

Jesus, Our Great High Priest (Part 2)

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: 29 August 2021

Preacher: Jim Patterson

- [0 : 0 0] Hebrews 7.22 we read from, and we read there that in verse 25 we read, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for us.
- What do we know about Jesus' prayers for us? Yes. When we think about this, we need to remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- So as we look at the prayers he prayed when he was on earth, we understand something about the prayers he prays for us in heaven.
- And his prayer for Peter is an example. Now, if you've got your Bible there, you might have to turn about a bit. Luke 22 is where we find that prayer.
- It's verses 31 and 32. Again, it's the night that Jesus was betrayed. He's still in the upper room with his disciples, and he's been praying for them, and he prays for Peter.
- [1 : 2 8] And he prays. In verse 31, he prays, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.
- And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Peter was about to face a great spiritual crisis, a great test of his faithfulness to Jesus.
- He didn't know about it, of course. It was in the future, and he didn't know. But very soon, Peter would stand alone in front of Jesus' enemies, and he would deny that he knew him with curses, that he knew him at all.
- So Jesus was praying for a need that Peter didn't know he had, and which he, Peter, thought he didn't have.
- In fact, Peter thought he was strong enough. He would easily overcome any temptation to fall away. He said, Lord, I'm willing to go with you, both to prison and to death.
- [2 : 4 5] Peter failed the test. Peter failed the test. But his faith did not fail. His faith did not fail. And what an encouragement this little incident is to us, because Jesus knows the trials and dangers that we face even before we face them.
- and he prays for us. He prays for us. Like he prayed for Peter. There's a warning, too, here.
- A warning about overconfidence, about self-confidence. You know, the only safe place for a Christian is at the foot of the cross with our eyes fixed on Jesus.
- He alone can't strengthen. Strength. We have no strength of our own. The hymn has said, We rest on thee, our shield and our defender.
- We go not forth alone against the foe. Strong in thy strength. Safe in thy keeping tender. That's the only place where we are safe.
- [3 : 5 2] We rest on thee. And in thy name we go. But how encouraging it is that even when we don't know the needs that are facing us or the danger that we're in, Jesus is praying for us.
- The name, the other name that Jesus has given as a great high priest is an advocate.

An advocate. He is our advocate. Now, praying for us, interceding for us, that assumes that we're praying for ourselves and asking for his help.

The advocate comes in response to a call for help and danger. Jesus is our advocate.

He is the one who pleads our cause by God's right hand. And he is omnipotent to save.

[4 : 58] Now, let's look back again at John 17. Because there, Jesus was praying for his disciples. It was the night before his crucifixion.

He had celebrated the Passover together with them. And he prayed aloud. They heard him. If you remember, the prayer divides into three parts. First one, Jesus prayed for himself.

Second one, Jesus prayed for his disciples. And in the third one, he widened it out. And he said, I'm not just praying for these 11 that are here. I'm praying for all believers.

And he says, I don't pray for these only, but for all those who will believe in me through their word. In his commentary, Bruce Milne writes, like a mountaineer gazing out from a summit across an expanding vista as range succeeds range into the distant horizon.

So Jesus gazes out across the rolling centuries. He beholds and embraces the harvest of the ages, the church of the Redeemer gathered from every nation, people, language, and tribe.

[6 : 18] He's praying for us. He's praying for us. For all who will believe through the word of those first disciples. For all who will believe through the preaching of the church down through the ages.

For us, for those who will believe through our witnessing, our talking with their neighbours, our evangelism, our faithfully going about our work, our preaching even.

He's praying for all those who will believe. Because that's how the church grows. That's how people believe, through the word. Praying for all those who will believe in me through their word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of God. and what does he pray for us?

What does he pray for us? Well, he prays for unity very clearly. It's very, very prominent in this passage. He prays for unity.

[7 : 29] He prays that the world might believe that he is the Messiah. He prays that his disciples be with him in heaven. He prays that his mission might be completed.

We're going to look at these verses now. He prays for our unity. In verse 21, he prays that they all may 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 sent me and love them even as you love me.

Clearly, Jesus was concerned about the unity of the church, isn't it? This is almost the last thing he said to his disciples before he was crucified and what was important to him.

What was important to him? We saw the last time we looked at it, the glory of God was important to him, but also the church as we see in these verses here.

[8 : 55] The unity of the church. What do we see about that unity? First thing we see about it is that it is a supernatural unity.

It comes from the fact that we as Christians are all one in Christ and in God. Some amazing statements in these verses.

Verse 21 that they may all be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you. That they also may be one in us.

Our unity is just like the unity of the Father and the Son. They all may be one. That's amazing, isn't it? Sharing the unity of the Godhead.

