



SERMON TITLE: The Lord's Prayer

DATE: January 10, 2021

SCRIPTURE: John 17:1-20

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SERIES SUMMARY

"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

We are living in troubled times—lawlessness, lies, deception, violence, corruption—seem to permeate every aspect of the political world we live in right now. And it's easy to become so caught up in what's going on that our souls are overwhelmed with worry and trying to make things work our way rather than God's way. It's easy to become critical, judgmental, and self-righteous. We know that none of these things should characterize the followers of Jesus, but sometimes there's a gap between what we know and how we live, right? The question is—What is the church supposed to be and do during a time like this? Is there any place in Scripture that can give us specific guidance? I'm happy to tell you there is and it's found in John 17.

John 17 is Jesus' prayer for his disciples and his future church after he's given his final instructions on the night before his death. In John 13-16—what we call the Upper Room Discourse—Jesus has told his disciples that he's leaving them and returning to his Father in heaven. He's told them that all the resources of heaven will be at their disposal through prayer. He's told them that after he leaves, he will send them the Holy Spirit who will continue to reveal God's truth to them. He's promised them peace and love and joy, but they are so overwhelmed with worry, grief and fear that none of this is really sinking in. So, in John 17, Jesus asks the Father to fulfill all these promises and to bring his life's work to fulfillment through his coming death on the Cross. This is the real Lord's Prayer. In it we overhear the Son talking to the Father—God talking to himself, if you will. The point is, in this prayer, we overhear what is most important to Jesus just before he dies. And the amazing thing is that this prayer is mostly about us. As Jesus faced suffering and death, the most important thing to Jesus is us—you and me. And he prays four things for us. He prays that we will know the truth and be "sanctified in truth" (vv3,17). He prays that his disciples and all who follow them will be unified (vv11,21,22). He prays that his mission in the world would continue through his disciples and that the Father would protect from the evil one (v18). And he prays for our holiness—"Father, sanctify them..." (vv17,19) Today, we will start with holiness because it's the one most of us have the hardest time getting our mind around. You can't really understand what Christianity is all about until you figure out what is so important about being holy that the Son of God would die for it. We're going to spend two weeks looking at holiness because the only way we can understand what it means *for us* to be holy is to begin with what it means *for God* to be holy. So this week, we will answer the question: *What does it mean that God is holy?*

In both the Old and New Testament God says to his people: "Be Holy; for I am holy." (cf Lev19:2; 1Pet1:16). Our holiness is based on God's holiness. We have to understand the holiness of God before we can understand why Jesus died to make us holy. In v11, Jesus addresses his Heavenly Father as "Holy Father." And in so doing, he's emphasizing that God is distinct, separate, in a class by himself." For God to be "holy" means that he is "other"—different in a special way—he is so far above us and beyond us that he has no rivals or competition (cf Ex15:11; 1Sam2:2; Ps86:8,10; Isa40:24). Holy is the way God is—he doesn't conform to a standard—he is the standard. In the Bible, when people are in the presence of Holy God, they are overwhelmed by his "Godness." Like, to see how BIG God is, you are overcome with how little you are; to see how WISE he is, you understand how ignorant you are; to see how PERFECT he is, you

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realize how flawed you are; to see how POWERFUL he is, you are overcome with your weakness. (for example, we see this in Isaiah 6 and at the end of the book of Job). In the Bible, when people experience the holiness of God, they immediately understand how flawed and fallen they are. Here are three practical illustrations of how addressing God and experiencing God as "Holy Father" can impact your life during troubled times. *In troubled times—we worry, we tend to take things into our own hands, and we can be extremely critical and judgmental. And these three things relate to God's holiness—let's start with worry:*

(1) In troubled times, we worry because we think something needs to happen and if it doesn't happen like we think it needs to happen then life for us won't be what it's supposed to be, and so, we worry whether it's going to happen or not. What are you worried about right now that you think should happen but it's not happening? Let's get underneath that. *What are you really saying?* You're really saying that the One who is in charge of history might not get it right this time. What you're saying is, God might not be on top of what's happening. He might not have this one under control. He might not be wise enough to see how important this thing is to you. But God is holy in his wisdom. His wisdom is infinitely beyond what you and I can see or know. So, in the midst of trouble, when you can't make sense out of what is happening, *if you pray, "Holy Father, there is no one like you. I know you know much more about this than I do. You're so much wiser than me and so, I can rest in the fact that you know best"—if you pray like that—then—you will experience the peace Christ promised you in the midst of trouble. Seeing God as holy in his wisdom eliminates worry.*

