

Christ's Prayer for His People

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 17, please. John 17. Our prayers are windows, just like these windows.

Our prayers are windows into our hearts. They give us a look inside to see what's there. The Bible says, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

And that's never more true than when we're praying. We see what's on a man's heart when we hear him pray. And that's not only true of you and me, that's true of the Lord Jesus, the perfect Son of Man.

And here in John 17, we have this prayer of the Lord Jesus. And through this window, we get a look right into the heart of Jesus and see what's on his heart. Now, our Lord had a few things on his mind and heart this night.

He's just hours away from the betrayal. And then the whole ordeal with the trial and the beatings, the whippings and the crucifixion to follow.

[1:12] In which he'd receive man's worst and God's worst. And yet, we find our Savior not wholly taken up with himself, but actually thinking and praying for us.

What a Savior. He had us on his heart as he poured out his prayer to the Father. And he states within his prayer just who he's praying for in verse 9. He says here, I pray for them.

I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me. For they are yours. Now, if you recognize the context, he's speaking here of his apostles.

Those that the Father had given him. And he had given them his word. And they had believed on him. And they had obeyed him. And he says, I'm praying for them.

So the first application is to his own apostles. But notice it's not only the apostles that he prays for. Verse 20. I do not pray for these alone.

[2:19] These 11 who are still left around the table in the upper room. But also for those who will believe in me through their word. Brothers and sisters, that's us.

If you're a Christian tonight, it's because you have believed in the words of the apostles. They've given us the gospel. And we've come to believe on the Savior.

And so Jesus was praying for us on the night of his arrest. What a blessing to have the Son of God praying for you.

One of the most encouraging things anyone can say to me is, John, I'm praying for you. And that happens quite often here. You encourage me with that.

To know that my poor name is being mentioned before the throne that rules the universe. Rules everything concerning me, my heart, my life, my family. And from that throne, my name is being heard as you pray for me.

[3:21] There's only one thing more encouraging than that. And it's that Jesus Christ is praying for John Heaney. If on your way to the kitchen tomorrow morning, you glanced in to your living room on your way through, if you do go by your living room on the way to the kitchen, and you saw the Son of God on his knees praying, and you paused and heard your name being mentioned to the Father, would it change the way you headed into your day tomorrow?

Would you go with any more confidence? Any more expectation of help? Any more joy in the Lord? Peace?

Whatever happens, it is well. He's praying for me. Well, that's reality. Not here in your living room, but from the Father's own right hand.

He is praying for you. You who are his children. Because Jesus lives forever. He has a permanent priesthood, and therefore he is able to save completely those who come unto God through him.

because he always lives to intercede for them. So here in John 17, we listen in to his prayer for us. It's a model prayer of his high priestly work that is done now in heaven.

[4:43] He's already praying as if he's coming back to the Father, and this is a prototype of his high priestly work, what he's praying for us today. So tonight there's just four points, because there's four petitions that he makes in his prayer for us.

He's already prayed about himself in the first part of his prayer, and now he turns to praying for us. And his first petition for us is protect them. Protect them.

Verses 11 through 15. I will remain in the world no longer, but these are still in the world, and I am coming to you, Holy Father.

I am coming to you, Holy Father. Protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name that you gave me.

None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction, so that Scripture should be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

[5:59] I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

Twice in his prayer, he starts with this petition, Protect them, Father. Protect them. Now, get the picture. Jesus has just walked on this earth for 33 years, and now he's leaving it.

He's coming back to the Father. And so it's like he's coming, having been in the world, he's now leaving that place. And he says, Father, I'm leaving them in the world.

Oh, protect them. First thing out of his mouth, protect them. And we wonder, right? Whoa, what must it be like back there, where he's been for 33 years? The first thing he wants is our protection. No one knows better than Jesus, the dangers in this world, or our own vulnerability and weakness to temptation. And knowing what he knows, he prays, first of all, that we would be protected.

[7:12] Divine protection. Jesus likens us to sheep. I'm sending you forth as sheep among wolves. Why does he use a sheep to compare us to?

I believe above all other reasons, it's because a sheep is absolutely defenseless of itself. It has no means of protecting itself. A lion has its powerful claws, and a porcupine has its needles, and a turtle has a shell, and a skunk has a scent, and even birds have wings to escape.

