

## What Jesus Prayed For Us

Scripture Text: John 17:20-26

### Introduction

During our recent Bible Conference, we were reminded us of many things we have heard before. We need to be a church that does not focus on material things, but to be a people who love God and love others. We were challenged to not just send our money for missions, but to do missions. Missions is simply helping other people in need, and all of us can do that. You do not need to go to another country to be a missionary. You are a missionary right now. You just need to reach out to others around you who are in need. The greatest need, of course, is for others to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We were also challenged by the greatest question Jesus ever asked, "Do we love Him?" If we say we love God, how do we show our love? Are we following Him? Are we obeying Him? Are we loving others as He has loved us?

Today, we are looking at a prayer Jesus made. It is not just any prayer. Many call it Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. In this prayer, Jesus prayed for Himself. Jesus was about to be betrayed, arrested, beaten and then crucified. He prayed to the Father in Heaven that He would glorify His Father in Heaven. Jesus then prayed for His disciples. He knew they were about to face tough times. He would not be with them, so He prayed the Father would keep them safe. Look at the following verse:

**John 17:11** <sup>11</sup> *And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.*

What did Jesus pray here? That His disciples would be one. Think about what was about to happen. Jesus was going to be killed. The disciples were going to be scattered. The church was going to face persecution. They needed to be united. A house divided cannot stand. Jesus then prayed for "those who will believe in [Him] through their word." That is you and me. Jesus prayed for those who would believe in Him. He prayed for us.

One thing we should recognize is the importance of prayer in Jesus' ministry. Jesus would often get alone to pray. Prayer is our direct line with the Father. We need to pray. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus was praying for His disciples and He was praying for us. When we go through difficult times, do we think of others, or do we think primarily of ourselves? If I was about to endure what Jesus did, I would probably be praying a lot more for myself. Jesus had love and concern for others. Even though He was about to endure a very painful experience, Jesus prayed for others. There are three elements to Jesus' prayer I would like to mention: 1) we should be one with Christ, 2) we should be one with each other, and 3) we should be one with a mission.

### One With Christ

We see these three elements in verses twenty and twenty-one:

**John 17:20–21** <sup>20</sup> *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

What did Jesus pray here? That we would be one. He already prayed that His disciples would be one. Now He prayed that those who would come to believe in Him, you and me, would be one *in Him*. Many people get this part of Christianity wrong. They believe that if they say a prayer or attend church faithfully or give their money, time or talents to God, then they have done enough. They want to compartmentalize their lives with God. They will give some area of their life to God, but not another. God does not want part of you — He wants all of you. He does not want your name on the church roll. He does not want your money, or your talents, or anything else you want to give. God wants you! If He does not have you, then you can take everything else and just keep it. He is not the least concerned with what you give Him until you have first given yourself to Him.

Maybe you say to yourself that you are “one in Christ”. Maybe you say to yourself that you are united with Him. Once you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are saying that He is *Lord of all*. You are saying that it is His way and not your way. Every member of God’s church is united in Christ, and from that union, should flow every thought, decision, and action we do. If you say you are united in Christ, then what do your actions say about it? How is your relationship with Christ? Does your life show a oneness with Him? When people look at you, do they see Christ? He does not want the left overs you give Him. He wants you all in or He does not want you at all. Remember what He said about being lukewarm. He would spit you out. (Revelation 3:15)

Our vertical relationship with God must be right for our horizontal relationships with one another to be right. This goes for our marriages, our families, our friendships, and our church family. A church’s unity results from each member being united in God. If there is disunity in the body of Christ, then ask yourself if you are united in Christ. Are you where you need to be with Him? Are you loving Him as you ought? The answer to that question should be the same for all of us. We could all love God better. If your relationship with Christ is not where it should be, then pray to Him to show you what needs to change and then repent of it. If your relationship with Christ is not where it should be, then your relationships with others will be off. This leads us to the next point.

## One With Each Other

Gena and I spent a couple of days at Fort Caswell this weekend getting refreshed and learning to be a better spouse to one another. While we were there, we connected with other Christian men and women who were able to relate to our struggles and concerns. One thing we discovered is that attendance is down in churches everywhere. It is not just here, but everywhere. We also found a similar problem in just about all churches: *they are not loving one another*. They are not united in love for one another. This is strange to me, even though I have experienced it and have been a part of it. If Christ so loved us to die on a cross when we deserved death and condemnation, then why do we

withhold love from each other? Why do we withhold fellowship from those who genuinely love Jesus when God has extended fellowship to us wretched sinners?

