

† The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Praying Savior – John 17

The Lessons from Jesus’ Prayer – John 17:1-26

The Revealing Nature of Prayer

John 17:9-10

9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

There is no greater comfort and no greater joy than knowing that you are in the thoughts and prayers of others. This past week I was found on Facebook by the lady the Lord would use to bring me to Himself some 24 years ago. And in a brief exchange via email she commented that she had been praying for me, my family and my ministry. It was overwhelming and comforting to know that out there are people whom I have not seen or spoken to for years, yet praying for me.

In our text this morning we find someone else who has been praying for those who believe in Him for years and years. What a comfort and encouragement it ought to be for us to know that not only are there family and friends praying for us, but that our Lord Jesus Christ, even before our births, has been and continues to pray for us. And from our verses this morning, I would like to consider what are some of the comforts and lessons that we learn about Jesus and prayer as He prepares to petition the Father on behalf of those who believe in Him?

I. Prayer reveals Jesus’ relationship (John 17:9-10a)

9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine...

To begin with, let us consider how this prayer of Jesus reveals that prayer is relational – that the very practice of prayer reveals some manner of relationship. Beloved, prayer expresses a relationship, a connection or a communion between individuals. And as we see Jesus praying to the Father here in our text, it reveals at least two relationships Jesus deemed important.

First, we see the relationship of the Son to the Father. Looking to the Father, Jesus says, **“I ask [or I pray] on their behalf...”** These words and those that follow are simple, yet profound, for in them we find Jesus expressing the unity and the equality that exists between the Father and the Son. In effect we see Jesus in these verses not only demonstrate His humanity, the truth that He is fully man, but He also defends His deity, that truth that He is fully God.

As a man, Jesus was completely dependent upon the grace and working of His Father in His life. As man, Jesus needed to be in constant communication and communion with the Father in order to constantly please the Father. Even a simple reading of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveal that Jesus was a man of prayer.

But we must also remember that Jesus was fully God and as God, God has not need to pray to God. The Scriptures are so very clear that there is only one God who has revealed Himself in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While this is a mystery, we learn from the Scriptures that each of these three persons are co-equal in power, in glory and ability. They each have always existed and continue to exist in three distinct Persons and yet we are not speaking

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about three gods, but One God in three persons. Each of these three persons, while equal and in complete unity, each also carry out unique and specific functions for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity. For example, in the salvation of men, the Scriptures teach that it is the Father who chooses, or elects those who will be saved; that it is the Son who comes to redeem those to be saved by shedding His blood on the cross of their sin; and that it is the Spirit who applies or makes effective this work of salvation in a person's heart while revealing to that person the truth of the Father's choosing and of the Son's redeeming them. So, this is Jesus as God, the one who came from heaven to earth to save His people from their sins.

And let us remember that when Jesus left the glories of heaven to come to earth, that He also laid aside His prerogatives or privileges as God. He allowed Himself to be limited in a body of flesh like ours, but, according to Philippians 2:5-11, without ever ceasing to be God. So, here in John 17 we find Jesus praying to the Father, not as God, but as Man. But even as Man, His prayer was not like that of a sinner; it was not like that of an inferior begging for mercy from a superior; but rather (did you not sense this); the prayer of Jesus here sounds like that of an equal. Listen to His words again,

9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

Look at the relationship expressed by Jesus between Himself and the Father. As Jesus prays for those He is to redeem, He says clearly that not only do all the redeemed belong to Himself, for the Father had given them to Him and He says that all things (speaking primarily of the redeemed) are His or belong to Him; but that they also belong as well to the Father. Both the Father and Son equally possess these for whom Jesus prays. Those for whom Jesus prays are a precious commodity that belong equally to the Father and the Son.

This is something remarkable for a man to say. Who among us here can make such a claim that all things that belong to me are God's and all things that are God's are mine? We must all know that everything we have belongs to the Lord. Our homes, our possessions, even our lives are not our own, they belong to God. But none of us can say as Jesus did here that all things, everything that God has and is belongs to us? We know that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, but the last time I checked there was not even one in my backyard. But Jesus could say this, because He was and is both God and Man. He is not some lesser God as the Jehovah's Witnesses would say. He is not somehow inferior to God because He is man. The truth is that all things that make the Father God also make the Son God. There is no attribute of God that is found only in the Father and not in the Son. There is no less glory to be attributed to the Son than there is to be given to the Father. As man, Jesus did not possess some limited or potentially inferior concept of the will of God, for Jesus was also God who knew the perfect will of God.

