

What Would Jesus Pray - The High Priestly Prayer

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[0 : 00] All right. If you're visiting tonight, I haven't met you before.

My name's Jono Smith. I'm one of the pastors here at the church. And if it's your first time here, you're coming in the middle of a sermon series we're doing at the moment, three-week series, looking at the prayers of Jesus, some of the prayers of Jesus.

So last week we looked at the Lord's Prayer that Jesus prayed in Matthew 6. This week we're looking at John 17, which is called the High Priestly Prayer.

And next week we're going to be looking at Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, right before he is arrested and then crucified. So last week in the Lord's Prayer, we looked at how we should pray as a result of seeing Jesus' model prayer for us.

Tonight it's going to be more about what we learn from Jesus' prayer, what we learn about ourselves and Jesus' mission for the church, for this church. What should this church look like based on what Jesus prayed in that great prayer?

[1 : 06] And it is a great prayer, I think. It gives us a really good insight into what kind of man Jesus was, what he was on about, the relationship he had with God. And John, who wrote this prayer down for us, was really close to Jesus.

He's probably one of the three closest disciples to Jesus. He had sort of a big brother-little brother relationship, really close-knit. He was there at the Mount of Transfiguration, which is a big deal in Jesus' ministry.

He's going to be there next week when we look at Gethsemane. Gethsemane. And he wrote a few books in the New Testament, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, Revelation, and this Gospel of John, which is a pretty unique gospel.

90% of what he's written down is unique to John, whereas Matthew, Mark, and Luke have a lot of similar material. He has a lot of fresh insights into the life of Jesus.

And so I think this prayer really shows us a lot about the kind of person Jesus was and the kind of prayer life he had. We could also talk about this sermon, talk about this prayer forever.

[2 : 14] I mean, there was a guy, Thomas Manton, a Puritan guy who preached 45 sermons on this chapter. I'm going to try and keep it under 45 minutes.

He did 45 sermons. There have been a few books, more than 500 pages written on this prayer. So there's a lot that we could go through.

I've chosen to draw out four things that Jesus says about the church, about what our church should look like, about what the church should look like in this prayer. So we've got four things.

Firstly, Jesus prays for the truth of the church. Jesus prays for the truth of the church. Secondly, Jesus prays for the holiness of the church. Thirdly, Jesus prays for the mission of the church.

And finally, Jesus prays for the unity of the church. So we're going to hit all four of those. Go fairly quickly through this. Be good to keep your Bible open. We won't hit every verse, but I want you to be reading along with me as we go through it.

[3 : 16] So why don't I pray for us first? Ask God to help us as we look at this and ask him to change us as we look at how our church needs to change to be more in line with what Jesus prayed.

So let's pray together. Father, Father, we love your word in this church. It's amazing to me that you would give us a revelation about yourself written down on paper.

And it's amazing that you've preserved it for us over so many years, that we would have it in abundance right before us now, that we can speak on it and meditate on it.

Father, we love your word in this church. And I pray that now as we open it, you would show us some really significant things from it as we look at Jesus' prayer. Moved by a Holy Spirit, convict us of sin, convict us where we need to change.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. First thing we're going to look at, Jesus prays for the truth of the church. You can see this verse 11. He says, by the way, I should have said this, the first five verses are Jesus praying for himself.

[4 : 22] That's important. We should be praying for ourselves. If Jesus did, all the more we should be. Then he switches and prays for his disciples, the disciples that were in front of him in the upper room as he's talking about this stuff, and also us as disciples of Jesus.

If you're a Christian, he's praying for you as well. We're going to look at that section. So we're going to start in verse 11. And he says, and now I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world.

And I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me so that they may be one as we are one. This is a prayer that we would remain true to the revelation that God has given us in Jesus.

It's a prayer that we would remain true to the revelation that God has given us in Jesus. See, there's a lot of churches today. If you've been church shopping recently, you would have noticed there's a lot of churches that they're not remaining true to the revelation of Jesus as we have it in the Bible.

