

The High Priestly Prayer

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] John chapter 17. And just before we get to John chapter 17, let me just say that one of the recurring scenes in the gospel narratives is that of Jesus withdrawing to a private place to pray.

One minute we see him and he's ministering to the needs of the crowds, or he's with the disciples and he's teaching them, he's being with them, next minute he's gone. And he withdraws to pray. Mark 1.35, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Matthew 14.22, immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of them to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Luke 6.12, one of those days, Jesus went up to a mountainside to pray.

And he spent the night praying to God. Jesus often withdrew to pray. He was busy.

[1 : 22] He was industrious. He was very involved in ministry. He has crowds around him. He's never idle. And yet he's often praying.

We see him often withdrawing from that place of busyness and going to the place of prayer.

And usually that's the point at which the gospel writer's camera cuts. You know, we have these scenes in films and you get taken so far in to the scene and then the camera cuts.

You don't see what happens next. And that's usually how it is with Jesus' prayers. As he withdraws, we don't usually see him.

We don't usually get the opportunity to be able to listen in to his prayer. We're not usually taken on to the mountainside or the solitary place. But this time in John 17, we find ourselves with Jesus in that quiet place.

[2 : 38] We find ourselves in the place of prayer. We get to listen in as God the Son communes with God the Father and the Spirit.

So it's holy ground in this passage. So let's give our attention to this. This is holy ground.

And yet we're not trespassing. Sometimes we find ourselves in a place and we're overawed by the sense of wonder in the place.

And we almost think, I shouldn't be here. There's something of that in John 17. And yet we should be here. Because we're brought here. We're privileged to be taken here by John.

And we're given this insight. We're enabled to listen in and be part of this prayer. So that we'll be enabled to know more of the character of God. And the love of God.

[3 : 41] And the will of God for his people. John Calvin. It's John Calvin. who said in the preamble to his commentary on John's gospel.

The difference between John's gospel and all the other gospels is simply this. The other gospels show us Jesus' body. John's gospel shows us Jesus' soul.

And he remarks in relation to John 17. This is where we see most clearly the soul of Christ.

As we hear him pray. So these are deep and profound words that we read in John 17. These are awesome truths that we are given.

But let's be careful to see also. In case anybody is starting to switch off. Let's be careful here also to see.

[4 : 43] That this is not a passage that's so spiritual and theological. And otherworldly that it doesn't relate to us. This is a passage where Jesus brings us in.

This is a passage where you will hear Jesus pray for you. You know something very wonderful.

Something very powerful. When we learn someone's praying for us. But I was to beg the preacher. He speaks about how when he was a wee boy.

It was one night. And he couldn't sleep. So he went off downstairs to tell his mum and his daddy he couldn't sleep. And he got to the door.

The door was just a wee bit open. And just before he went in. He could hear his dad speaking. So he hesitated. But his dad wasn't just speaking to his mum.

[5 : 48] His dad was praying to God the Father. For Alistair. That he would come to know God. That he would walk with God. That he would glorify God.

It was such a powerful prayer. Of how his father was bringing his son to God in prayer. And he sat there.

And he stood at the door. And he hesitated. And it made an impression on his whole life. There is something very powerful. About knowing.

That we are prayed for. I remember when Anna was ill. It's almost two years ago now. And some weeks after she was ill.

And she had recovered. Mainly recovered. We were on the mainland. We were in another church. And we were just chatting away.

[6 : 45] And somebody came up to me. And said, you're David MacLeod. And I said, yes. And he says, and this is your three girls? I said, yep. This is them here. He says, oh, it's lovely to see.

Which one's Anna? And he said, this is Anna here. And he says, well, it's lovely to meet you all. He says, it's especially nice to see you looking so well, Anna.

We were praying for you. I'd never met the man. Didn't know he existed. I had no connection with him in the past.

And yet I was blown away by the fact that this person who I didn't know existed was praying for us. What a comfort.

Well, how much more should we be blown away and comforted as we hear Jesus? God the Son. Praying to his Father.

[7 : 48] And praying for us. There's two points today. As we consider this prayer. First of all, we hear Jesus praying for himself.

And certainly we hear Jesus praying for his disciples. So these are the two points. We'll just split it that way. And we'll think about this prayer. And how it begins with Jesus praying for himself.

And then it moves on to Jesus praying for his disciples then. And right up until the present day and beyond. Look at verse 1. If you open your Bibles, please.

I'm going to stick very closely to the text today. I'm going to make past just comments on the text. But we're heavily going to be in the text today. So let's look at this.

First point. Jesus prays for himself. Look at verse 1. After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed. Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son. That your Son may glorify you.

[8 : 53] The time has come. The hour has come. What hour had come? What time had come in Jesus' experience?

In Jesus' ministry? Well, this was the time. This was the hour of the cross. And Jesus knows it so well. As John's gospel progresses, we go all through it.

We hear about the miracles and the signs and the wonders. And all the industry. All those who were healed. These works of compassion. The blessings.

The teaching. That Jesus was so much giving himself to. And yet from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Everything he did. There was a shadow cast over.

And it was the shadow of the cross. Jesus knew from the beginning. He knew from before the beginning.

[9 : 52] That the hour was coming. And now as the tick of the clock. Is all the louder and more intense. Jesus comes to his Father.