And so, as Jesus prays here, we must see the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. And what Jesus is about to ask for in verses 9, 10 and following for those He will save then is in perfect unity with the will of the Father. In others words, as we progress through the rest of this prayer in John 17, we must and can be assured, that because Jesus is God, He will ask the

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Father for that which is in perfect accord with will of the Father. If you want to know the very essence of God’s will for your life, here it is in John 17. Sometimes a friend or family member might pray for you something that you know is amiss, but everything Jesus prays is what is good, right and necessary for our lives. Let us rejoice then in what Jesus prays for those who believe in Him.

So then, we learn that prayer expresses one’s relationship to God. And the deeper the prayer life; the deeper the relationship to God. We need to learn to pray even as Jesus prayed; with fervency, with frequency and for both ourselves and for others.

But there is also a **second** relationship that is revealed in this prayer and it is found in those for whom Jesus prayed. In verses 9-10 we also see the relationship between the Son and the redeemed.

Listen again to what Jesus prays here and let us note that Jesus clearly identifies two groups of people when He says, ***I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours...*** Now, if you are a believer, if you know your life has been given over to Jesus Christ because you have received His life for your life; His mercy in place of your rebellion; His righteousness in place of your sinfulness, then this statement ought to be one of great joy and encouragement. However, if you do not know or are uncertain if your life has been exchanged for the life of Jesus in you, then this statement ought to drive you to your knees begging for the mercy of God.

For whom does Jesus pray here? Jesus prays for those who are His, who belong to Him, and He does not pray for any of those who do not belong to Him. It is interesting to note that in all the recorded prayers of Jesus, there is only one that is directed toward unbelievers, and that is the prayer of Luke 23:34 where Jesus said, ***Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*** Every other prayer of Jesus has as its focus and concern the glory of God and the benefit of those whom He intends to redeem. Jesus not pray for the “world” – that system of belief and behavior that stands in opposition to God’s will and ways. Those who are not chosen out of the world by the Father are not the subject of the prayer, only those for whom Jesus will die in order to redeem. In other words, “Those for whom Jesus died; He also prays; and those for whom Jesus prays, He also died.” The death of Jesus was made for a specific group of people that the Father Himself purposed to redeem before the beginning of time. The blood of Jesus would not be poured out carelessly; it would not be wasted, but would completely and perfectly redeem each individual that had been given to Jesus to save from their state of sin and rebellion against God.

Beloved, this is the relationship Jesus reveals between Himself and the redeemed. It is for those “whom You [the Father] have given Me [the Son]...” It is for those for whom Jesus has given eternal life as we saw in verse 3. And just who are those given to Jesus and granted eternal life? According to Hebrews 7:25, it is for those who ***“draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”***

Of course, there are those who hear such a teaching like this as say something like, “But what if I am not one of those given to Jesus? What if I am not one of those chosen by the Father?” And to such a question I answer, “You do not know that, and you cannot know that!” By virtue of hearing these truths and being concerned about your relationship to them, I say, “Is it not the convicting work of the Holy Spirit calling to your soul, calling you to believe, calling you to

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repent.” As it is written in 2 Corinthians 6:2, **Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"** — Do not harden your heart and say as if you know all things, “I am not chosen...” The word of Christ is near and the very concern of your soul is your conscience crying out to you to beg for mercy. Receive the promise of eternal life as offered by Jesus by calling out to Him as Lord, as God who has come to deliver you from your sins, to change your heart and change your life so that you may turn from your idols to serve the living God.

May there be not one here this morning that is unable to answer in the affirmative that they possess this relationship to Jesus; who does not know that when Jesus said, **“I ask on their behalf...”** that He in fact was praying for you.

II. Prayer reveals Jesus’ responsibility (John 17:10a)

I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine...

As Jesus utters this prayer to the Father, a prayer that will include asking for protection from evil influences, for joy in all circumstances, for understanding the truth and for experiencing the glory of God, we learn from our verses here just how seriously He takes His responsibility to accomplish all that is necessary to that end. When Jesus said that He was praying for **“those whom You have given Me”** there is found in this statement a commitment. We have read already in verse 4 that Jesus was committed to do everything needed for our salvation and in effect, He is simply stating that commitment again?

