

Praying for Life

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: 06 April 2019

Preacher: John Lau

[0 : 00] Good morning again. Welcome to our gathering as a church family.

For those that may not know me, my name is John. I'm a regular member of this church and currently training in a theology college to know God more and to better serve all of you.

So each year, as part of our training, the students have opportunity to team up with churches and organizations for a week of intense ministry and mission works.

So last week, the students were all around Australia and also overseas to spread the good news of God. We had teams in Melbourne, northwestern Australia.

We have people in the Bible College in South Africa and a couple of Anakin churches and schools in Hong Kong and all over Sydney, with the closest one being Ataman and the Shores School.

[1 : 10] I myself joined 12 students, one faculty and one lady chaplain in Hong Kong to partner with St. Andrew's Kowloon.

We were involved in kids and youth ministry, men's breakfast, women ministry, home workers' devotion. We visited three universities to reach out to the students.

And we also get a bit of sightseeing around Hong Kong and we actually joined the gaily dance, which is a Scottish dance that you go around and around like that. So for those of you that have kept me in your prayer, I really want to thank you for your support.

I would also like to especially thank my wife, Vivian, because she took a look after our two kids while I was away. The team in Hong Kong had a very encouraging time.

It was mostly encouraging, but we had a very encouraging time because we actually had a lot of chance to speak to people around in Hong Kong.

[2 : 14] But personally, I was most encouraged because I got to catch up with three friends that is from high school, which I haven't seen for 30 years. And it was very encouraging because we were able to speak from our heart and I was able to share my faith with them, get to know them more.

And I guess when I left Hong Kong, we were sort of on a good friendship already. So I was able to rekindle that friendship and hopefully maintain that friendship. It was very encouraging to me.

And also to actually find out that a lot of my old high school classmates are actually believers, faithful believers, brother and sister in Christ, that we are serving the same God.

It's also very encouraging to me. So if you have a chance to catch up with some long-lost friend, what would you be focusing on with your conversation?

What would you hope to happen during that meeting? Are there issues that you might have left and dealt with that need to be resolved? And what would you celebrate about?

[3 : 23] Nick already shared that since last few weeks ago and leading up to Easter, we as a church family have been looking into the book of John to actually see Jesus' interaction with his follower before his imminent departure from earth to go back to God's side.

We saw how Jesus reassure and encouraged his follower, promising the sending of the Holy Spirit after his departure to remind them of things that he has spoken to them until he returned.

Jesus then pointed out that as someone follows him and do his command, that person will be transformed to be his friend and the transformed life will be a fruitful life.

This new life that he gives will also be an uncomfortable one because the world hates and will persecute those that follow Jesus. However, he also pointed out that he has overcome the world and his followers will live a joyful life when they see the return of Christ Jesus their King.

In all this conversation, Jesus has been using a future tense when he referred to his departure. But now we come to chapter 17.

[4 : 42] At the very beginning, Jesus says, the hour has come. The hour for his arrest and to face his death and his resurrection is only a few hours away.

And Jesus takes this time to speak with his Father. In this chapter, we can see what concerns Jesus the most. We can see what is on Jesus' heart.

As we drop in on Jesus' conversation with God, we will know Jesus more. A German reformer that worked with Martin Luther and had contributed a lot towards the Reformation is Philip Melancthon. And he said this about this chapter. There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime than this prayer offered up by the Son of God himself.

Most scholars and commentators would say this is where we are given the most profound revelation of the very heart of our Lord Jesus. If you have been a Christian for a while, I encourage you to take some time to read through this chapter again after today.

[6 : 05] And if you do not know who is Jesus that many people have decided to follow, you should also read this chapter. This chapter provides the best evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ, his self-consciousness of his identity, the claim that he made about himself, especially of his universal dominion, his reference to a previous existence in living unity with the eternal God.

Leave us with no match, not much choice. We can either decide that he's a lunatic, he's insane, or he's God. Even if you're not interested in who Jesus really is, but interested in what life is about if someone decided to follow Jesus and become a Christian, you can also find the answer here by Jesus' own words as he prayed for those that were following him and for those that would believe in him through the message of those followers.

