

What Jesus Prayed for His Disciples John 17:1-26

Intro: I've been moved by the prayers of other people. As a preacher I don't think I would still be preaching if it were not for those who have surrounded me with prayer. Many times in my life some of my best friends in the Lord have said to me, "I pray for you every day". It meant a great deal to me in times of opposition and uncertainty.

Today I want you to consider a prayer that someone prayed for you. It may be one of the most important prayers ever spoken in your behalf. It was prayed by someone who had the closest relationship to God. It was prayed by someone who had your interest at heart. It was prayed by Jesus the night of His death (Jn. 17).

That prayer which Jesus prayed for his disciples reaches even to us and sets before us the yearnings of His heart on that sorrowful night. When he could have been thinking of himself, he was praying to the Father for you and me. The Holy Spirit brought this prayer in its perfection back to John's memory. It reveals what Jesus wanted for all His disciples for all time. What it reveals will help us see what great things He had in mind for us who follow him and what He wanted us to do. Jesus prayed that his disciples would...

See the glory of God

When Jesus prayed to the Father He spoke about glory--the glory of the Father, His glory, and the glory that would rest upon his disciples.
I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. (John 17:4)

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: (John 17:22)

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. (John 17:24)

"Glory" may describe the light that emits from a star, or an angel, or from God himself. That light is a visible representation of the power, majesty, or greatness of what is glorified. To speak of the glory of God is to know Him for who He is—to see His power and wisdom, His holiness and righteousness, His love, mercy, and compassion, to see His greatness because of all of these things.

To see God's glory we must use all our powers of spiritual discernment. And when we do we will see God in all His perfection. Such a vision is the prelude to worship and the motivation of all true service.

John said of Jesus, "We beheld His glory..." (Jn. 1:14).

Have you seen His glory? Did you see it in this service? Do you see it in your daily life? Jesus prayed that you would!

Follow the word of God

Jesus wanted His disciples to receive the words the Father had given Him.
For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. (John 17:8)

He knew the power those words would have in their lives. In following the word, disciples are sanctified. They are set apart from the world.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

In following the word, disciples may be hated by the world.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. (John 17:14)

But in following the word, there is hope of eternal life.

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

Is this how you would describe your life? Is this how we would describe our congregational life? Are we a people who are committed to follow the word wherever it leads us? Will we take a stand against the world's values even if it means persecution? Will we place our hopes on it? Jesus prayed that we would!

Be united in the love of God

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

What Jesus was praying for was not merely an intellectual agreement on a few distinctive doctrinal issues. Instead he was looking for a unity that shares the character of God. This "I in you and you in me" language refers to the shared glory of God's holiness. Get that right and the doctrine will take care of itself. When we want to be like God and Jesus more than anything else, we will know His truth.

But in addition, when we are drawn to God's holiness and want to know Him and be like Him, we are the beneficiaries of His special love.

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21)

What a motivation to seek God and obey Him!—that we might be united in His love, a family who loves Him and wants to be like Him. Does this describe you and me? Jesus prayed that it would!

Go forth in the mission of God

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (John 17:18)

Jesus sent forth his disciples with a mission—to make more disciples. What He here prayed for He later commanded of them.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

He sent them to show God’s glory to a world ignorant of God. He sent them to reveal His truth to a world in darkness. He sent them to bring together a world divided by hatred and sin and bring them into the one body. And they did.

How about us? Jesus prayed that we would!

Experience the joy of God

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. (John 17:13)

When all these things are taken together we begin to see that Christian joy is the product of all these things: Knowing God, obeying God, loving each other, helping others be saved.

If we do not know the joy of God, it may be because we lack one of these in our lives. But where we are committed to all of them, there will be the fullness of joy.

Do we have such joy in our lives? Jesus prayed that we would!

Conclusion: What a vision Jesus had for his disciples, and for us! The time has come to embrace the vision, to see that if this is not the life we’re living, then the prayer of Jesus has no answer in us.

It must be applied personally. Have I...?