In other words, Jesus really isn't the foundation of everything they do in the church. A church that has remained true, like Jesus prayed it would, will have Jesus Christ as the foundation of the church.

[5 : 38] And everything they do is influenced by that truth. So you get a lot of churches now that are sort of the foundation of the church is entertainment or prosperity or even church type things like certain ministries or groups or architecture, certain buildings.

These are the things that sort of direct the mission of the church. And Jesus says, no, I want you to keep my disciples in the truth about the revelation of himself.

Protect them in your name that you have given me so that they may be one as we are one. And so I know it's tempting as we look at churches and we look around at churches. It's tempting to go with the coolest church, with the coolest band or with the hottest chicks or with the best buildings or with the best technical equipment.

The best churches aren't the most modern churches. They're not the most high tech churches. They're the churches that have Jesus Christ as the foundation of the church.

So when Renee and I were in Africa recently, we saw churches and households where they had nothing, no technology, no cool stuff, no cool buildings. Nothing.

[6 : 54] But they had Jesus. And Jesus says, that's a good church. That's a church that has been protected in truth. So that's what we need to be here.

And, you know, God bless us. This church has been built on that foundation for many, many years. He prays for the truth of the church.

Number two, this is a big one. He prays for the holiness of the church. Verse 15 to 17. He says, I'm not asking that you take them out of the world, but I ask that you protect them from the evil one.

They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. So this is a prayer that we would be in the world, but not of the world.

You might have heard that phrase before. That we would be in the world, but not of the world. I remember at youth group, I always used to pray this prayer. When I started getting to the leadership, I started to pray this prayer that I just wish people would come in, young people would come in and see that we're no different from anyone else.

[8 : 04] And the heart of the prayer was really that people would see that we're not freaks and, you know, a weird sect and see that we're not, all Christians aren't weird. But really, that prayer is the wrong prayer to pray because, in fact, we are different from the world, aren't we?

If you're a Christian, you've been called out to be set apart in some way. That's what it means to be holy, to live in a different way, to have a different worldview, to worship a different God.

So Jesus prays for the holiness of the church. And all throughout church history, churches and Christians have fallen into one of two extremes in this way, two sinful extremes.

I'm going to talk about syncretism and sectarianism. Two big words that just mean, by syncretism I mean Christians and churches have been too much like the world.

Not distinctively Christian. Really, really interested in being in the world and making a difference in some way, maybe social justice. Or community involvement. But not really different in any serious way.

[9 : 15] They're not distinctively Christian. That's syncretism. Becoming just like the world. Then there's the other extreme, isn't there, of sectarianism. Churches, Christians who completely cut themselves off from the world and act like a little sect.

They're really inward looking. They live in that Christian ghetto. They've bought canned goods. They have a bomb shelter. Bought firearms. Pray for the rapture. Sectarianism.

Sectarianism. Everyone's falling into one of these errors. So the challenge for us here at this church is how do we walk down the middle where we're in the world, influencing the world.

We've got a mission and a message. We're also wholly separate. Not stained by the world as the Bible describes it.

So I've got a list, together a little list, of areas in which I think we individually and corporately are falling into these errors of syncretism being too much like the world and sectarianism not too disconnected from the world.

[10 : 30] When it comes to syncretism, these are probably more individual sins that we commit. But I want you to consider these. Number one, consumerism.

The world loves stuff. Coming into Christmas. This is everywhere, right? The world loves stuff. Possessions, money, toys, everything you can buy at Doncaster Shopping Town.

The biggest church in Doncaster, right? The world loves materialism. It loves its consumerism. And we are infected with it.

Whether you like it or not, you're infected with it. So we've got to be on our guard in this respect. How much do you get a thrill from buying something new?

How much are you working just so that you can stack up enough money to buy that new toy or to do that extension at the house? How much are you a slave to consumerism?

[11 : 36] That's number one. Number two, sexuality. Here I'm thinking about the pressure that's on Christians here, and probably more with the younger people, but I'd say it's with everyone.

To compromise sexually. That is, premarital sex. For the older people, perhaps extramarital sex. Affairs, fornication.