So please open your Bible to John 17 again and let's walk through this chapter together to see what it has to offer to us. We'll begin from verse 1 to 5.

After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you grant him authority over all people, that he may give eternal life to all those you have given him.

[7 : 58] Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you have gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I have with you before the world began. As I'm meeting up with my old school friends, in our polite nature, the question of who's your best friend at school has often come up.

But we rarely ask them, like, who upsets you the most or who you dislike the most. I guess it goes without saying that the kind of student that we dislike the most would be those teacher's pets, self-glorifying and self-centered people.

As you read this passage, it comes across Jesus as a bit selfish by starting praying for himself. But however, it's furthest removed from selfishness as possible.

Jesus prayed to be glorified in order that he might glorify his Father. And there's a reason that he can offer eternal life to his follower. First one, he says, Father, the hour has come.

[9 : 20] Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. For you grant him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

By his request to be glorified, Jesus referred to his crucifixion that is going to happen within a few hours. His triumph over the grave after three days, his ascension, and supremely his outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

To glorify someone is to make that someone known. Jesus decided to be known in his true character as an obedient, divine Son of God, as a gracious Messiah, as a merciful Savior of the world.

All these attributes were manifest in the hour which had come and extended to the time when all the believers gather together and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This gift constitutes or secure the answer to his prayer. by the glory of the Son, by Jesus making the true character and identity of himself known to the world, people will come to know the Father and the glory of the Father was secured.

[10 : 43] God was never so fully refilled in all his justice and love and holiness and grace as by the hour with which we are focusing our current preaching series on.

In addition, eternal life was also secure for the follower of Christ. In verse 3, it says, this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

To know is not just an act of mind. It's not just a head knowledge because in that sense, demons know God.

But to know it represents love, obedience, faith, the response of an entire human being. To know is to be intimate and have close relationship with someone.

Therefore, the eternal life that is referred to is not only a future event but a present experience. It means endless existence in the future but also a present heavenly blessedness.

[11 : 56] We know we can go to heaven but at this stage right here we can experience the blessedness that God gave us. Jesus prays this prayer based on the fact that his entire earthly task was completed.

First of all, he says, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you have gave me to do. The supreme sacrifice seems to him to have been made.

His work was finished. He would therefore pray and now Father glorify me in your presence with the glory I have with you before the world began. If you are told your death is only a few hours away, will you have the confidence to say my life is complete and his work is finished.

To many of us, life seems to be a pathetic series of beginnings and failures and imperfect strife and endeavours. However, if we do the will of God, the symbol of our life need not to be some broken columns.

for someone who had only three years of ministry, only healed a few sick people, preached only a few sermons, only 11 followers secured and many deserters, no book have written, no church or organisation established, it seems a bit premature to say my work on earth is finished.

[13 : 30] But the hour has come, his work on earth about to finish and he need not to linger anymore, only the cross remains and the glory fulfilled.

We follow on in this passage, Jesus pray for, pray next for his immediate disciples, for the twelve who have followed him and been with him. this is a very special group of people that have the privilege to be the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry on earth.

However, the term disciples is not just reserved for them. Anyone can be Jesus' disciples, anyone can be counted as a Christian.

So have you ever asked who is a disciple? What does it mean to be a Christian or a follower of Christ? Jesus has provided the answer personally in this prayer for these questions.

In verse 6 to 8, he identified his followers as those whom God gave him out of the world, whom have obeyed God's word. There are those that accepted the words of God that were given through Jesus and they believed that God sent Jesus and knew with certainty that Jesus came from God.

[14 : 53] So a disciple or follower of Jesus, a Christian, is one who got taken out of the world to believe God sent Jesus and believe that Jesus came from God.

This belief came from accepting and obeying the word of God that was presented through Jesus. At this special moment, Jesus prays specifically for his immediate disciples and asked two specific things for them.

First, he prayed that they may be kept from evil. In verse 11, it read, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, or Father, keep them faithful to your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

It is because Jesus is leaving them that he prays for his disprotection. While Jesus was with them, he protected them, but now he is leaving, and he knows that the world will hate them.

