
JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

THE GREATEST PRAYER

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on September 9, 2018

INTRODUCTION

If you could hear Jesus pray for you, what would you expect to hear? Would He pray for your health? How about your safety? Maybe your family relationships? Surely, Jesus cares about the ills of your community's, your state's, and your nation's interests? It seems as though Christ cares about all of these things, but His chief concern is for the preservation, mission, and goal of His people in the world. In this message, we shall consider Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, and we shall observe and apply the profound contents of the greatest prayer ever prayed.

JOHN 17:1-26 (ESV)

1 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, 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.

4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

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.

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

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. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them 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, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 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.

22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to redeem His people in order to commission them in the world and to set them on a course for glory.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

- (1) JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (1-5)
- (2) THE BASIS FOR JESUS' PETITION (6-11A)
- (3) THE DISCIPLES' PRESERVATION & MISSION (11B-19)
- (4) JESUS INCLUDES ALL CHRISTIANS (20-23)
- (5) THE PERFECT END (24-26)
- (6) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (1-5)

- **One Petition:**
 - The Father glorify the Son, so that the Son may glorify the Father
 - “**glorify your Son** that the Son may glorify you” (1b) and “now, Father, **glorify me** in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (v5)
 - God shares His glory with no one (Is. 42:8)
 - Christ is the highest expression of God’s glory in the world (Jn. 1:14).
 - “**Now**” is Christ to be glorified... and this is a direct reference to the glory He intends to display at the cross

- **Four Truths:**

1. The Son is God and has authority over every human

- The Son existed “before the world [*kosmos*]” and was glorified “with [the Father]” (v5).
 - *kosmos* – is referring here to all created things
 - The Son existed before all things (Col. 1:16), and He is the Great I AM (Jn. 8:58); but the Son is distinct from the Father, for He is said to be “with” Him.
 - This calls to mind the distinctness and oneness of the Godhead, revealed in John 1:1-2.
 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”
 - The Word (the Son) is with God, showing distinction in the Godhead (i.e. the Son is not the Father, merely manifesting Himself differently or operating in a different mode).
 - The Word (the Son) is God, already existing in the beginning, showing the true divinity of the Son (i.e. the Son is, in fact, God).
 - The only way to maintain both distinctness and oneness (or unity) in the Godhead is to understand God as one in being (ontology) and three in person (personae)
- “you [Father] have given him [Son] authority over all flesh” (v2)
 - In submission to the Father’s will and decree, the Son has authority to act as God in the world.
 - Therefore, Jesus has divine jurisdiction over all things!

2. The Son has authority to give eternal life to the Father's people

- The Father gave the Son “authority over all flesh, to **give eternal life to all whom you** [the Father] **have given him** [the Son]” (v2)
- These who have eternal life are those “**the people whom you** [the Father] **gave me** [the Son] **out of the world**” (v6)
- Jesus said, “**Yours** [the Father's] **they were**, and **you** [the Father] **gave them to me** [the Son]” (v6)
 - There is a profound mystery here:
 - In some sense, the Father owned, possessed, claimed those to whom the Son gives eternal life before the Son gives them eternal life
 - These people are “**out of the world**”
 - They are recipients of “**eternal life**”
 - They belong to the Father and are given to the Son
 - Therefore, Jesus has authority to give eternal life to the Father's people!

3. Jesus was perfectly obedient and successful

- “I glorified you on earth, **having accomplished the work that you gave me to do**” (v4)
 - What was the work that Christ came to do?
 - The Scripture says elsewhere, “**when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons**” (Galatians 4:4–5).
 - Therefore, God's plan to save a people for His glory through the person and work of the Son was and is perfectly successful!

4. Eternal life is intrinsically tied to knowing God through the Son

- **“this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”** (v3)
 - This is as Jesus has already been saying, **“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned”** (John 15:5–6).
 - Therefore, eternal life IS knowing God through the Son!

Summary: Jesus began His prayer with a focus on Himself...

