

# Jesus' Prayer for Us - John 17

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 31 March 2019

Preacher: Kevin O'Connor

[ 0 : 00 ] Can you still hear me okay? Good stuff. If you'd like to open your Bibles to John chapter 17. John chapter 17. I'll just pray quickly if you don't mind again.

Father, we thank you that we can gather here as your people, open your word. And we pray, Father, that there will be none among us, Lord, who has a hard heart, a heart that resists you. But, Lord, that we would be sensitive and tender to what you have to say. And, Lord, that we would not be those who just hear your word, but that we be those who obey and do your word. Lest we deceive ourselves, Lord, into thinking that by just hearing it will bless us, Lord, but that we must obey and receive it, Lord, by faith.

I ask for your help and for the blessing of your Holy Spirit, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'd like to begin this morning by asking you a question.

If you could go back to any one event in the Bible to be there firsthand in the flesh and see something in the Bible, one event, what event would you choose?

[ 1 : 25 ] Any event in the whole Bible, New Testament, Old Testament, whatever you want it. This is a question that a friend of mine asked me. And so he asked me, what would you choose? Maybe have a think about it.

Would you go see Moses parting the Red Sea and bringing the Israelites out of Egypt? Or would you see the walls of Jericho come crashing down, maybe?

Or David killing Goliath, walloping him in the head with a stone and then hacking off his head? Or Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount, maybe? So my friend who asked me this question, I think, actually had the best answer.

He said, of all the events, of all the things that I could go see in the Bible, go back in time and see, the one thing I would like to see would be Jesus praying.

And some very flashy. But wouldn't it have been amazing to be there and hear Jesus pray to his Father in heaven? Well, the text that we have this morning in John chapter 17 is exactly that.

[ 2 : 31 ] It is a candid insight into the prayer life of Jesus Christ himself. Consider this, of all the things that the disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them, in the New Testament, we only have record of them asking him to teach them one thing.

Jesus, teach us how to pray. Not Jesus, teach us how to cast out miracles, teach us how to preach better, teach us how to pray. I think that's very significant.

Because surely they saw that at the heart of Christ's ministry was his dependence upon God, borne out in prayer to him constantly.

We read in Hebrews chapter 5 that Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence.

If you picture Christ praying in your mind, do you see him crying with tears and shouting out loudly? Because he was full of passion. Imagine how incredible it would be to hear that.

[ 3 : 48 ] And so here, as I said, we have in John chapter 17, not that we can hear with our ears, but that we can read with our eyes the very words of Christ. This is God incarnate in the flesh, praying to God in heaven.

This is the longest prayer that we have of Jesus, and it is made even more special and precious to us because it is the prayer that he prays before he goes to the cross.

Judas says that they're in the upper room, chapters 13 to 17, is Jesus' final teaching to his disciples. He's preparing them for his departure, and he's telling them all about what is going to happen, and there's much that they don't understand.

Judas, at this point, has left them to betray Jesus. They've just finished eating their Passover meal, and this is just before they walk, as it were, across the valley near the Garden of Gethsemane,

where Christ will then be arrested, falsely tried, beaten and mocked, and then executed by crucifixion at Calvary.

All of Jesus' life, all of his earthly ministry, all of his miracles, all of his work, has led up to this hour, and this is what he prays.

[ 5 : 11 ] So read with me. We'll read through this chapter together. You can either listen or follow along. The whole of John chapter 17. 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, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

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

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.

Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 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.

[ 6 : 39 ] I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

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. 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.

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 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.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth.

[ 7 : 54 ] Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 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. The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one.

I in them, and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me, and love them, even as you loved me.

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.

[ 9 : 04 ] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 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.

What a prayer. I think in all your life, you'll never read a better prayer than that. If you imagine for a moment, that our prayers, your prayers and my prayers, are like pouring out water, the Lord pouring out our hearts to Him, this is a waterfall of a prayer.

This is the Niagara Falls of prayers. Just a rush, a torrent of glory. Hearing God, the Son, pray to God the Father.

I don't know if you've ever been to a, a kind of a famous city, or a beautiful city. I remember being a few years ago in Milan, with Roxy on holidays, and I weren't there for like, a few days, and there's just so much to take in.

You walk around, you look at all the nice, ancient buildings, that are just so old, and all the nice places to go visit, and all the things to do, and it's just, you said to yourself, we've got to come back here, because there's just so much to take in.

[ 10 : 21 ] And I would put it to you, that this prayer is like that. There's no way we're going to be able to cover everything that's in this prayer. But I would invite you to go back, and visit it, and read

through it yourself. Because it is just absolutely wonderful.