[16 : 02] He commits them to the care of his Father. It is at this verse and previous verse that we also see what Jesus claimed about himself. The first thing before that is verse 10, he said, all I have is yours, and all you have is mine.

So that they may be one as we are one. Jesus is claiming that he is one with God, that he and God is one. In his prayer, he does not ask that they shall be taken out of the world.

He does not ask that they shall be kept from sorrow and pain and temptation. But he prays that they will be kept from gloom and discouragement and sin.

Verse 15, it reads, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. What is the difference between sorrow and gloom?

Pain and discouragement, or temptation and sin? The differences are very similar. Feeling sad about something or some situation is one thing, but gloom is hopelessness, is giving hope.

[17 : 19] Feeling pain is a sign of growth and suffering will eventually make us stronger. However, discouragement only happens when someone gave up their courage, gave up their vision and focused on what is immediate.

We may be tempted but not sin. To sin is a decision to let go of our true identity as the children of God and give in to the world.

So, Jesus prayed these first things for them is for the disciples to be kept from evil. Second thing that Jesus prayed for this is his disciples may be sanctified in verse 17 to 18.

Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you send me into the world, I have sent them into the world. In here, sanctification doesn't mean making them holy because the first part of the prayer already prayed for that.

In here, sanctification means more about setting a path for service. Because in verse 18, it says, as you send me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

[18 : 34] the service that is required of Jesus' follower is witnessing to the truth to be Jesus' messenger, to testify to the truth.

The truth of God, the word of God, will sanctify those who hear the message and believe in Jesus. And the final section of this chapter shows how Jesus prayed for all believers for the world.

And the main focus is that all of them may be one, and that at last they may be with him in heavenly glory.

The oneness that share among the Trinity, the three persons of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is emphasized by Jesus' own word.

In this last session, Jesus' father, just as you are in me and I am in you, I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one, so that they may be brought to complete unity.

[19 : 45] Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you. Theologian Charles Edmund says that the oneness mentioned in this chapter contemplates a spiritual unity, which must be given visible expression, by which in its essence consists of a union with Christ and through him with God.

Jesus prayed for us, his followers, to be part of that unity that's shared among the Trinity, that loving relationship that is between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

if we look through this section, Jesus said this, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

Christian exists to make Christ known to the world by the spiritual unity that we share with Christ and with our Father in Heaven. Becoming a Christian is not to have a better way of life or to give us a relief from the pain and sorrow and temptation and the trouble of the world.

[21 : 15] Christianity is not just another religion to try out. To be a follower of Christ is to participate into the oneness of God, to share the glory of God that existed before the beginning of the world and to make God known to the world through that participation.

To know God and to have eternal life is to experience the presence of God and the heavenly blessedness in your day-to-day life, to use the glory that is given to you by God to glorify him.

Those that have understood and accepted the word of God is revealed by Jesus. Those that have understood and accepted the words of God as revealed by Jesus, those that make the decision to follow and obey God's word, knew with certainty that Jesus comes from God and believe that God sent Jesus.

And also are those that through whom glory has come to Jesus. And they will have the full measure of Jesus' joy within them.

And they will also experience the opposition of the world. So now this is eternal life, that they know God, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom God has sent.

[22 : 44] let's pray. Father, thank you so much for sending Jesus.

Thank you so much for Jesus' obedience to you, that he's willing to reveal the fullness of you to us, that he has protected us while we're on earth, and now he has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us, to live our life, that you want us to live.

God, thank you so much that you have called us to be your follower, to be your children, that you didn't cut our sin against us, but you have gave us eternal life.

You gave us a way to know you through Jesus, to learn about you through your word. You also give us the ability, the strength to carry out your will, God, help us to really truly understand what it

means to have a relationship with you.

Help us to not just live our religious life, but really live our a true Christian life, that is enjoying a daily relationship with the hope of future heavenly life, and live our life in faith according to your word.

[24 : 13] Thank you so much for what you have done for us. In a prayer of this, amen.