But the sheep has nothing to protect itself from danger. All of its safety depends upon the protection of the shepherd. We are like sheep.

No protection of our own. And where are we? We're in a world that hates us. He's just said, I've given them your word, and the world hates them.

And it's a world with a busy devil. The world is not a safe place for the sheep to be.

[8:27] Maybe the zoo would be a safe place for the sheep. But not this world. Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? No.

No, it's not. Now, what is it that makes this world such a dangerous place to the sheep of God?

Well, he tells us, My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

There is an evil one in this world, a real devil who hates the sheep and does all he can to steal, kill, and destroy them. And Jesus knows his rage firsthand.

He wrestled with him in the garden, didn't he? He wrestled with him in the wilderness. Throughout his life, they're on Calvary. And it's he who teaches us.

When you pray, you say, Keep us from, do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

[9:30] And Peter knows it as well, and with his scars to prove it, he warns, Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. So, pray, protect.

Protect me. Paul reminds us our struggle is never against other people alone, never against his flesh and blood. But that behind the flesh and blood are spiritual powers of darkness in the heavenly realms, Satan and his host.

And because we can't see him, we're likely to forget him. Have you thought about the devil this week? He's after you. Have you even prayed lately?

Protect me against the devil and his temptations. You see, we don't see him, so do we even think to pray this? Oh, how kind of Jesus that he prays to the Father.

Protect them. Protect them. From the evil one. He's a supernatural enemy. Not only invisible, but supernatural. There's no match for him.

[10:35] On earth is not his equal, Luther says. He's an experienced foe. He's been at it for 6,000 years. And he knows human nature better than any of us do.

He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your weakness. He knows what days of the week that you're weakest. And what time of day you're weakest. And what buttons to push.

And what you like. And what you don't like. And so he goes into his workshop and he creates temptations with all he knows about you.

And he tempts you. And if Adam and Eve fell to his ploy in the state of perfection, what do we, sons and daughters of Adam, what kind of chance do we have of standing?

Our only hope. Yes, our all-sufficient hope is that Jesus prays for us. Father, protect them from the evil one. And so there's Peter that night and he's listening to Jesus' prayer.

[11:39] He hears this. And he's just fixing for a big battle with Satan. He's just hours away from a struggle with the fear of man in the courtyard of the high priest.

There'll be a servant girl here and some others there. They'll all be involved, but behind it will be the evil one. And Peter's going to fall hard and he's going to fail miserably.

But on this night, Jesus assures him, Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, just to shake you up every which way. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.

And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. You know, if Satan had his way with Peter, he would not have just denied his Lord three times, but four times, five times, ten times, twenty, fifty, a hundred.

He would have gone on denying his Lord all the way to hell. That's what the devil wants to do. He wants to destroy your faith. But Peter was protected and his faith was kept from being ultimately destroyed.

[12:55] How? What would be strong enough to stand against the evil? The prayers, the mighty prayers of Jesus. And so, yes, he does fall.

But he also goes out and weeps bitterly and repents and is restored and forgiven and helped and healed and becomes a real blessing to the church and warns us about the devil and his fiery darts and his prowling after us.

what do we owe, what do we owe then to the prayers of Jesus for our protection? Well, literally, our salvation, our perseverance to the end. We don't have a chance of making it through this world.

That place that he's just come through for 33 years, we don't have a chance making it through this same world unless he prays for us. And so, what a wonderful thing it is to know that Jesus is praying for us, for our protection against the evil.

And how many times this week were we protected? There we were. We were in a vulnerable situation. And at that point, had this certain temptation come, we had gone down.

[14:08] But someone was praying, knowing how much we can bear. And he did not let us be tempted above what we were able. We were in another situation and it was all becoming too much for us and suddenly a way of escape opens up in answer to his prayers.

We don't have a clue how many times we've been protected, do we? We see here and there, oh yeah, I see, he was protecting me, he was guarding me.

And for everyone that you can look back and see, there are tens and hundreds of times we've been protected by the prayers, the watchful prayers of our Savior.

Thank you, Jesus, that you pray for my protection. That's his first prayer. Secondly, he prays, sanctify them. We see this in verses 16 through 19.

Sanctify them. They're not of the world even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.

[15:14] As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them, I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified. Sanctify them.