But just what is this commitment? Just what is the responsibility given to Jesus as the Father gave to Him a people to redeem? I would say to you that this responsibility is found in His work or office as our Mediator. Why did the Father give the Son a group of people to redeem? He did so, so that Jesus would be their Mediator, their go-between, their representative; the one who would die on behalf of their sins; that is pay their penalty as sinners; to have all that is evil, bad and unholy in us, placed up Him; to be nailed on the cross and buried in the grave, so that everything righteous, good and holy about Jesus could be placed on us so that when God looks upon us, He no longer sees our sins and our rottenness; that which made us unacceptable and unfit for God’s heaven, but rather now God sees the Son’s sinlessness and righteousness; that which had and always make the Son acceptable in God’s sight; now upon us.

Such a truth is captured for us in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 where we read, **“5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”** Beloved, not one of us is able to mediate for ourselves because we are unqualified to do so. We needed the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus and even the presence of Jesus before the throne of God in order to have a relationship with God. This is what Jesus did for those whom the Father gave Him. The Son gives His own the privilege to come before the Father without fear of judgment or condemnation.

When we desire to come before God then, we can only and must only do so through or because of the work of our Mediator, Jesus Christ. This is why any religion that minimizes or excludes Jesus Christ is unable to save, because there is only one mediator between God and

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man; there is only one person through whom we may approach the holy God and that is through the crucified and risen One, Jesus Christ. Let me say this another way.

What right do you have to come before the throne of God? What right do you have to dare ask God to benevolently provide for you or others when you have been so sinful and rebellious? What right do you have to ask for understanding of God's word? What right do you have to even be part of His body, the Church or even to come to church? What right do you have to worship the holy God in prayer, in song or in hearing the word preached? Beloved, such a right only comes as one has confessed with his mouth Jesus as Lord – that He is your God who came to save you from your sin and that you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead; or that God proved the validity of Jesus as our Lord and Savior by raising Him from the dead. The wages of sin is death and since Jesus never sinned, death could not hold Him, so He was raised to newness of life and in like manner, if we believe that He did this for us; that He died for us and was raised to life for us, that He is our only Mediator, the only One by which we can be made right with God, then we are saved.

Do you realize that it is only by or through Jesus that you can live a life that pleases God? Do you realize that it is only by or through Jesus that you can sing songs of praise to God that cause the heart of God to rejoice. As Hebrews 13:15 reminds us, **“Through Him [Jesus- our Mediator] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”** It was Jesus' responsibility to ensure that all who were given to Him, would be justified, declared right before God by means of His own rightness being applied to us. And beloved, this Jesus did for all who believe. Do you believe that in Jesus alone, that because of having and pursuing a relationship with Jesus, you are in relationship to the living God? This, beloved is what Jesus accomplished. This beloved is salvation. Do you have this relationship to Jesus?

III. Prayer reveals Jesus' reward (John 17:10b)

and I have been glorified in them.

Thus far in these verses we have seen that this prayer reveals Jesus' relationships as well as His responsibility. Finally then let us see that this prayer reveals Jesus' reward.

Recalling the beginning of this prayer back in verse one, we saw that the chief concern of Jesus was the glory of God. The very first petition was, **“glorify the Son, that the Son may glorify You...”** We might ask ourselves, “How is the Son glorified?” And we have at least a part of the answer at the end of verse 10. The Son is glorified in lives of those He saves. This is His reward, to be glorified in the lives of those He saves. Jesus says, **“and I have been glorified in them.”** Because of what Jesus does on the cross for us, because of the changed lives that result; because of lives that live no longer for themselves but for Him who died and rose again; because of lives that have died to self and live for God; because of lives that no longer present the members of their bodies as slaves for unrighteousness but rather as slaves for righteousness, such things, says Jesus, glorifies the Son. And by glorifying the Son, the Son in turn glorifies the Father. It brings us full circle, for since we belong to the Father and the Son, Jesus works in us so that His glory might be displayed through us both before the Father and before the world.