Our oneness is to be of the same type as that of Jesus and his Father. It's a wonderful prayer. Let them be one just like us.

[9 : 54] In verse 23 he says, again, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one. Our oneness stems from the life of God in us as believers.

We share in that life like the branches sharing in the life of the vine. We have that union with God, with Jesus that unites us.

we have a common spiritual life. Jesus is praying that that unity that is there, that exists already, might be seen.

Our external unity is to be an outward expression of our inward unity, our inward life, which is common in Christ. What an amazing truth, what a wonderful privilege, challenge, and what a challenge.

It's a supernatural unity. And the second thing about this unity is that it is tangible. In other words, it will be known, it will be seen, it will make the world believe.

[11 : 06] Look, again reading verse 21, he said, that there may be one just as you father are in me and I in you, so the world may believe that you have sent me.

Francis Sheffer called our unity, the unity of the church, the ultimate apologetic, the ultimate proof, the ultimate argument for the truth of the gospel, the fact that the unity of the church convinces the world.

The church, you see, is to be a visible revelation of the unity of the unseen father and son and their love. And the world needs to see our unity.

And when it does, I wonder how such different people can get along together. You know, here we are, different people, Scots and Irish and English and Welsh, different families, different jobs, different personalities.

What keeps us together? What gives us a unity? Our common oneness with Christ. With Christ. And Christ is another Jew nor Greek, born nor free.

[12 : 21] And seeing our unity won't bring everyone to faith in Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can make dead men alive. But we are told it'll make them sit up and think that they also may be one in us so the world may believe that you've sent me.

It'll make them sit up and take notice. So our unity is to be tangible. Third thing about this unity is us to be evangelical.

It springs from the last one. Our unity is a catalyst that gives rise to faith in those who see it. That the world may believe.

That the world may know. Now the church that most people see is the local congregation. People like us and others.

Many, many congregations around the land. And we are to model that love that exists between the Father and the Son. It's to be seen in our relations together.

[13 : 30] Some churches used to sing a little chorus, bind us together, Lord, bind us together with chords that cannot be broken. Praying for that unity.

We sing that psalm, behold, how great a thing it is when brothers dwell in unity. That unity is evangelical.

And Paul, in his writings, urges us to maintain it. That means that we can lose it. clearly, if it urges us to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, it's so easy for that unity to be damaged, to be shattered.

I'm told there are 33,000 denominations in the world today. I don't know how they can count it, and it's probably not true, and it's probably out of date, because they're probably increasing all the time.

But in the light of Jesus' prayer, this would certainly seem a failure on the part of the church, and it should sadden us. And yet, we're not talking here about a structure of unity, like that which existed in the Middle Ages, when just about everyone owed allegiance to the church of Rome.

[14 : 53] That was a unity that concealed and corrupted the gospel, and had to be sacrificed at the Reformation to recover the gospel. We're not talking about that, recovering that again.

But Jesus' prayer challenges us to work together with others who hold the fundamentals of the faith, and who are the objects of this prayer, just as we are.

We should certainly not see ourselves in competition with them, but we should be able to rejoice when we see God working through other churches, praise him for what he's doing.

This is an encouragement for us here too, because Jesus prayed for our unity, and Jesus' prayers are always answered. It's to be an evangelical unity.

Fourthly, it's a unity which God himself gives, not something we work up. we are one in Christ Jesus. Our unity stems from this common union, as I've already said.

[16 : 06] This is our situation as branches in the vine. God has already worked among us. One day in heaven, that unity will be perfect, and all the sometimes minor things that separate us will seem totally unimportant.

important. You know, this prayer was almost the last thing that Jesus prayed before he was crucified. So it shows that unity, that the church should show that unity was important to him.

It was important to him. May God help us to show that unity among ourselves and in our relations with other evangelical churches.

Second thing he prayed for, he prayed that the world might believe. We've already read those verses.

It comes up in verse 21 and 23, that the world may believe that you have sent me. And in verse 23, that the world may know that you sent me.

[17 : 17] And love them even as you love me. Jesus had already shown this desire in his ministry. He had stood up in Jerusalem and said, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

He looked at the crowds and had compassion on them and seeing them as sheep without a shepherd. He looked over Jerusalem and wept over it, saying, Oh, that you would have known in this day that the things that make for your peace, but now they're hidden from you.

You know, Jesus yearned for the salvation of sinners. And his yearning for the salvation of men and women isn't contradicted by his conviction that only those whom the Father had given him would come to him.

because Jesus' love is as broad as his Father's love. The love that caused the Father to send his Son to earth to die on a cross.

And this is the gospel, the gospel call to Scotland. Whosoever will, may come. Whosoever doesn't know Jesus, those who don't know Jesus, come, come.