All sex outside of marriage. We believe here that sex outside of marriage is a sin, but the pressure is on you guys on every TV show to be a part of that.

And also, in addition to that, I'm thinking of compromising on what we believe about a biblical understanding of sexuality. So there's pressure on you to be pro-homosexuality.

To be pro-pornography. I wonder if you feel yourself slipping a little bit in this area. The world loves pornography.

[12 : 42] The world loves homosexuality. You'll be much more accepted if you say you're gay in your workplace than if you say you're a Christian. No doubt. No doubt. So there's pressure on us to compromise in these areas.

Pressure for consumerism. Pressure for compromise in sexuality. I've got a third one here. It's drunkenness. In the news, a lot at the moment, it's this binge drinking culture.

Drunkenness is a big deal. There's pressure on you to get drunk. Now, I want to separate for a minute drinking alcohol and drunkenness.

If you come back to my place next door after the service, everyone's welcome. We're going to go back next door to Renee, my house. We'll have a bunch of fun. It'll be cool. If you come back and you're over 18 and there's no one there who has a big conscience issue with drinking alcohol, then you can sit down with me and we'll have a beer.

We'll have a great time. We'll praise God for beer. The Bible is pro-beer. The Bible is very seriously anti-drunkenness.

[13 : 52] The Bible just says, don't get drunk. I mean, it couldn't be any more plain than that, could it? Do not get drunk. The pressure on you guys, and particularly you younger guys, you're going to parties.

Everyone's sitting on a slab that's mostly empty. People are drinking alcohol and other drugs as well. There's immense pressure on you guys to conform, to get drunk.

The Bible says, do not get drunk. And so there's pressure on you in that way. We've got all this legislation coming in now. The government's trying to fight this binge drinking culture by legislating.

Personally, I don't think you can legislate morality. I think if people become Christians, they'll stop getting drunk. And I think if you guys as Christians are in that worldly environment where people are getting drunk, and you refuse, and you make an example, and you stand up for what you believe, that's how we affect the culture around us.

That's how we redeem the culture around us. Three challenges there in terms of syncretism. Let's talk about sectarianism. I think this is more of a corporate thing.

[15 : 00] My points, at least, are more corporately to do with the Holy Trinity. I'm saying this as a friend, and I'm saying this as a fellow sinner, and someone who's guilty in these areas as well, by the way. Let's look at sectarianism.

Too removed from the world. I think, in many ways, our church is too inward-focused. So a lot of our ministry, the majority of our ministry, is done to serve the people who are here, and that's good, and we want to do that.

But I think we can work harder to look outward, to do ministry outside of the church, to impact Doncaster and the thousands of people who don't know Jesus around us.

At times, we can be too inward-focused. In doing this, too, I've been thinking about this, and I think in terms of having ministry for people outside of the church, we're going to be launching next year some new key ministry areas, and looking at young adult women and young adult men, we're going to be focusing more outwardly in those areas.

So recently, the young guys have been getting together and helping out in the backyards of some older people in the community who just can't do physical labour anymore. These young guys, they're stupid, but they can lift stuff, and so they get together, and I'm one of them.

[16 : 27] And that's a way of looking outside of the church to help other people. Ladies will be doing the same thing. I'm thinking baking. That's just what I see.

We can talk about that. Related to that, though, looking outward, I think there's a lack of evangelism corporately and individually in our church. We're all for evangelism, and we hear that from the pulpit all the time, but when the rubber hits the road, we need to be doing more, I think.

So, Matt's coming on board next year. He's an evangelist. If you've spent more than 10 seconds with Matt, you would have heard something about Jesus.

That's just who he is. That's a great thing. And so, key ministry area for next year is evangelism, and Matt's going to be getting a team together of evangelists and people who are into evangelism, and they're going to be looking at ways to help us do evangelism corporately and individually, giving us resources and training and encouraging us.

Many of you guys don't have non-Christian friends. Get some. You need to get some. We want this church to grow enormously.