Segue: And now He turns His attention to the people the Father gave Him out of the world.

(2) THE BASIS FOR JESUS' PETITION (6-11A)

- ***Jesus lists at least four reasons He is praying for His people***
 - **“I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world...”** (v9)
 1. They belong to the Father
 - **“Yours they were...”** (v6) and **“they are yours”** (v9)
 - The Father has a special interest in those who belong to Him.
 2. They belong to the Son
 - These are **“the people whom you gave me out of the world”** (v6)
 - These are **“those whom you have given me”** (v9)
 - In fact, these are the shared possession of the Father and the Son:
 - **“All mine are yours, and yours are mine”** (v10)
 - The Son has great care for those who belong to Him.

3. They have received, kept, and believed the words of God
 - Jesus prayed, “**they have kept your word**” (v6)
 - “I have given them **the words** that you gave me, and **they have received them**” (v8)
 - “**they have believed** that you sent me” (v8)
 - While there is much that the disciples had yet to learn, they did believe that Jesus was the Son of God and that He had the words of life (Jn. 6:68-69)
 - This reality distinguished Jesus’ people from “**the world**”

4. Jesus was leaving the world, but they are remaining in it
 - “I am no longer in the world, **but they are in the world**” (v11)
 - Jesus’ entire farewell discourse has been about His departure and the care and commission of His people in His absence.

Summary: Jesus is praying for His people, whom He is leaving in the world...

Segue: **But what does He ask the Father to do for them?**

(3) THE DISCIPLES’ PRESERVATION & MISSION (11B-19)

- ***Jesus asks the Father to preserve His people***
 - “Holy Father, **keep them** in your name” (v11)
 - We know what Jesus means by “keep them” because of what He says in verse 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”
 - Therefore, we are to understand that Jesus is praying for the preservation of their soul.

- “...that **they may be one, even as we are one**” (v11)
 - Union with God is inherently related to union with one another.
 - Jesus does not merely pray that each individual person would be “kept” in God, but that they would be united with one another as the preserved people of God in the world.
 - There is much to be learned here, but it is clear that **God’s people are manifested in the world as a united body.**

- “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that **you keep them from the evil one**” (v15)
 - Even as Jesus is about to leave the world, He asks the Father not to remove His people from the world.
 - Let us not forget that the “**world has hated them because they are not of the world**” (v14).
 - So, it is instructive that Jesus prays for protection from the “**evil one**” while His people remain in the hostile world.
 - It is a sobering thing to read this petition in the great prayer of Christ for His people.
 - Jesus thinks the evil one is a danger
 - Jesus thinks His people need protection from the evil one
 - Jesus, Himself, takes responsibility for making sure this prayerful petition is offered

- **These petitions for preservation are not to be separated from the mission on which Jesus is sending His people**

- ***Jesus also asks the Father to empower His people for mission***
 - Jesus prayed, “As you [Father] sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (v18)
 - As Jesus “consecrated” or “sanctified” Himself for “their sake,” so Jesus is praying that the Father would “sanctify them” (v17-18).
 - To sanctify something is to set it apart for a special purpose.
 - In Jesus’ case, He was set apart from all other humans (sanctified) as God’s holy one through whom He would accomplish the work of redemption.
 - In the case of Jesus’ people, they are set apart from the world (sanctified) as commissioned by Christ...
 - **But to do what?**

(4) JESUS INCLUDES ALL CHRISTIANS (20-23)

- ***Jesus prays for you!***
 - “I do not ask for these only, but **also for those who will believe** in me **through their word**” (v20)
 - Do you believe the word of God, that came from the Son, that was preached by His disciples, that was written down by His Apostles?!
 - Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into the world to give eternal life to His people?
 - Do you belong to Christ, through the gracious gift of the Father?
 - Then join your hearts with me and rejoice! For this prayer is the very words of Christ spoken on your behalf!
 - Let us read and hear what intercessory petitions are being raised by our Savior even now... for He ever lives and pleads for us (Rom. 8:31-34)!