[18 : 41] And we have, we have the, we are here to tell that message, that we be left on the earth. Jesus says in verse earlier on in this chapter, he says, I don't ask you to take them out of the world.

I ask you to be safe in it. And then he says, as you sent me into the world, so I've sent them into the world. Just as Jesus was sent into the world to save and to die for us, so he has sent us into the world to announce the gospel.

That's what we've been left on the earth for. This is the message we have for West Lothian, a message that we have to express in words, as well as in deeds and in our lives.

Because how are they to believe in whom they have never heard? How are they to hear without preaching? So we express it in words. But it's confirmed by our unity.

By our unity. When I side, I was looking and think, see how they love one another. I said that so often that's been terribly contradicted by our divisions, hasn't it?

[20 : 01] The divisions in the church. Again, Bruce Milne said the biggest barriers to our evangelism are not outdated methods, but gossip, negative criticism, jealousy, and unforgiving spirit.

The list could go on. The glorious gospel of our blessed God, which is committed to us, is being openly contradicted and veiled by relationships within the church community.

so often. I'm not particularly talking about Livingston Free, by the way, in case you're wondering what I'm talking about. I'm just expanding the word.

Jesus prayed that people would be persuaded and that our unity ought to be part of that persuasion.

Again, Jesus prayed that his mission would be completed. Verses 24 to 26, Father, I desire that also those 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.

[21 : 21] I desire that those whom you have given me may be with me where I am. Again, Jesus looks down through the ages and sees the new heavens and the new earth.

Before the foundation of the world, he had shared the glory of heaven with God the Father and he was going to share it again. He was going back there very soon and he wants his disciples, you and me, to be there and to see that glory.

You see, that will be the true finishing of his work when the saints of all the ages, from every nation, from every tribe, will be presented before his throne.

John, again, saw in Revelation 7, verse 9, he said, I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all the tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

this, you see, is the ultimate completion of the work that God the Father gave to his Son. And Jesus prays that we might be with him.

[22 : 37] You know, this is the language of love. This is the language of love. Lord, I want those whom you have given me to 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.

Oh, righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know you, that you have sent me. I have 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.

This is the language of love. Isn't it just amazing that the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus, should desire that you and I should be with them in heaven.

The way, if your husband or wife is away, you long for them to come back, or even more so, because Jesus' love is so much greater than our love, but he desires that we be with them in heaven.

Me, a sinner saved by grace, you, a sinner saved by grace, he wants you there in heaven. What a wonderful day that will be when all Christ's work will be completed and the church from every nation will be gathered around the throne.

[24 : 01] In the meantime, we are in a world that does not know God and because it does not know or love God, it doesn't love the church either.

Chapter 17, verse 14, we read, I have given them your word, Jesus said, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.

In this world that doesn't know Jesus, it's our privilege to declare his glory. We've been left here, we've been given a task to do, to declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among the peoples, declare his glory.

That's what Jesus' great concern in John 17, he was concerned for the glory of God. We've been left to declare his glory. This is our privilege and our task.

You know, sometimes it seems we aren't getting anywhere. Sometimes the work may seem tedious and discouraging, but Jesus' prayers will be answered.

[25 : 14] Jesus' prayers will be answered. And as we travel on our way as pilgrims through this land, we have the assurance of the continued presence of our great high priest, praying for us, strengthening and sustaining us by his Holy Spirit who lives with us, sharing his love with us, continuing to make himself known in us and through us.

Jesus prays for us and he continues to pray for us. He makes continues, Hebrews, let's look at that verse again, Hebrews 7 25.

Hebrews 7 25. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost, this is our Jesus, those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for us.

He always lives to make intercession for us. The old hymn said, I have a Savior, he's pleading in glory, a dear precious Savior, though earth's friends be few.

For me he is praying, for you he is praying, he's praying for you. We praise him, we praise him this evening for his intercession for us as a high priest.

[26 : 56] He prays for our protection, he prays for our unity, he prays that the world might believe, he prays that his mission be accomplished, and he prays that we might be with him in glory.

May God bless his word to all our hearts this evening. Let's pray. Father, to think that you pray for us, to think that you know us, you know us by name, you bear our name, our names upon your heart, upon your hands, just like the high priest used to, names of the tribes of Israel were written on their breast plates, so our names are written on your hands, our names are written on your heart.

Father, we thank you. We thank you that in our weakness, we know that you are praying for us, and that our strength is made perfect in that weakness.

Father, we praise you today, and we thank you for that. Lord, we pray you will take us from this place, renewed in our enthusiasm, in our love for you, in our enthusiasm to talk about you, and to live for you, to be lights in this dark world, and to show forth your glory, here in West Slothian, and wherever you take us.

We ask it, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.