

Adult School of Ministry

Lesson for Sunday, July 4, 2021

Christ's High Priestly Prayer: Jesus Christ's prayer details His desire for His followers.

Scripture: John 17: 1-26.

The Lesson Overview: In His role as our High Priest, Christ continually makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34). In this lesson, we review the high priestly prayer of intercession Jesus offered to God on the evening before His crucifixion. The passage of Scripture for this lesson, John 17, is viewed with deep reverence by Christians, because it reveals Jesus' innermost thoughts about His mission and His lofty aspirations for those who believe in Him. By its structure, the prayer divides naturally into three parts: first, Jesus prayed for Himself, vv. 1-5; second, Jesus prayed for His immediate disciples, vv. 6-19; and third, Jesus prayed for all believers in Him, vv. 20-26.

Historical Background: On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus met with the Twelve Apostles to observe the Jewish Passover (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). At the conclusion of the Passover meal, Jesus washed the feet of the Twelve (John 13) and, after Judas the betrayer had departed, Jesus taught the Eleven (John 14-16). Following this teaching, Jesus spoke the prayer found in John 17. Finally, Jesus and the Eleven went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed alone, and was, during that night, arrested and taken to the house of the high priest of the Jews in Jerusalem. These events occurred at the time of the Passover, in the spring of AD 30.

Lesson Outline:

1. "Father, Glorify Thy Son": John 17:1-5.
 - A. Prayer for Glorification, vv. 1-3.
 - B. The Basis for Glorification, vv. 4-5.
2. "Keep Them From The Evil": John 17:6-19.
 - A. Prayer for Protection, vv. 6-16.
 - B. Prayer for Sanctification, vv. 17-19.
3. "That They All May Be One": John 17: 20-26.
 - A. Prayer for Unity of Believers, vv. 20-23.
 - B. Prayer for Believers To Be With Him, vv. 24-26.

Discussing the Lesson:

1. "Father, Glorify Thy Son": John 17:1-5.

A. Prayer for Glorification: John 17:1-3.

- 1) Jesus began this prayer by praying for Himself and, in particular, praying first for His glorification, v. 1. In Scripture, the glory of the presence of God is the fullness of all of His attributes. Simply stated, God's glory is all that God is, and that is infinitely beyond our comprehension or imagination.
- 2) When Jesus, the eternally begotten Son of God, became incarnate, He voluntarily limited for a while some of the glory associated with His being eternal God (Philippians 2:5-8).
- 3) By means of Jesus' death and resurrection, His full glory as God was restored to Him (John 17:5); Philippians 2:9-11). Therefore, by His praying for glorification, Jesus affirmed His commitment to lay down His life by death on the cross, and to take it up again in resurrection, as God the Father had commanded Him (John 10:17-18).
- 4) By Jesus' perfect obedience to God the Father, "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8), both Jesus and the Father were glorified, and are glorified forever, v. 1.
- 5) One purpose for which Jesus and the Father are glorified is that, "He (Jesus) should give eternal life to as many as Thou (Father) hast given Him", v. 2.
- 6) In His prayer, Jesus defined "life eternal" as knowing the true God (the Father) and knowing Jesus Christ, v. 3. This knowing of God and Christ is personal, experiential, life-transforming knowledge of God and Christ by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10).

B. The Basis for Glorification, John 17: 4-5.

- 1) After praying for glorification, Jesus spoke to the Father about the basis of His glorification. It was, very simply, that Jesus, during the whole course of His earthly life had perfectly obeyed God the Father, v. 4.
- 2) He could do this because as Jesus stated elsewhere, His deeds and words matched exactly whatever He saw and heard God the Father do and say, John 5:19-20, 30. Jesus also said His being lifted up in death on the cross would prove "that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught me", John 8:28.
- 3) Jesus had finished the work God sent Him into the world to do. Jesus was nearing the end of His divine mission, and He was fully committed to dying on the cross to fulfill the will of the Father.
- 4) A short while later, as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, His commitment to die on the cross was tested, but He remained fully committed to doing God's

will. For Jesus, the only way back to the glory He had with God the Father “before the world was”, v.5, and also before His incarnation, was through death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension to God’s right hand, Acts 2:32-36.

- 5) The glory Jesus had in mind was not something He earned by way of His perfect obedience to the Father, nor was it something He would receive for the first time through His suffering, death, and resurrection.
- 6) Jesus’ glorification was, and is, something that is rightfully His as the eternal Son of God. The glory of Jesus Christ is the glory of God: “we beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father”, John 1:14.
- 7) Jesus had this glory before the world was, v. 5. Jesus’ perfect obedience in doing the will of His Father was the testimony that His eternal deity and union with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were in no way broken by His incarnation and death on the cross.
- 8) Jesus prayed that He and God the Father would be glorified. Some people take offense at God, or Jesus Christ, asking to receive glory. Obviously, these individuals do not know, or do not believe, who God the Father is, and who Jesus Christ is.
- 9) God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are worthy of all glory and praise because God is the ultimate reality, who is also the source of the entire universe He created for His own glory.
- 10) It is absolutely right that we should give all glory, honor, and praise to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. From a practical standpoint, the glorification of Jesus by the Father means, “every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”, Philippians 2:10-11.

2. “Keep Them From the Evil”, John 17:6-19.