- **What does He ask for us?!**

- I think there we should include everything Jesus has said so far...
 - And I also think that this is the portion of the prayer where the mission of Christ's/God's people becomes more evident.

- ***What does Jesus ask the Father to empower us to do?***

- ... to be united in Christ for **evangelism** / the witness of the local church

“20 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that **they may be one** even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that **they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know** that you sent me and **loved them even as you loved me**” (v20-23).

- **Unity in the “word” we believe**

- We are the people of Christ if we “believe in [Him] through their [the Apostles/disciples] word” (v20)
- Their “word” is the “word” Christ “gave them” (v14), which is the “word [the Father] gave the Son” (v8)
 - And, this unity in the word we believe is “**so that the world may know and believe...**”

- **Unity in the “glory” we enjoy**

- We are the people of Christ if we receive His “glory” (v22) rather than a worldly “glory” (Jn. 5:44)
- Christ willingly and graciously shares His “glory” with His people so that they may be united by it and not fighting one another for it (v22).
 - And, this unity in the glory we enjoy is “**so that the world may know and believe...**”

- **Unity in the “love” we share**

- We are the people of Christ if we are “loved [by the Father] even as [the Father] loved [the Son]” (v23) and if “the love with which [the Father] loved [the Son]” is “in” us (v26)
 - This is how John put it elsewhere: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (1 John 3:16).
 - And, this unity in the love we share is “so that the world may know and believe...”

Summary: Jesus prays for His people to be His **witnesses in the world**, through their **peculiar believing** and **living** in the world...

Segue: **And what is His ultimate goal in all of this?**

(5) THE PERFECT END (24-26)

- **Jesus expresses His will** (*His purpose or intention*) **for His people**
 - “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be **with me where I am**, to **see my glory** that you have given me” (v24)
 1. Jesus **reunites sinners** with **God**
 - “I desire that they... be **with me** where I am”
 - Since Genesis 3, sinners have been barred from God’s presence, but Jesus prays that His people will be with Him, united with God the Father through the Son.
 2. The **greatest gift** that **Jesus gives** His people is **Himself**
 - “I desire that they...**see my glory** that you have given me”
 - God’s/Christ’s people see Him as glorious.
 - “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

- This beatific vision is the ultimate goal of everything.
 - “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because **we shall see him as he is**” (1 John 3:1-2)

Main point:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to redeem His people in order to commission them in the world and to set them on a course for glory.

(6) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe in this Jesus?

- a. Do you believe in the Jesus who is God?
- b. Do you believe in the Jesus who humbled Himself unto death and is glorified forevermore?
- c. Do you believe in the Jesus who preserves His people and commissions them to the task of being His witnesses in the world?
- d. Do you believe in the Jesus who offers a view of His own glory as the greatest reward?

2. Who are you?

- a. Are you among Christ's people?
 - i. Have you heard and believed the words of life?
 - ii. Do you live primarily as an ambassador for Christ in this world?
 - iii. Is Christ glorified in you? Do you seek His glory above your own?
- b. Or, are you among "the world"?
 - i. Have you neglected or rejected His words?
 - ii. Do you live primarily for yourself in this world?
 - iii. Do you seek your own glory, prestige, and honor?

3. Do you want what Christ wants for you?

- a. Do you want Christ's glory through your redemption, your preservation, and your commission lived out in this world until you finally see Him as He is... glorious above all things?

Main point:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to redeem His people in order to commission them in the world and to set them on a course for glory.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer by Justin Taylor

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-high-priestly-prayer>

The Most Thrilling Prayer Ever Prayed by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-160/the-most-thrilling-prayer-ever-prayed-part-2>

Are We Sanctified? by J.C. Ryle

http://www.biblebb.com/files/ryle/are_we_sanctified.htm

Eternal Life! by C.H. Spurgeon

<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols40-42/chs2396.pdf>