So this morning, it's not my aim, as I said, to unpack this entire chapter, because there's so much here. Instead, it is my aim for us to walk through this prayer, and see how Jesus prayed right before he went to the cross.

In particular, I want to look at the petitions. There are five petitions. Five things that Jesus asked, or requested, of his Father in Heaven, in this prayer.

And so I want to use that as a framework for us to go through this prayer. There's more to this prayer, than just the petitions, but it's just a way for us to move through it. So let's start with Jesus' first praise for himself.

Look at verse one. One petition that he prays for himself. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you.

[11:27] What does the word glorify mean? We don't really use that anywhere outside of church, really. Glorify. To glorify someone means to lift them up on high.

It means to exalt them, and honor them. In the most basic sense, it means to show how good someone, or something is. To glorify someone. To exalt, and to honor someone.

Put them in a higher place. Say, this is the man. This person here. Father, Jesus prays, glorify me, that I may glorify you.

Exalt and honor me, Father, so that I may exalt and honor you. And you'll notice, just before Jesus asks this, right at the start of verse 1, he says what?

The hour has come. As I said earlier, Christ's ministry has been building up to this time. Earlier in the Gospels, we hear Jesus repeat this phrase, my hour has not yet come, my hour has not yet come.

[12:30] This is the pinnacle of his ministry, which is going to the cross, dying for our sins, rising from the dead, and ascending to the right hand of the Father. This hour, the time for that, has now come, and Jesus knows it.

He knows he is about to go to the cross, and on top of the physical agony of being nailed to wood and suspended only by those nails, he knows that on top of that, he will suffer the wrath of God, God's righteous anger for my sin and for your sin.

It is not Jesus' physical pain that wipes away our sins. It is his blood shed for us as a sacrifice that he absorbed and swallowed up, as we said earlier, God's anger, righteous, good anger against our sins.

Jesus knew that on that cross, he would be forsaken. Do you know the only time Jesus doesn't refer to God as his Father is on the cross?

He always refers to him as his Father, except on the cross. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus did not cease to be God, but as a man, Jesus was fully man, was forsaken by God.

[13:56] So how is it then that Jesus can say, I am going to go to the cross, I am going to suffer physical agony, I am going to be the sole target of the wrath of God.

How can Jesus pray that he will be glorified in that? Sounds funny, doesn't it? the worst thing that could possibly happen.

Being betrayed by your friend, being wrongfully accused, being murdered, and then God's wrath being poured out on you saying glorify me in this. The answer to that apparent contradiction is in verse 5.

Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Jesus is looking beyond the cross.

He is looking beyond his death. He is looking to the resurrection and not just to his resurrection to life but his ascension into heaven.

[15:00] Father, bring me back into your presence. Glorify me by bringing me back to heaven from where I came. Glorify me as it were into your presence.

This is exactly what Paul refers to in Philippians 2 as you might think of that Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

That is why Jesus could pray at this time before it is all about to go down.

God, glorify me. Bring me through this fire. Bring me through what I have to do. Jesus knows that the final destination, his final destination is not the cross.

It is not the grave. It is heaven itself. Hebrews 12 says, for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross despising its shame and is seated at the right hand of God in heaven.

[16:11] That is where Jesus is right now, at God's right hand. Friends, if God, the Father, brought Jesus through the pain and the suffering and the spiritual agony of the cross and if he raised him from the dead and brought him all the way back to heaven, how will he not also care for you this week?

Is there anything in your life that God will not be able to bring you through? Our boast as Christians is not in our own strength as we've sung this morning. It's not saying that we get better as it were at being Christians but that we realize more and more our complete dependence upon the Lord.

He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him, with Jesus, graciously give us all things. There is nothing God will withhold from you as his child.

Absolutely nothing if you need it at the right time. That is what Jesus prays, glorify me that I may glorify you and he goes on now to pray for his disciples.

So having prayed for himself, Jesus now goes on praying for his disciples who were there. Let's read verses 6 to 9 again. He says, I have manifested your name to those whom you have given me out of the world.

[17:38] They were yours, you gave them to me and they have kept your word. And skip down to verse 9, I pray for them, I do not pray for the world but those whom you have given me for they are yours.

Jesus is praying for those people that the Father has given to him. He is not praying for everyone in the world, that is what he says, but rather for those who belong to him.

Now don't let that get twisted in your mind if you go, I wonder do I belong to God, I wonder do I belong to God. Do you have faith in the Son of God? Do you trust in him? You belong to the Lord. But the Lord in his love made sure that we would be saved. By handing us over to the Son that he might lay down his life for his sheep. Notice what he says about his people, his disciples.