[17 : 40] Not so that we can have a big church, but so more people can come to know Jesus. It's another area I think we can work on. Third, I think there's a lack of concern for social justice in churches that are big on Bible teaching like ours.

Bible teaching is the most important thing we can do. That is essential. Jesus is the foundation. We preach the word. That's unreal. But sometimes there's a lack of conscious effort to alleviate oppression, to alleviate the down...

What is it? How does Amos describe it? The poor are being downtrodden, and we're not doing enough about it, I think. So we looked at Amos during the year in our small group, and God is really, really upset when the poor are oppressed, when there's injustice in the world.

And so I think we can look at more ways that we can influence the culture around us. Part of our problem is that we live in a wealthy area. I don't think that's a good enough excuse. There's more that we can do in this area.

So next year, key ministry area, social justice, community outreach. If you've got gifts in that area, if you've got gifts of mercy and a heart for the poor, then you need to get on in that team and start doing some stuff in that area.

[19 : 06] So that's just a little summary of ways that I think we can fall into syncretism and sectarianism and some ideas about how we can get back on that ideal ground that Jesus prayed that we'd be on when he said, I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask that you protect them from the evil one.

This is a great church. I just want us to keep working to be an even better church for the glory of God. Thirdly, Jesus prays for the mission of the church, and this is very much related to what I've just been saying about evangelism and doing stuff outside of the four walls of the church.

But let's look at verse 18. He says, As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I think we'd be more inclined to do evangelism if we understood this point and the weight that comes behind it.

Acts 17 says, Paul gets up and says to his hearers that God decided when you would live, where you would live, and how long you would live for.

He decided that you would live here at this point in history for this many days. And with that comes a sense of mission, doesn't it?

[20 : 31] Like, God has put me here for a purpose. And it's not consumerism, and it's not fornication, and it's not drunkenness. It's spreading the gospel.

God has put you here for a purpose. He has determined that you would come to this church and be part of this community, that you would have a ministry and a mission here. And it's incredible that he says, as you have sent me into the world, he's talking to his Father, as you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Jesus came with a very clear mission, and he fulfilled it all the way. The same thing is true for us. God has sent us into the world.

Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. He says, so if you have sent me into the world, I have sent them. That gives us incredible responsibility.

Fourthly, finally, he prays for the unity of the church. I'm looking at 20 to 23 here. He says, I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be all one.

[21 : 48] As you, Father, 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. A lot of people are on about unity at the moment.

A lot of church type people, they're always talking about unity, and some people think that John 17, that's the big idea, it's all about unity. And maybe it is, but I think we need to ask these people who keep talking about unity, what kind of unity are you talking about?

Because there's a lot of people who would tell you, you know, Christians have got to be united for the sake of unity, and there's no real parameters. They say that we here at Holy Trinity should be united with Christians in churches that are pro-gay, churches that don't believe that Jesus was the Son of God, that he wasn't resurrected, that we should be united with churches who preach false doctrine, churches who preach prosperity doctrine, churches who pray to Mary, you know, universalist churches.

We should just be united with everyone because we don't want to argue and don't want to debate and we don't want to discuss, we don't want to have division. Let's just be friends. You know, hold hands and sing songs, not to Jesus, but to, you know, the force or whatever.

Guys, that's not the kind of church unity that Jesus is praying that we have. That's not the kind of unity. Let's take a look at it properly.

[23 : 23] He's talking to his disciples, the apostles. They're in front of him and so he says, I ask not only on behalf of these guys, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word that they may be one.

So he's looking into the future and he's seeing you. He's seeing us. Seeing everyone who's going to become a Christian and he says, I want them, you guys, to be united to the apostles and he wants us to be united to them in so far as we believe the same truths that they believed.

We believe the truths about Jesus that they believed, that he taught them himself. That's the unity we want. It's apostolic unity. So we want to be united with other Christians who believe these things.

A really good way of seeing what this is that unites us, the kind of stuff that we believe that unites us, is if we look at the Apostles' Creed. We do this in the morning services every week.