(2) In troubled times, we tend to take things into our own hands. We give ourselves excuses to not do what God tells us to do. In the Bible, God tells us things to do and not do because he knows what's best for us. He never gives us arbitrary rules to follow just to make us miserable. No, what God says is the right thing to do and it's always best for us. But when things go sideways in our lives, sometimes what God tells us to do doesn't seem right to us, doesn't seem practical. And when we do things our way rather than God's way, it either weighs us down with guilt or it puffs us up in self-righteousness. What we need to see most is God is holy in his righteousness. Jesus addressed God as "Righteous Father" in v25—meaning—that God is right in all his ways. The problem is, when we don't see God as being holy in his righteousness, then we end up thinking and acting like we are more right, more reasonable, more fair than God. When we forget that his righteousness is infinitely above our righteousness, we set ourselves up to play God. Seeing God as Holy in his righteousness is a safe-guard against self-righteousness.

(3) In troubled times, we tend to become critical, negative and judgmental. The antidote for these things is seeing God as Holy in his fatherhood. In vv6-8, Jesus affirms his disciples as having kept God's word. He says they understand and believe that Jesus was sent from God. Now, that's a bit strange to me because all these disciples ever do is argue. They never seem to get what Jesus is saying. They definitely had their own agenda for Jesus' Messiahship. And as I recall, at times, Jesus was pretty hard on them. But Jesus is taking the long view here, and we see how God, as Holy Father, treats his children. Most of us were raised in homes like this: when you did something good, that was nice, "Good job, buddy!" But when you did something bad—WHAM!—you were clobbered for it, right? That's what most of our families *were* like and *are* like, *if we're honest*. But, life in God's family is different. When you do something good, it's affirmed, it's celebrated. When you do something bad, *it's dealt with; it's forgiven; it's forgotten*. That's the kind of Father we have—that's the kind of family that a Christian is born into. So, God is HOLY in his Fatherhood, *meaning*, he's distinctly different from us in the way he parents us. The point is, when you experience God as your Holy Father—knowing that God loves you even when you are in the wrong, knowing that he doesn't deal with your sins tit-for-tat, knowing he doesn't condemn you even in your worst moments, well, that should work into you a different kind of spirit. You can't be a critical, complaining, irritable, judgmental person if you are constantly being melted by the fact that God covers your offenses and affirms your strengths. And, neither can you be a person full of self-pity—always complaining that your life is going wrong. Seeing God as your Holy Father changes how you relate to the flawed people in your world.

Do you see how practical understanding the holiness of God really is? This isn't some bland, abstract theological discussion. This gets right down to where we live. How you view God is the most important thing about you. Worriers do not treat God as perfect and Holy in his wisdom, the disobedient do not treat him as perfect and Holy in how he says life is to be lived, and critical, negative people and people full of self-pity do not treat him as perfect and Holy in his Fatherhood. But if you worship your Heavenly Father as your Holy Father—perfect in his wisdom, perfect in his righteousness, perfect in his fatherhood—it will fill you with peace and confidence and compassion. This week, when you pray, I want to encourage you to address God as Holy Father, as a way of reminding yourself that as you ask God for the

things you need and want to happen—you'll remember that His wisdom and His ways and His love for you is greater than anything you can imagine.

Discussion Starters —

- Start by having a couple of people take turns reading portions of John 17. Here's a good breakdown, vv1-5, vv6-19, vv20-26.
- Ask the group—What is at the heart of Jesus' prayer in John 17?
- Why is this the real Lord's Prayer vs the prayer in Luke 11 that we typically call the "Lord's Prayer?"
- Draw attention how Jesus addressed God as "holy Father" in v11. Ask the group, "Why do you think Jesus addressed his heavenly Father as Holy Father in this prayer (remember, this is the night before he's crucified, remember, what he's facing and about to go through)."
- Charlie focused on three practical illustrations of God being our Holy Father. That God is holy in his wisdom, holy in his righteousness, holy in his fatherhood of us. He showed how each of these aspects of God's holiness relates to the issues of (1) worry, (2) taking matters into our hands and (3) becoming critical, negative, self-righteous people when we go through distressing times. Spend some time on each of these and discuss how focusing on God as Holy Father counteracts these three things.
- Close your time by praying and addressing God as Holy Father.