The basis for Jesus prayer for unity of the disciples and for all those who will believe in Him, is the unity He had with the Father. We ought to be united in love and in purpose as the Father and Son are united. Would the Father say to His Son, “I do not like what you are doing, so just get away from me?” Would the Son say to the Father, “I do not want to follow You any more, so I am leaving?” Would the Father or the Son ever not love one another so perfectly that they cease to be in fellowship? No! If we are His church, should we be any different? No! I have heard stories of people in church who threaten the pastor or other members in the church because things are not going a certain way. Is that supposed to honor God? Is that being one with Christ? Is that being one with each other? No, it is not!

If you say you love God and follow Jesus Christ, then ask yourselves: How well do you love others? How well have you treated those who might be a little different from you or a little difficult to be around or not exactly the kind of people you want to associate? Is the church about Christ or is about you? The way some Christians act, it is clear that church is all about them. The greatest danger to a church is not from without — it is from within. The Devil already has those in the world. He is working on those in the church. If He can sow seeds of discord in the church, then he has accomplished his purpose. Are you being a tool of Satan or a servant of Christ? Which is it? Of course, no one would say they are intentionally trying to hurt the church. I believe we all *think* we have good intentions. But think about these things:

- Do you avoid other church members instead of talking with them about a problem?
- Do you blame others in the church for a problem rather than looking to yourself?
- Do you believe it would be better for some to leave than for us to work together?
- Is having things your way more important than seeking God’s will?
- Are you seeking God’s will?

How can we be one with Christ when we are not one with each other? How can we say we love God if we cannot love those around us? If we are in discord, we are giving Satan the opportunity he needs to destroy God’s work. This brings me to the final point.

### One With Mission

The third area of oneness that Jesus prayed in this passage has to do with our mission as the church. Once we are united in Christ and we are united with each other, the church is equipped to show Jesus to an unbelieving world. Once we are unified, we will be able to bear witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God sent to save an unbelieving world. Twice in this passage, Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one so that the world would *see Him*. Look at the verse below:

**John 17:21** <sup>21</sup> *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

Jesus prayed that His people, the Church, would be united in Christ and united with one another so that the world may believe in Him. Jesus prayed that the church would be so united that through their unity the world would know about Him. It is a beautiful thing when a church is so together that those outside the church say, "I know those people are all about Jesus." People are looking for hope in this dark world and the church has the answer. Do you know who is hurt most by a church which fights amongst itself? The unbeliever. God's people are more concerned about the building, the flowers, parking lot, the cemetery, or any other material thing, and the Gospel gets lost. When we are fighting amongst ourselves instead of reaching others for Christ, we are not doing the Lord's work. It is nothing but a distraction that Satan is happy to use.

Surely those in the church who endure conflict are hurt by it. Those who leave the church because of conflict in the church are also hurt by it. But, the greatest tragedy of a church that is in conflict is those who will never hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. People in the community will never see the Jesus whom the Father sent to be their Savior because His church is too busy caring about other things. Folks, how can the world see Jesus if His people are not showing Him? How can the world see Jesus if all they see is a people more concerned about things than Christ? How can they see Jesus? We say we love Christ and we say we follow Him, but what do our actions reveal?

Jesus prayed to His Father in Heaven, "The world does not know you, but, I know you, and these disciples know that you have sent me." Why would Jesus mention that the world does not know the Father but His disciples know that the Father sent Jesus? Might it be because His disciples will so love Him and love each other, that they could not but help tell others about Him? Might it be that the disciples would love others so much, that they would put away pride, hate, bickering, and selfish desires and reach the world for Jesus Christ? The Church is not about us. The Church is about Christ and we need to get serious about showing Christ to the world and not ourselves.

## **Conclusion**

I recently came across an interesting saying that is oftentimes displayed at weddings. It said, "Pick a seat, not a side. We are all family." That attitude applies to the church. There ought to be no sides in a church, except for God's side. We ought not to ask whether someone is on our side. We need to all be asking are we on God's side. Are we following His will? If we have accepted Christ, then we are members of His Body. If we have accepted Christ, then we are all children of His family. Do you hear the "His" part in that? It is about Him, not us. Are we going to be one as His church or not? I would like to close with the following thoughts for you to think about:

## **Meditation**

- How can I be "one in Christ"?
- What sin do I need to repent in order to be closer to Him?
- How can I better demonstrate "oneness" with my fellow church members?
- What act of unkindness do I need to repent?

- Who do I need to forgive or seek forgiveness in order to be one with them?
- How can I better show Jesus to others?

We will close with the hymn Blessed Assurance. In that hymn, it speaks about “perfect submission, perfect delight.” What area of your life do you need to surrender to Him today? What do you need to change in your life to have perfect delight in Him?