We all stand up and we say either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed and the Creed says a few things like this. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty.

[24 : 40] You know there are churches who don't believe in one God? Christian churches, right? Our God is one among many gods.

You've got the Buddhist God and you've got the Muslim God and you've got the Mormon God and in a sense they're all one God. But all gods are valid.

We don't have unity with them. They don't believe in one God. It goes on to say, we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ.

A lot of churches believe in many lords. Jesus is probably last on the list. You've got other roads to salvation. You've got other mediators between you and God.

You've got, in some Catholic churches, Mary is a co-redemptrix with Jesus. So they both did the work for you to get you to come to know God.

[25 : 43] And so there are many lords in many churches. We don't have unity with them. They're not Christians. What else did the apostles believe?

They put it down in this creed. It's a great, great creed. It goes on to say, for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Many churches don't believe that Jesus actually died on the cross.

It's more of a metaphor. Jesus didn't really rise from the dead because that's a miracle. Miracles don't really happen. That's a metaphor too. He was raised sort of in our hearts to encourage us to be godly or whatever.

They don't believe, in addition to that, that the scriptures have any weight. It says, in accordance with the scriptures. And they don't believe that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father, sovereignly governing all of human history.

[26 : 53] Christian churches, maybe a little closer by than you think. We don't have unity with them. They don't believe the apostolic teaching of the church.

Finally, it says, we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. We believe Jesus is coming back. Many churches don't.

Many churches don't believe in a physical recreation, a new heavens and a new earth. Jesus can't come back because he's never raised from the dead.

But also, heaven isn't about us having new bodies and living in a perfect creation. It's about us, like I heard in one Anglican church recently, it's about us being absorbed into God like a drop in the ocean.

We don't have unity with these guys. Jesus is coming back. He's coming back to judge. They don't like that. The living, us, if he comes back tonight, and the people who are dead.

[28 : 05] And those who have put their trust in him, he's going to give them life eternal in a physical, recreated heaven. These are the truths that Jesus was praying about at the start, that we would be kept in these truths.

And many, many churches, many, many Christians just don't believe them anymore. That's the kind of unity we want with other churches, guys.

So next time you hear someone say to you, can't we all just get along? Why are we arguing? Why are we debating? Why are we disagreeing? Can't we just have unity?

That's what Jesus prayed for. You need to remember, Jesus prayed for unity, but it was a very specific unity. It was that we'd be united in the teaching of the apostles that they received from him about some very significant beliefs that we hold as Christians.

You can pick up that green book in front of you that some of you may never have picked up before. It's called the Prayer Book. It's got the Apostles' Creed in there. It's worth a read.

[29 : 14] Hopefully you can tick off every line. So Jesus, just in summary, guys, this is a great prayer. It's well worth you reading and meditating on to see Jesus' heart for the church, to see Jesus' heart for us.

He's about to be killed, and yet he prays an extensive prayer just for us. It's pretty amazing. Jesus prays for the truth of the church, that we would maintain him as the centre of everything we do.

He prayed for the holiness of the church, that we would be in the world, but not of the world. He prayed for the mission of the church, that we would take the gospel to the nations and to our neighbours.

And he prayed for the unity of the church, that we would be united on the big ticket items of Christianity. There's one God, that Jesus Christ died once for all for our sins on the cross, that he was raised for our salvation, that he gave us the Holy Spirit to dwell amongst us, and that he's coming back to take us home.

I want to pray for us now. Let's bow our heads. Let's bow our heads. Let's bow our heads. Amen.

[30 : 32] Father, thank you so much for sending your son. Thank you for recording for us his very words to you in prayer, to teach us how to pray, and also to give us an insight into what he was on about, his desires for us, his hopes for us, his prayers for us.

Thank you for Holy Trinity, for the grace that you've given it to be a strong church for so many years, a church that's serious about teaching the Bible and serious about sharing Jesus with others.

Thank you for a great church, and I pray that you would continue to encourage us to be involved in mission and ministry, evangelism, social justice, for the good of those around us and for the eternal good of those who will come to know you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.