In verse 6, he says they have what? They have kept your word. And again in verse 8, I have given them the words that you have given me. Jesus passes on the message, the word of God to his people and they have received them.

[18:51] This is the hallmark of God's people that they receive the word of God. That they believe it, accept it. Jesus criticized the Pharisees, he said, who rejected Jesus, he said, my word finds no place in you.

So that when the word was preached, when Jesus was preaching, they rejected what he had to say. Thereby rejecting Christ himself. But Jesus says this is a hallmark, this is what the people of God do.

That we receive the word of God and we obey it. It's not just to believe it or accept it in some sort of theoretical sense. I think there are a lot, there are a lot of people in the world who think that Jesus is a good teacher and they agree with him and they don't mind being associated with him in some loose sense and they're a fan.

There are theologians who would absolutely wipe the floor with any of us in this room about the ins and outs of the Bible, theology, what Jesus taught and yet they don't believe what he thought.

So to receive the word of God means that you personally take it and live your life according to it. Jesus isn't looking for fans, he's looking for disciples.

[20:14] He doesn't call us simply to give a mental assent and say, yes, that sounds good, but rather to say that is true and I believe it. The word of God and the people of God are inseparably linked and Jesus said, this is who I'm praying for, those whom you have given me who have received your word and he goes on to pray three things for his disciples.

As Alex has mentioned earlier, he prays, keep them, Father, keep my people in your name, secondly, protect them, thirdly, sanctify them.

So keep them, protect them, sanctify them. Now, these petitions or requests that he is praying, he is praying in the first instance about the disciples that are with him, his disciples at that time.

But as you go on into verse 20, he says, I do not ask for these only, referring to the disciples who are with him, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. That's you and me. So we don't read this and kind of go, oh, this is a prayer about the disciples who died long ago and who were in heaven.

Yes, it is, but it is also about you and I. He said, I'm not asking just for them, I'm asking for all of those people who will come. Isn't that cool? That Christ prayed for you and for me before he went to the cross for us.

[ 21 : 45 ] Let's look again at verses 11 and 12. I am no longer in the world, 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.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. And skip down to verse 15. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them, protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. So he's praying, keep them, protect them, sanctify them.

When Jesus was with his disciples, he protected them. He guarded them and he kept them safe. And clearly the disciples needed his protection because of all the spiritual opposition from a non-believing world and from the devil himself that he would experience.

but he's not just praying for their protection from the devil. He is also praying that the Father keeps them in his name.

[ 22 : 58 ] Now what does that mean? What does that mean to keep them in his name? If you really, if someone was a Christian and said, what does it mean that you believe in Jesus' name?

Why don't you just believe in Jesus? It kind of sounds odd when you kind of look at it. The idea is that we are kept, Jesus is asking that we be kept faithful to who God is.

God's name being his expression of who he is. This is my name. This is who I am. That we would be kept faithful to the Father.

Jesus knows that he is about to be publicly executed, that his disciples will be scattered like sheep, as he says, that they will abandon him, that they will be scared and confused.

He knows how weak they are, just like you and I, and he prays that the Father would protect them. I mean, ask yourself, why didn't, why didn't the disciples just give up on their faith completely when Jesus died and go, well, he's dead.

[ 24 : 07 ] That's it. I feel a fool. Why did they persevere? Why is it that the early church was not completely wiped out by the Roman Empire?

Why did it, like, last? Think of it. I was trying to someone there whose daughter is studying marketing. It wasn't marketing that kept the early church going.

It was the truth of God and God protecting his people. you and I are in this building this morning because God has kept his people down through the ages. It wasn't because the disciples were smart or because they were good at strategy, anything but.

it was because they were led by the Lord and protected. God answered this prayer of Jesus and he keeps his people faithful to himself. He gives us the strength each day to carry on.

it was just a wonderful assurance and comfort as a Christian to know that nothing in all existence can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

[ 25 : 19 ] Nothing. That God keeps his people. If you think of what Christ said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them they follow me I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

That's Jesus talking about you and me. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me again is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

It's almost as if Christ's hand and the Father's hand holding us secure never letting us go. So Jesus prays that the Father would keep them and protect them and then in verse 17 he prays that the Father would sanctify them.

Sanctify them in the truth your word is truth as you sent me into the world so have I sent them into the world and for their sake I consecrate or sanctify is another way of translating that I sanctify myself so that they would be sanctified in the truth.