Make them holy. Set them apart for yourself, O God. That's the burden of his heart as he prays for you and me. He wants his people to be holy like himself.

And yet, he's leaving us in a very unholy world, isn't he? That's what he tells us. We might think, well, if he wants us holy, he ought to just beam us up, take us away out of this unholy world.

But no, he says, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world. Why not? Because our mission is to the world. Verse 18, as you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

And that's the apostles and the church, all of us. We've been sent into the world. And so bringing the gospel to lost and dying sinners means contact with an unholy world.

[16:23] Jesus means it to be that way. He wants us in contact with the world without being conformed to it. Say, that's more than I can pull off.

How about you? Be in contact with the world all week long and not find your heart and mind being secretly, seductively, quietly, bit by bit conformed to it.

So Jesus prays, sanctify them. Make them holy. Think what glory comes to God to have a holy people right here in the midst of an unholy world.

To have a good apple in a barrel of bad apples. To have a holy man like Daniel in an unholy place like Babylon.

to have a holy woman in an unholy bremen. A holy young person in an unholy class.

[17:32] A holy man in an unholy work environment. What glory comes to Jesus? Leonard Ravenhill said the greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world to make that man holy to put him back into an unholy world and to keep him holy in it.

What glory comes to Jesus to have a holy bride in this unholy world? And so that's what he asks his father to do. Sanctify them Lord.

Sanctify them Father. Now the mission the mission requires it. Holiness is absolutely essential for our mission in the world.

And so a man shows up at your door selling diet pills and he's obviously a hundred pounds overweight. Are you buying? Or he's bald and he's selling some miracle hair grow formula.

Are you getting your wallet out? Or he's professing to be a Christian and telling you that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Saves from sin.

[18:51] And his life is a sinful wreck. Are you believing? You see holiness is absolutely essential to our mission which is to take the gospel into the world.

And we adorn that gospel. How? With a holy life. Life like our Savior. Our message to the world is Jesus saves from sin. He breaks the power of reigning sin.

He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. Oh yes, yes, that's our message. His blood availed for me.

Can you say that? Without a holy life and have the gospel adorned? No. So you either detract from the gospel message or you either detract or attract to it based on your holiness.

And so we're to be a walking billboard of the sin cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. Men can't argue with the power of a holy life.

[20:01] Spurgeon said, the beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world next to the might of the Spirit of God. How is it that the might of the Spirit of God is revealed to this world if not through the beauty of holiness in us who were nothing but sinners when he found us?

So it's only holy men who will do this unholy world good. Paul challenges Timothy that if he cleanses himself he will be made holy, useful to the master, and prepared to do any good work.

Timothy, you're only as useful to the master as you are holy. So cleanse yourself from these sins.

Come to the fountain, wash and be cleansed, and be useful to the master.

Not a worthless servant like we heard this morning. Useful to the master. So here we are on the eve of sending Jesus, is on the eve of sending his disciples into the world on this gospel mission.

What does he pray for? Not more funds, more money to fund their labors. Not more giftedness in speaking. Not more prestige in the world's eyes.

[21:16] holiness, but for more holiness. As you go into the world, you rub shoulders with them tomorrow morning. What's your great need?

It's greater likeness to Jesus. And that's what Jesus prays for. Make them holy, Lord. Make them holy, Father. And notice his instrument to make us holy.

It's his own word. verse 17. Sanctify them by the word. Your word is truth. So we have God's truth in a book. The holy scriptures.

And our commitment to holiness is no greater than our commitment to the book. Because we're sanctified by the truth. His word is truth.

And so we must know this book. We must understand it. We must believe it. we must live it. We must think it.

[22 : 18] There's everything here that we need for life and for godliness, for holiness. It is useful for training in righteousness. That's holiness.

It's here that we see the glory of Jesus Christ. And beholding him, we are changed into his likeness from one stage of glory to another. So sanctify them through your truth.

Your word is truth. Let's never forget the practical purpose of the word of God. Why do we have Bibles? Why did God do that? Why do he put it in a book? Why do he give us access to them?

! Through your truth your word is true.

So what changes have you made recently? Just because it said something here. And so you can't go on watching that. And you can't go on running around chumming with this person or that person because of something you saw in here.

[23 : 49] And you will guard your heart in this area and that. You'll stop doing things. You'll start doing other things because the word of God is sanctifying you. That's what Jesus prays for.