A. Prayer for Protection, John 17:6-16.

- 1) As told in John 17:6-8, Jesus reviewed the part of His mission He had completed. He had gathered a group of disciples, had made God the Father known to them, and they had believed Jesus had been sent by the Father.
- 2) After this review, Jesus’ began His intercession for His immediate disciples, and especially for the Twelve, v. 9, 12. Jesus’ success with the Twelve, was that, only one of them was lost, v. 12.
- 3) All the rest, Jesus had kept faithful to himself, but now He was going out of this world, v. 11, and they would remain in the world, because this is what Jesus asked of the Father for them, v. 15.
- 4) Therefore, Jesus prayed for them to be kept by God the Father from the evil in the world, v. 15, because they were not of this world, v. 16.

B. Prayer for Sanctification, John 17:17-19.

- 1) Jesus requested God to provide for His disciples' security against evil by means of sanctification, v. 17. Sanctification is that work of God by which the believer in Christ is cleansed of sin, set apart from the sinful world by being set apart to God, declared holy by virtue of belonging to God, and being made holy by receiving credit for the righteousness of Christ, and by having the righteousness of Christ imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit.
- 2) When the Word of God (the Truth) is believed and obeyed resulting in saving faith in Jesus Christ, the Word becomes God's instrument for sanctifying the believer in Christ by the Holy Spirit, v. 17.
- 3) When Jesus spoke of sanctifying Himself, that we might be sanctified, v. 19, He spoke of His complete consecration to God and obedience to His Word. We would have no hope of sanctification, had not Christ consecrated Himself completely, perfectly, to God and His will.
- 4) Before Jesus asked in this prayer that God would keep His disciples from evil. He had taught them to pray, "Lead us not into [Lead us away from] temptation, and deliver us from evil", Matthew 6:13.
- 5) Only God, for Christ's sake, can save us from sin, deliver us from evil, and keep us from evil, and there is much evil from which we need to be kept secure by God.
- 6) We need to be kept from the Evil One, who is Satan. But he is not the only evil in this world. We need to be kept from evil lurking in ourselves that gives rise to temptation and sin.
- 7) We need to be kept from the evil in other people, and in various organizations, institutions, and godless ideologies. We need to be kept from the evil we see, and often do not see, in the world all around us. As believers in Christ, we must depend on God to keep us from all evil, whatever its source.

3. "That They All May Be One": John 17: 20-26.

A. Prayer for Unity of Believers, John 17:20-23.

- 1) Verse 20 makes clear that Jesus' prayer was not only for His immediate disciples and the Twelve, "but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word", v. 20.
- 2) Jesus' disciples who had seen, heard, and believed Him to be the Messiah were His primary witnesses. Through "their word," inscribed in the Gospels and all of the New Testament, all succeeding generations have become believers in Jesus Christ.
- 3) Jesus included in His intercessory prayer, all who would ever believe in Him as a result of hearing and believing the Gospel.

- 4) Jesus prayed for the unity of all believer in Him, patterned after the unity between God the Father and God the Son, vv. 21-22. The unity of all believers for which Jesus prayed, is realized in the fellowship (brotherhood, community) believers have with one another in fellowship with God and Christ.
- 5) Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers in Him, “that the world may know that Thou [Father] hast sent Me”, v. 23. One major importance of the universal brotherhood and community of believers in Christ is that, this serves as a testimony to the world that God sent Christ, and that believers in Christ experience in their lives the same love of God the Father, the Father has for Jesus, see John 14:21-23.

B. Prayer for Believers To Be With Him, John 17:24-26.

- 1) In this prayer, Jesus’ final request for believers was that, ultimately, all who believe in Him will be with Him, where He is, beholding His glory, v. 24. Jesus is at the right hand of God in heaven, Acts 7:55-56, and this is where He wants us to be, with Him, when our earthly life is done.
- 2) In the life to come after death, heaven is where God is, where Christ is, and when believers in Christ will be, see 1 Peter 1:3-5.
- 3) Jesus’ concluded His prayer, vv. 24-26, reviewing what He had accomplished. All the world had not become believers in Jesus as the Messiah, because the world did not know God’s Son, v. 25.
- 4) But Jesus had gained believers in Him as the Messiah and Son of God, and His love, the love of God, was in them, v. 26.
- 5) Jesus’ great intercessory prayer in John 17 accentuates the fact that, Jesus Christ the ascended Lord, is always making intercession for those who believe in Him.
- 6) It is good we can pray for ourselves, and that we can ask others to pray for us, as needed. But let us never forget that Jesus Christ is always praying for us.
- 7) And in unison with Christ’s intercession for us, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ and of God) dwelling in us, “makes intercession for us with groaning’s which cannot be uttered...because He makes intercession for the saints (believers in Christ) according to the will of God”, Romans 8:26-27.
- 8) Our response to Christ’s intercession for us should be that we pray without ceasing (continually, daily), and that we also pray for others.

Call to Discipleship: Jesus is the supreme example for all who will be His disciples. Jesus was a man of prayer, and we, to be His followers, must be people of prayer. It is, in fact, impossible to be a true believer in Christ, and not pray. Believers in Christ pray with their thoughts, words, and deeds.

Ministry in Action: Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers in Him. With this in mind, pray for the unity of believers in your local church, your community, your denomination, across denominational lines, and that believers of every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation will be united in Christ.