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I remember my first trip every to Bud Walton Arena. It was in 1995, the year after the Basketball Razorback had won the national championship. As I walked in among all the sea of maroon red, I saw trophy case after trophy case and picture after picture depicting all the triumphs in the history of Razorback sports. Of course, on grand display were the accolades of the National Championship. It was truly a hall of glory for Razorback sports. Beloved, when the righteousness of Christ is applied to the life of a believer, that person becomes a trophy that is meant to display the glory and honor of the accomplishments of God in our salvation. I believe that our brother Tyler loves the title, “a monument of mercy” or “a monument of grace.”

According to the prayer of Jesus here, He says of those for whom He died, **“And I have been glorified in them.”** Notice Jesus didn’t say that He might be glorified in them, or that He hopes to be glorified in them, but rather, according to the Greek text, that He has and will continue to be glorified in those whom He has saved. This is not only a statement of fact –that those whom Jesus saves will glorify Him, but is also an assurance of salvation, that those whom Jesus saves will continually glorify Him. To be sure, there will be times of sin, times of struggle or even times of doubt, but the overall characteristic of the believer’s live is his desire to be that monument of mercy for all to see. Beloved, this is the very same teaching we find in Ephesians 2:10 where we read;

For we are His workmanship [His poiema – His canvas – His work of art], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Last week we were reminded that believer were called out of the world, that there is to be something different and clearly distinguishable about the life and behavior of the believer. We are reading the same thing here. What distinguishes the life of the believer from the life of the unbeliever is his God-given desire to see Jesus Christ glorified. In other words, there are changes, good changes, sometimes difficult changes in the life of the believer. His affections, his attitudes, and his interests are all changed, not by something he has done, but solely by the transforming work of God in His life. D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones said it this way, **“We are meant to be a living proof of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has finished the work which His Father sent Him to do.”** How are you doing? Are you this “living proof”? He goes on to say, **“Our business is to manifest, to make a display of the glories and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** How are you doing? Is this your business? Beloved, this is the business, this is the proof, this is the pursuit of one redeemed by Jesus. Let us desire more and more of a manifestation of this proof in our lives. Let us pray for more and more of this proof in our lives.

I would be negligent not to give a few ways in which we glorify Jesus and reveal this living proof or our relationship to Him. And with these I will close.

First, we glorify Jesus by believing on Him and growing in our knowledge of Him. There is not one of us in here who will rightly glorify Jesus without first believing on Him; that is believing who He is, God in the flesh come to save you from your sins; as well as believing in what He has done; taking your sin upon Himself and dying for it; giving you of His righteousness so that you my live by it. We glorify Jesus then by growing in our knowledge and appreciation of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

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Second, we glorify Jesus by finding all satisfaction in Him. I know we looked at this a couple of weeks ago, but let us remember that Jesus is glorified in our lives when there are no rivals for our affections toward Him. Jesus is to be the one we love and the one for whom we live. Do you have any misplaced affections or longings that have usurped your love for Jesus?

Third, we glorify Jesus by speaking to others about who He is and what He has done. We have been called witnesses for Christ, ambassadors for Christ, and even as **A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)**. Are you talking to others about Jesus? This is how we glorify Him. I came across a blog article that was entitled, “If You’re Not Jaw Droppingly Astonished At Jesus’ Teaching Then You’ve Read Them Wrong.” I think we could safely say that if we are not jaw droppingly astonished with Jesus, then you’ve misunderstood Him. And, if we misunderstand Jesus, we won’t be as likely to speak about Him. Let us pursue a clearer vision of Jesus.

Fourth, and finally, we glorify Jesus by living our lives before others in such a way that Jesus is the only explanation for our lives. I love the statement found in Acts 4:13 where we read, “**13 Now as they [the Jewish leaders] observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.**” Notice that this observation is right after Peter’s confession of who Jesus is and what He has done for us as Savior. Oh that this would be the description of each of our lives, that as people observe us, they would recognize us as having been with Jesus; and all this to the glory of God.

Let us take to heart these lessons from the prayer of Jesus for His own, that this prayer reveals Jesus’ relationship, first the Father as both God and Man and then to His followers as their Mediator, for this was Jesus’ responsibility, to bring us to God. And finally, let us see that Jesus’ reward is that He is glorified in the lives of those whom He has saved.

Soli Deo Gloria

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