He's praying that we would be sanctified. Jesus did more than pray for our sanctification. He lived and died for it.

He says in verse 19, for their sakes I sanctify myself. I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified. Do you know if Jesus was not perfectly holy?

His death for us would not have meant a hill of beans? Wouldn't have done us any good whatsoever. He dies for himself. He dies for his own sin. He had to be absolutely pure and spotless, holy, in order for his sacrifice, his death, to do good to us sinners.

So he says, for their sakes, I sanctify myself. He kept himself holy. He was hungry, folks. He hadn't eaten for 40 days, and he's tempted to turn the stones to bread.

[25 : 02] But for your sakes, for your sake, he said, no. He'd rather starve than sin, that he might lay down his life, a perfect substitute for your sins.

this is our Jesus. For their sakes, I sanctify myself. Flavel says, so in love is Christ with holiness that he will buy it for us with his own blood.

He loves holiness and he wants us holy. Have you ever thought that Jesus Christ is praying for your holiness from the throne he is saying, father sanctify John Heaney.

He needs to be more holy. Have you thought of him praying for you to be made more holy? Can we hear our Savior pleading with his father for our personal holiness and not be moved with gratitude to pray the same and to strive after the same?

What did you pray for this month? Did you ask God to make you holy through his word? Robert Murray McShane often prayed make me as holy as a redeemed sinner this side of heaven can be.

[26 : 22] Where do you get that prayer? Well it was born in his heart by the spirit of God but it's the same prayer that his father is hearing from his son. Sanctify them.

Protect them. Sanctify them. Thirdly unify them. Verses 21 to 23. that all of them may be one father just as you are in me and I am in you may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one I in them and you in me may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me how important is unity in this church in the body of Christ how important it is it is to you how important is it to Jesus Christ well we see a bit here how important it is to Jesus don't we and you know it as well fathers you enjoy coming home to a family that's working together helping each other the whole ethos and atmosphere of the family is just raised when there's unity at home you know Jesus wants the same for his family so he prays for it father make them one make them one and they praise not once but five times in this prayer breathe out his heart to his father remember the window his prayer make them one five times he cries in this prayer so let this emphasis in our

Lord's prayer be reflected in our own priorities remember earlier in that very same day the disciples had been arguing among themselves on who was the greatest which one of us is the greatest wouldn't it be harder to go back and pick up that argument after you've heard Jesus praying for you make them one father how many of our arguments would just dry up at the root if we remember Jesus is praying for us to be made!

the and that's the pattern of our unity our unity is to reflect the glorious unity in the trinity he's praying that we would be one as they are one you see how the stakes are raised that means that our unity or lack thereof can either show off the unity in the deity or detract from the glory of God's unity we are to be a reflection of the unity that exists in the members of the

[29:59] Godhead no wonder Jesus prays so intensely unify them the revelation of God's glory is seen in his church so the pattern is the unity of the Godhead the source of our unity is our own individual union and unity with Jesus Christ we're united to him I'm united to Jesus you're united to Jesus and so that is what brings you and me together the source of our unity is that we're both united to the same head we have the same father the same savior verse 21 that they also may be one in us I in them you in me there's this union with Christ he's the great unifying factor why are we one body here tonight we have different ages different interests different all the differences that are found in the world what brings us together it's it's

Christ you're united to Jesus I'm united to him we're together here tonight and it's good to remember that when our relationships with each other get strained that the same father that in eternity past chose me chose her the same savior that spilled his blood on Calvary for me spilled! it for him and the same holy spirit that lives in me has made her his temple and that's the kind of unity that we're to have a unity patterned after that in the God head reflective and growing out of our unity with God ourselves and the source of unity being God means that there's power there's love patience there's kindness there's returning a kind word for a harsh word where do you get that kind of power well you get it by your union with Christ you're drawing on him so he's the source of our unity what's the effect of the unity so that the world may believe that you have sent me Jesus says to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you've loved me so there's a there's a there's a specific reason

Jesus asked that we be unified it's that the world might believe that he's not that the message of Christ and the message of the gospel is not another false report about another religious leader who comes along and leads his little group and vanishes off the earth they may believe!

that you really sent me that I am God the son who I said I am how are they to believe that when they come in contact with a group of Christians and they see that group as diverse as they are loving each other praying together working through problems together disagreeing together but loving each other working together laying down their lives for each other praying serving together and the world says wait a minute that's not the way the world operates there's something more here than what is found in the world maybe ought to think twice about the message of those people could it be that this Jesus they talk about really has been sent by God he really has come to the earth Jesus says it's through our unity that they will come to believe that the father has sent me you see our evangelistic mission to the world is never far from the heart of our savior in this prayer it keeps peeking out it keeps poking its head up!

