

John 17:1-19 “The Lord’s Prayer”
Exodus 3
Psalm 66

October 4, 2020

At Mt. Horeb God revealed his name to Moses.

He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
And he has now heard the cries of his people –
and he will deliver them from Egypt.

And God says that when Moses brings the people out of Egypt,
“you shall serve God on this mountain.”

This is the first time that God chooses a *people*.
He had revealed himself to Abraham – and he *promised* Abraham
that he would be the God of Abraham’s seed – Abraham’s descendents.
But only in the book of Exodus does God actually bring a *people* to himself.

And through Israel – through the Seed of Abraham –
all nations would be blessed.

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 66 – which calls the nations to bless the LORD.

Sing Psalm 66
John 17

Jesus has taught his disciples “whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you.”
We talked some last week about what that means.
But if you really want to understand what it means to pray to the Father
in the name of Jesus, then listen to Jesus!
Because after telling them to pray to the Father,
he models for them what they are to do.

We have a pattern of prayer that Jesus gave us – which we call “the Lord’s Prayer.”
But there is another way in which John 17 is truly the Lord’s Prayer.
This is the prayer that our Lord himself prayed –
as he prayed for himself, for the eleven, and for us.

This prayer in John 17 is often called the “high priestly prayer.”
There are some priestly elements in it (the language of consecration in verses 17-19),
but interceding for the people of God is not especially a priestly function.
There are two types of intercession in the OT.
There is a priestly intercession and a prophetic intercession.
Priestly intercession is found in the sacrifices—bringing a blood atonement for sin.

The most important of these was when the high priest would enter
the Holy of Holies once each year on the Day of Atonement.
But intercessory prayer was not one of the high priest's special duties.

Prayer is always associated with the ministry of the Word.
The one who speaks the Word of God intercedes for the people of God.
Moses interceded for Israel in Exodus 33;
Isaiah interceded for Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19;
We read in Daniel 9 of Daniel's intercession for his people.
In 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon's famous intercessory prayer follows his sermon.
Even Ezra, who was of the priestly family,
is described as a scribe—a teacher of the Law (Ezra 7).

Jesus is about to make his priestly intercession—through his blood—
but this prayer is part of his great prophetic work.
Having taught the eleven those things that they most needed to hear,
he now models before them what he has taught.
He has spoken the Word of God to them as only the Great Prophet could do.
And now he prays for them as only the Great Prophet could do.
The Word that was in the beginning with God
has spoken.

And when he spoken these words (John 13-16),
he lifted up his eyes to heaven.

There are many postures and stances for prayer in scripture.
The publican prays with downcast eyes—(Luke 18:13)
reflecting his humility and acknowledging his unworthiness.
Jesus prays with eyes lifted up to heaven,
beholding with the eyes of faith the dwelling place of the Father.
This is why some churches kneel for the prayer of confession,
and stand for the prayer of thanksgiving.
Until the nineteenth century Presbyterians *never* sat during prayer.
Even after the practice was introduced it was not uncommon
to see the older folk rise during the prayer,
because they could not bring themselves to sit while speaking to God.
Of course, if sitting in the presence of God is inappropriate,
then we should go back to the practice of the early church,
and have the entire congregation stand for the whole service!

I don't think that controversy on the subject is profitable.
My one conviction is that we should not adopt only a single stance toward God.
Sometimes it is appropriate to close your eyes and fold your hands and bow your head.
But sometimes it is not!

Especially when you are giving thanks to God,
lift up your eyes to heaven!
I know that Presbyterians can be a little reticent about lifting up your hands,
but at least lift up your heads!

Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven for a reason.

Jesus is turning his focus from speaking to his disciples to speaking to the Father.
He is shifting the focus from earth to heaven—from the sermon to the prayer, as it were.
The focus of his prayer is closely tied to the content of the sermon he just preached.
The language of the “hour,” glory, the work of Jesus, fullness of joy, and unity
pervades the prayer as it did the sermon.
As Jesus has taught them, so now he prays for them.

John started chapter 13 by saying “Jesus knew that his hour had come.”

And in 13:31 Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

Now Jesus says, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son
that the Son may glorify you.” (17:1)

The prophetic prayer recapitulates the message that has been preached,
applying it to the lives of the hearers.

Just as Solomon proclaimed the Word of God,
explaining how God had established David’s seed and Jerusalem’s temple,
and then prayed that God would continue to bless the seed and the temple;
so now Jesus has preached that his hour has come,
and now he prays that God would continue to do what he has promised.

There are three basic parts to the prayer.

First, Jesus prays for himself (17:1-5),
Then, for the eleven (17:6-19),
and finally for the whole church (17:20-26).

1. The Glory of the Son with the Father (v1-5)

a. Glorify Your Son that the Son May Glorify You (v1)

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

In praying for himself, Jesus recognizes his unique relation to the Father.

Throughout the first half of John’s gospel,
Jesus began to explain the relationship between himself and the Father.
In John 5, Jesus taught that the Father has given the Son
authority to execute judgment.

