

Sunday Morning Message

April 17, 2016

Looking unto Jesus and His Prayer for His Disciples

Text for Today's Message – John 17

Congregational Reading – John 17:15 - 18

Our theme for the year is *Looking unto Jesus*

Our theme verses are Hebrews 12:1 – 2

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

This year, we will be preaching messages from the 4 gospel accounts in the New Testament and we will be closely examining the life of our Lord Jesus Christ while He walked the earth, learning the principles that He teaches us, specifically looking for ways to apply His life to our own.

Introduction to Chapter 17

In John chapters 14 – 17, Jesus is preparing for his departure from the earth. In just a short time He would be crucified, and then He would rise from the grave, and a few days after that, He would ascend up into Heaven. In these chapters Jesus comforts His disciples, He prepares His disciples for their ministry on earth without His physical presence, and in chapter 17, He prays for the disciples that were with Him on earth, and for His disciples today as well.

This is the real Lord's Prayer. The prayer that Jesus taught the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount is what we call the model prayer. It was a pattern that could be followed with our prayers today. Had that been a prayer from Jesus to His Father, He would have never said, "forgive us our sins (or debts)".

This is a beautiful passage of Scripture. It is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible, yet it only takes about 3 minutes to read.

"In John 17 the veil is drawn aside, and we are admitted with our great High Priest into "the holiest of all." Here we approach the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, therefore it behooves us to put off our shoes from off our feet, listening with humble, reverent and prepared hearts, for the place whereon we now stand is indeed holy ground." (A. W. Pink)

J. Vernon McGee said that he felt himself to be totally inadequate to deal with this prayer.

This was the favorite passage of the great reformer John Knox, and it was the passage that he requested his wife read to him on his deathbed.

"This is truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it" (Martin Luther).

This is the great prayer of intercession, and it gives us a glimpse of the Lord's ministry for us today:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." - (Hebrews 7:25)

He intercedes for us today. You may have forgotten to pray today, but He didn't, and God always hears His prayers:

"...Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always..." - (John 11:41-42)

There are two doctrines that will show up again and again in this passage:

1 The Doctrine of Election (v 2; v 6; v 12; v 24)

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." - (John 6:44)

The Elect are those that have received the Lord Jesus as Saviour – those that have placed their faith in Christ.

I believe in the doctrine of election, though I do not fully understand it. I believe in the sovereignty of God; but I also believe in:

- a the free will of man
- b the unlimited atoning power of Christ's blood
- c the legitimate offer of salvation to all men – including those that would reject it.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." - (1 Peter 1:2)

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." - (Romans 8:29-30)

There won't be a man in Heaven that will be there without receiving Christ as His Saviour. Nobody will be in Heaven against His will, and conversely, there will be nobody in Hell that have truly called upon the name of the Lord.

God offers salvation to all men, but most will not come to Christ:

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." - (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." - (2 Peter 3:9)

2 The Doctrine of the Deity of Christ

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." - (John 17:5)

"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." - (John 17:13)

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." - (John 17:16)

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." - (John 17:18)

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:" - (John 17:22)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." - (John 1:1-2)

This prayer that Jesus prays to His Father can be divided into three sections:

I His Prayer for Himself (vs. 1- 5)

v. 1 "lifted up his eyes" – not what we would consider a typical prayer posture. He may have been standing or walking.

"the hour" – seven times the word *hour* is used to refer to the time that Jesus would go to the cross. The first time we see it is at the wedding in Cana (John 2:4)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." - (John 1:1-2)

This was the hour that Christ would show the whole world how much He loved them.

"glorify thy son" – Christ will be glorified through His own death. It is because of His

death that believers adore Him. He would also be glorified through the resurrection.

The Father would be glorified because the Son was wholly submitted to the will of the Father.

v. 2 “given him power over all flesh” – He has “all power” – He could have forced the world to bow to Him, but He didn’t.

v. 3 “that they might know thee” –

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” - (Philippians 3:10)

v. 4 “I have finished the work” – not the work of redemption – that will come when He says, “it is finished” on the cross; but he is finishing His earthly ministry – He now begins His ministry of intercession.

There was nothing left that needed to be done with the disciples before Jesus went to the cross.

v. 5 – regarding His glory – He never laid aside His deity, but He laid aside the prerogatives of His deity. He was robed in human flesh. His glory was veiled by His flesh. Some of the disciples would catch a glimpse of the glorified Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and John would see it again on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1)

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” - (Philippians 2:6-7)

II His Prayer for His Disciples (vs. 6 – 19)

Notice in v 9 that He does not pray for the world. He intercedes on behalf of believers. He did everything that He can do for the world – He died for them, but He will not intercede for them unless they belong to Him.

Notice also that it says that “they have kept thy word”, and “they have believed” – Jesus is basing His statements on what He knows about these men, and He knows all that they will be in the future. These are men that will die for the Lord, though they will have some weak moments. Thomas will doubt and Peter will deny, but these men will recover, and will glorify the Lord with their lives.

You may be wondering how God could love somebody like you. Well, first of all it’s all through His grace, but secondly, we must remember that we are works in progress. God is not finished with us yet. I am not now what God will someday make me to be.

1 He prays for unity (v. 11)

- 2 He prays for joy (v. 13)
- 3 He prays for protection (v. 15)
- 4 He prays for their sanctification (vs. 16 – 19)

Sanctify means to be set apart; consecrated; dedicated for the purposes of God

"This world is not my home. I'm just a passing through."

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" - (Philippians 3:20)

Justification is immediate. Sanctification is a lifelong process

Notice that the tool that God uses to "set apart" or sanctify believers is the Word of God.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." - (Romans 12:1-2)

III His Prayer for All Believers (vs. 20 – 26)

- 1 (vs. 20 – 22) He prays for unity for believers today as well – not some kind of ecumenical mingling of all who call themselves Christians, but a unity among true believers. However, unity at the expense of Bible doctrine is not unity, it is compromise.
- 2 (vs. 23 – 24) He declares His will regarding the future state of believers.
- 3 (vs. 25 – 26) He declares that the love of God will be in them, and it is – we simply need to allow the indwelling Holy Spirit of God to work in us.

Conclusion

It is comforting to know that Jesus spent the last few hours of His life comforting and preparing the disciples. It is also comforting to know that Jesus interceded on our behalf (my behalf) right before He went to the cross; and He continues His ministry of intercession for us today.

*"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**" - (Hebrews 7:25)*