[34:07] burden for the world why is he not taking us out of this dangerous place where the devil is in a world that hates us why is he leaving us here it's because we've got a mission to go to this world and so he prays father protect them from the evil one and father as you sent me into the world I'm sending them in the world and the world is an unholy place so sanctify them make them and keep them holy that they might have a redeeming influence upon this world and father unify them so that the world may come to know that you have sent me according to Jesus the thing that will truly impress the world is not how many celebrities have become Christians not how many professional athletes own the name of

Christ we thank God for every single one of them but that is not what Jesus says will impress the world it's not how good looking we are how rich we are how smart we are but how much we love one another by this will all men know that you are my disciples that you have love for one another and by this they will come to believe that the father has sent me if you're one one like we are one the world so used to divisions and hatred and strife and quarreling that it sits up and takes notice where it sees the supernatural power of love and unity among the people of God so that's the unity Jesus prays for that the world may know that he's been sent from the father may our witness in this world have the undergirding of love and unity to demonstrate that this isn't just another old wives tale this gospel we're telling it's true

Jesus has come from heaven protect them father sanctify them unify them lastly says glorify them verse 24 father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory the glory you have given me because you love me before the creation of the world if you're a child of

God those are amazing words that he prays for you father I want him to be with me where I am I don't want her there anymore I want her here with me it's the desire that is found in the heart of a bride or a fiancée for his soon to be bride there's distance between them now and he wants it gone don't want her there and me here

I want her here with me and the son of God is saying that to his father about his people I want did you hear that I want there is a want in the heart of the son of God tonight there's an unfilled desire unfulfilled desire in the heart of the son of God tonight he's been glorified with the father he's there at his right hand with the glory that God had given him before the creation of the world he's still not satisfied there's something else that he wants and what he wants is you his blood bought ones to be with him to see his glory the glory he had with the father before the creation of the world so united is Jesus with his people that until they're with him his own glorification is incomplete I want them to be with me I want them to be with me glorify them with me am I as anxious to be with him as he is to be with me are you as anxious to be with him as he is to be with you well if we understand this verse so right it changes our view of death for the believer doesn't it because whenever a believer dies another installment of Jesus prayer is fulfilled he gets what he wants I want her to be with me and she goes to be with him forever and ever to see his glory to worship him well that's heaven to be with Jesus if you don't have a new heart you wouldn't be in heaven for more than five minutes and you won't out because if you don't have a heart for [39:30] Jesus here you won't have a heart for him there you must be born again to enjoy heaven such are its pleasures the lamb you see is all the glory of Emmanuel's land no eye has seen no ear has heard neither has entered into the imagination what God has prepared for those who love him but it all focuses on his son so you must come to the son you must have life in him now you will be prepared for your death and it will take you to be with him so what do we do with this prayer of Jesus we said at the outset it's a window into his heart I trust we know a little bit more tonight of what's on the heart of Jesus tonight not just 2,000 years ago on the night of his arrest what's he praying!

well at the least should it not inform our prayers you ever wonder what should I pray for you ever come to your devotions and it's time to pray what should I pray for here's four things here's four things that are very important in fact they're so important these are the four things Jesus prays for us I trust that these will be the points that we will be praying for and then if he is so passionate about these four things should we not do anything about them not only praying for them but pursuing these things my protection so I don't just run into temptation I guard my step I guard my heart my holiness through the word so I open the word and I meditate and memorize it and seek to live by it my unity so I call up my sister and have her over and we talk about the things of the Lord that we have in common call up my brother in Christ and seek to encourage him and grow in our love and unity for each other these are the things that are important in heaven they're dear to our savior may they be more dear to us and may we wednesday night as we come together we'll be praying for these things for each other things that Jesus has on his prayer list well may we pray and seek the same for ourselves now to him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God our savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory and majesty power and authority before all ages now and forever more amen amen