Now Jesus asks the Father to glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...

b. As the Son Gives Eternal Life to Those Whom the Father Gives Him (v2-3)

² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Jesus has authority over all flesh.

All dominion is given to the Son.

So that the Son may give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him.

Here we are reminded that only God can save.

The Son gives life to all those whom the Father has given him.

We refer to this as the doctrine of election.

The Son gives eternal life to all those whom the Father gives him.

And what is eternal life?

“That they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Do you *know* God?

Not just – do you know “about” God.

But do you *know* God?

Because to know God is eternal life!

To know God is to be joined to the life of God.

The Son does not seek his own glory, but the glory of the Father.

Now the Son declares that he has finished the work the Father gave for him to do.

Now he is returning to the Father.

c. The Glory that I Had with You Before the World Existed (v4-5)

⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

What does it mean?

He is finished with the work?

He hasn't died yet—his greatest work is still ahead of him!

What was the work that he had been given to do?

“To give eternal life to all whom you have given him.”

And what is eternal life?

“That they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Jesus' work of giving eternal life is complete.

Again, I must ask, “what?”

Listen again to Jesus' words: “I glorified you on earth,
having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

You see, Jesus has no more earthly work to do.

All that remains for him is glory.

He must be glorified on the cross so that he can glorify the Father.

He must be lifted up on the cross so that he can be lifted up to the Father.
His work is finished.

All that is left is glory!

John sees the cross as the glorification of the Son.

⁵ *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

Here Jesus clearly states that he shared the Father's glory "before the world existed."

Jesus has previously said that he came from the Father –

John 1 says "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."

It is absolutely essential for the Christian faith that we recognize
that before the world existed, the Word was God –
and the Word was with God.

In other words, the Son is *not* the Father.

The eternal Son of God *is* God.

But he was also *with* God.

And since the Spirit proceeds from the Father (as we heard earlier in 15:13)
we must recognize that there are three distinct persons
who have always been in the one being of God.

And now the Son is returning to the presence of the Father.

But then in verses 6-19, Jesus prays for the Eleven.

2. The Glory of the Son in the Eleven (v6-19)

a. The Eleven Belong to the Father and He Gave Them to the Son "Out of the World" (v6-8)

Jesus has been speaking to the eleven.

And now he is praying for the eleven.

And his work with them is finished.

They have just declared,

"Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you;
this is why we believe that you came from God." (16:30)

They now believe in Jesus Christ–Jesus the Messiah.

Therefore Jesus prays (6-8)

⁶ *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they*

were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

How often have you thought about Jesus' work being restricted to eleven men?
These central chapters of John's gospel (13-17)
focus almost entirely on the eleven.

John's gospel is traditionally thought to have been the last one written,
perhaps as much as thirty years after the others.
If so, then the old apostle John would have been familiar
with the various religious groups that were forming around the person of Jesus.
Many claimed secret knowledge that Jesus had transmitted through various people.
John 13-17 is John's answer to such folly.
This is what Jesus taught us.
Listen to the apostolic teaching, and do not be drawn astray by myths.

Jesus has revealed the Father to the apostles.
The Father chose them beforehand, and gave them to the Son,
and now they have kept his word.
There is a very clear emphasis on divine election.
These are the people "whom you gave me out of the world."
Yes, Jesus has come to save the world,
but until the day when the new creation is unveiled in all its glory,
we are elect "out of the world,"
for the world is hostile to the glory of Christ.

Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.
Jesus' prophetic work is finished.
He has taught them all that they need to know—
because he has revealed himself to them.
Jesus words in verse 8 simply reflect what has just happened in 16:30.
And at this point, Jesus is not praying for the world, but for them—
for those eleven men standing around him.
Because on this Passover night, the kingdom of God consists only of them.

b. Not Praying for the World, but for Those Who Belong to the Father and the Son (v9-12)

And so Jesus prays:
⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

Again in verse 11 Jesus makes another odd statement.

“I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world.”

What does this mean?

Jesus has completed his work.

No longer must he teach and proclaim the kingdom of God.

His task is finished.

All that is left is glory—the glory of the cross, and the glory of the resurrection.

All that is left is to return to the Father.

Oh – and one more thing!

“and I am glorified in them.” (v10)

Jesus is glorified in the apostles.

They will continue his mission.

They will continue his work –

indeed “greater works than these” will they do –

because through them,

the glory of Jesus will go forth to the ends of the earth!

Jesus is now glorified in you –

because you have believed the apostles’ teaching!

The glorification of Jesus continues

as his glory fills all the earth –

through the great commission – as the nations are discipled –

as people are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the HS,

as people are taught to observe all that Jesus commanded!

And so Jesus prays:

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

“Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me,
that they may be one, even as we are one.”

What does it mean to be “kept in God’s name”?

Last week we saw that we are to pray to the Father *in the name* of Jesus.

And Jesus said to baptize

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We have this custom that when a woman gets married,

she changes her name, and takes the last name of her husband.

Likewise, when children are born, we give them the same last name as their father.

In the same way,

in your baptism you were given a name.

The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus asks his Father “keep them in your name.”