Jesus is praying that we would be made holy. That's another word we should define regularly and remind ourselves what it means. What does it mean to be holy? It means to be set apart for God and his purposes and to be like God.

[ 26 : 43 ] So something is holy as much as it is set aside for God and reflects who he is. that is what Jesus says I am about to set myself apart at the cross for this one purpose to do the will of

God I am going to do this so that my people will be holy that they will be saved and sanctified.

We talk a lot thankfully about Jesus dying for our sins Jesus died so that you could be completely forgiven of all your sins and he died to make you holy to make you like him because when we get to heaven we will be perfectly sanctified and that is the process that we are going through that Jesus sanctifies us and you will notice the means by which he sanctifies us that he sanctifies us through his word God's word is his primary way of making us holy he uses other things like baptism and the Lord's supper and fellowship with other believers and prayer and our circumstances he uses all things for the good of those who belong to him but God's word is how he shapes us by the renewal of our mind we can't mature as Christians apart from the word of God do you kind of feel like lately you've just kind of been you know put it into neutral and kind of freewheeling in your faith and it's kind of gotten boring even do you feel that

I've felt that where you feel a bit sort of like a half boiled kettle you know there's nothing going on you're not fired up are you in the word regularly I'm not saying like you need to read six chapters of the bible every day you need to know we need to know who God is and to be reminded of who he is and what he has done and the best way to do that is through his word that God will renew us and help us it's like that cliché you know if you call tech support my laptop is not working the first thing they always ask or my computer's not working is it plugged in so there's no point in hyper spiritualizing or problem saying I just feel strange in my faith or I feel really distant from the Lord well that's maybe because the Lord hasn't moved maybe you have you know it's like saying like I feel like no one can hear me on the mic because you're far from the mic there's nothing that mystical about it I've done that where I hyper spiritualize you kind of go maybe it's just a season I'm going through and the Lord is like no just read my word maybe that's just me but we need the word of God there's just no substitute for it I mean you wouldn't not eat for three days would you I definitely wouldn't I love eating but if you came into church next Sunday and you were just like ashen faced and just worn out and no energy what's wrong with you and you go I've been getting plenty sleep and then we eventually discover you're just not eating it's a pretty easy fix anyway I've labored the point but it cannot be emphasized too much that we need the word of the Lord so he prays we be sanctified in the truth and we have the truth in the Bible we read then in his fifth and final petition of Christ in this prayer he prays that all of his people would be unified look at verse 20 I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word that they may all be one just as father you 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 he says

I have given them my glory that they may be one even as we are one perfectly one Jesus desires that all his people his entire church throughout the ages would share in the very unity of the father and the son our unity with everybody in this room with other believers and the churches across the world it reflects the unity within the triune God himself and Jesus says I am praying for their unity so that the world would look at my people and believe that you the father sent me the son so that non-Christians would look at us and say those people really love each other Jesus must be there's something there's something legit about that Jesus is the real deal because those people seem to have nothing in common except Jesus and they love each other in a way that is unique

[ 31 : 47 ] Jesus says by your love for one another they shall know that you are mine I certainly underestimate that you think there'd be something fancier like the preaching of the word of God which is absolutely essential or something else but Jesus says no it's your love for your brothers and sisters I have a friend Clodagh and before she was a Christian she was on McCurtain Street and she was going to a gig or something and she said she remembers looking across the street of people coming out of Corp Baptist Church and she looked across the road and she was with a lot of her friends having a good time and she looked across the road and she looked at them and she said I could just see there was something different about them they they they they just looked so happy to be together and she said that that was a starting point for her in seeking out Christian fellowship so we should not underestimate how much our love for one another is a witness to those who come in and see the fact that God's people today you and me grow in maturity and that we love one another is the fact is proof that the

Lord is answering his prayer and it's not an artificial unity it's a unity around the truth of who Jesus is a unity in his word that we must seek to actively live out and exemplify for the world around us Colossians 3 says this as a picture of this unity bear with one another and forgive one another if any of you have any grievance against someone forgive as the Lord forgave you and over all these

virtues put on love which binds them together in perfect unity I'll finish by reading from Philippians chapter 2 just to fix our eyes on Christ before we draw to a close Philippians chapter 2 verses 2 to 11 Paul says this complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility count others as more significant than yourselves let each of you look not only to your own interests but to the interests of others having this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ

Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross therefore God has exalted him highly and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Christ Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father and all God's people said Amen thank you

Kevin we're going to stand together and sing in response to that go to the man das los to do and to what do the the God the he and oh to