The name which he has given to the Son.

The name which is above every name.

While he was on earth, Jesus guarded them.
He kept them in his name.
But now that he is returning to the Father,
he asks the Father to continue to preserve his elect.

Verse 12 makes it clear that Jesus is still thinking of the eleven:

¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Because there had been twelve.
Judas Iscariot had gone forth into the night in order to betray the light of the world.

Judas is an exception predicted by Scripture.
But Judas was once one of them.

Judas' apostasy was not a surprise to God.
Indeed, he was part of God's plan from the beginning.

There is a sense in which John views Judas as the last apostate.

Paul and John use different vocabulary to talk about apostasy.
Paul will talk about some in Galatia as "fallen from grace," (Galatians 5:4)
and Hebrews speaks of those who once "shared in the Holy Spirit;" (Heb 6:4)
both suggesting a sense in which the apostates were once actually part of us.

But John insists that "they went out from us, but they were not of us;
for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." (1 Jn 2:19)

John's discussion of apostasy is doubtless conditioned by Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Jesus will never lose any of his people—except Judas.

Judas is the last apostate.

After Judas, all who belong to Christ will be preserved by the Father,
because they are kept in his name.

And the proof of this is that everyone who goes out from us
was never really of us in the first place.

From the standpoint of our experience in history, the apostates were once a part of us.

But from the standpoint of election in eternity, the apostates were never a part of us at all.

c. As Jesus Comes to the Father, the Eleven Are No Longer 'of' the World (v13-16)

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ^[a] ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Jesus recognizes that the apostles are going to face trouble.

He had concluded his sermon at the end of chapter 16
by saying that in this world you will have trouble –
but take heart, I have overcome the world!

Now they must go forth and preach and pray.

Word and Prayer must go together.

In Acts 6, when the twelve appoint seven others to care for the church in Jerusalem,
they say that their task is to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

They understood that their task was not merely preaching,
but also praying.

Jesus said “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Put simply, Jesus is commanding them to pray that the kingdom of God would come.

Clearly in verse 15 there is a reference back to the traditional Lord’s Prayer –
“keep them from evil.” (or, from the evil one).

We do not pray that we will avoid all trouble.

In this world we will have trouble!

But we do pray – as our Lord prayed! –

that his Father will keep us from the evil one –

that he will protect us and deliver us in the day of our trouble.

And we have all confidence in asking this!

Because Jesus has conquered the world!

He has overcome!

d. Sanctify Them in Truth as I Send Them into the World (v17-19)

¹⁷ Sanctify them^[b] in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself,^[c] that they also may be sanctified^[d] in truth.

3. The Glory of the Son in Those Who Believe Through the Apostles’ Word (v20-26)

We’ll finish John 17 next week.

But I would like to close by reflecting upon what we have seen so far.
I have said that this prayer is a model for us.

How?

Jesus is the Son of God.

Of course the Father gives him whatever he asks.
There is only one sentence in this whole prayer that we can repeat with the same meaning:
“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”
The rest of the prayer is uniquely the prayer of the only begotten Son of God.

How is it a model for us?

Because it de-centers us.

It completely annihilates our self-centered prayer life,
and our narrow requests,
and forces us back to the true center.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.”

What are we supposed to ask for?

Look at Jesus’ prayer.

We are to pray that the glory of the Father and the Son
would be magnified.

We are to pray for those whom the Father has given the Son—
The church.

We are to pray that God would keep them in his name.

We are to pray that they might be one,

so that the world would know that the Father sent the Son.

We are to pray that the world would believe in Jesus.

What is the center of this prayer?

The glory of God and the salvation of his people.

Now go back and look at your own prayer life.

Does it look somewhat similar?

Or are you in a different world?

Are your prayers inward focused on small things,

or do you lift up your eyes to heaven

and see as in a glass darkly the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

There was a reason why I mentioned posture at the beginning.

I wonder if our physical posture in prayer has any effect on the content of our prayers.

If our physical posture is inward and downward,

then why should we be surprised when our prayers reflect that?

Obviously physical posture alone cannot correct a spiritual problem,

but there is nothing wrong with using our bodies

to remind us of what our minds should be doing!

There are times when your focus needs to be inward and downward,

especially when you are confessing your sins to God,

but especially in our intercessions with the Father,

the focus needs to be more outward and upward..

A lot of our prayer requests are for the sick, and for our daily labors.

These are good things to pray for

–so long as the focus remains on the glory of God and the salvation of his people.

Whatever you pray for,

orient it around the glory of God and the salvation of his people.

There is no subject that is inappropriate for prayer.

Anything and everything that happens under the sun is a fit subject for
adoration, confession, thanksgiving or supplication–
so long as Christ is the center.

But, of course, if Christ is the center,

then we may find that what *we* consider important changes.

Please continue to pray for the sick,

but also, pray for those who are tempted

pray for those who are in danger of falling away,

because we must ask the Father to keep his people in his name.

Pray for the unity of the church!

Pray for the proclamation of the gospel.

Pray that the kingdom of Jesus would come –
in your life – and in mine.