And he prays for health. He prays for strength. So that he'll be able to do. What was planned from before.

The beginning of time. So first of all. We hear Jesus pray for himself. And the application. For ourselves.

Even this early on. In the prayer. Is simply this. If Jesus needed to pray. If Jesus. God the Son. Needed to withdraw. From the busyness of his life.

And be on the mountainside. And be in the quiet place. And come to his Father. If he needed to pray. And if he needed. Especially. In troubled times. To come. And pray.

[10 : 53] How much more do you and I need to do? Now it's true that. You and I don't go. To a cross. To take the sin of the world.

On our shoulders. But we are taught. That if we are. Disciples of Jesus. We are to take up our cross. And follow him.

And sometimes. That will involve suffering. Sometimes that will involve. Hard times. Sometimes that will involve. As Jesus said. At the end of chapter. 16. Trouble. And so when that hits us.

Especially. And yet every day. We need strength. We need to pray. We need to pray.

Here's a question. Before we move on. Was Jesus prayer a selfish prayer? Might surprise us a little. But the first thing Jesus would do. Is he pray for himself.

[11 : 58] We can think about the high priestly role. And we can think about all that things. But we're not going to go there today. Was Jesus prayer a selfish prayer? Well. Even in the immediate sense.

As we think about it. The answer is no. Because all that Jesus was praying for. In terms of the strength. That he needed to. To persevere. With a. With a task.

That was so heavily before him. All that he was. Praying for help to do. Would not only glorify God. But it would secure. Your salvation. So Jesus is praying.

For your salvation and mine. In this prayer. Because all that he would do. Would be the means by which. You and I could be brought to God. The means by which.

You and I could receive. Eternal life. Look at. Verse. Two. As we. Continue on through here. Jesus continues in prayer. He says. For you granted him authority.

[12 : 53] Over all people. That he might give. Eternal life. To all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life. That they may know you. The only true God. In Jesus Christ.

Whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth. By completing. The work you gave me to do. And now. Father. Glorify me in your presence.

With the glory. I have. With you. Before. The world. Began. Do you know God?

This is what Jesus is praying for. That he would be given the strength. To persevere. In the task that was before him.

In order that you and I. Could know God. In order that you and I. Could know eternal life. Do you know God?

[13 : 54] Do you have eternal life? Which begins in the day that you trust Christ. Not in some. Other age. Do you have salvation?

Are you saved? Is God glorified? Is God glorified? In you? As one.

Who has benefited from all. That Jesus. Was poised to do. As he prayed. And has now done. You know.

If you are trusting Christ today. If you are one. Who can say. Yes I know I am saved. By the blood of Jesus. If you are one.

Who can say that. I know God. And I walk with him. And I talk with him. I have a relationship with him. That begins in time. And I know. Continues eternally. Because of all.

[14 : 56] Jesus has done. If you can say that. It is an awesome thought. To think. You are an answer. To Jesus' prayer. Jesus prayed.

He prayed for himself. And yet. In praying for himself. He is praying for you. And the second thing here. Is Jesus prays. For his disciples. And that is a prayer.

That spans centuries. Jesus. He prays. Here as we find it. In verses. Six and following. He prays. He prays. For his immediate disciples.

In the first instance. He prays. For those first messengers. Of salvation. He is praying for. Simon Peter. He is praying for. His brother Andrew.

And James. And John. He is praying for Philip. And he is praying for Bartholomew. He is praying for Matthew. He is praying for Thomas. He is praying for. James son of Alphaeus. He is praying for. Simon.

[15 : 55] He was called a zealot. He is praying for Judas. The son of James. He is praying for all of them. And they can hear him. As he prays. And he is praying for you.

If you are a disciple. Of Christ. Are you a disciple? That is the question.

Are you a disciple today? Or what is a disciple? Who actually is Jesus praying for here? He says. I am not praying for the world. I am praying for those who are mine.

I am praying for those who are my disciples. So I want to think for a second. Who are. Who are the disciples? Who is Jesus praying for?

Who is Jesus praying for? How do you and I know if we are disciples? What is the. Who is the disciple in terms of John 17? Well. There is two things I want to say about that.

[16:58] A disciple is one who belongs to Jesus. And a disciple is one who believes in Jesus. A disciple is one who belongs to Jesus. And a disciple is one who believes in Jesus.

And that is who Jesus is praying for. If you are a disciple. I don't know if you have thought much about this. But if you are a disciple. You belong to Jesus.

We hear that in the prayer. Look at verse 6. Jesus says. In fact even. If you go to verse 2. You see it. In verse 2. Jesus prays.

That he might give eternal life. To all those. You have given him. Then at verse 6. Jesus says. I have revealed you. To those.

Whom you gave me. Out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me. And they have obeyed your word. So a disciple is one.

[17:58] Who belongs to Jesus. Jesus. And it is staggering to think. That if you are a Christian. You are a gift. From the father.

To the son. You are. One. Of many. People. Tokens. Which the father.

Gives to the son. To express. His love. Now when we get a gift. From. We are about to come. To the. The time of year.

Where we are given gifts. And we are receiving gifts. Now. When we get a gift. From one that we love. We cherish it. Why? Well. Firstly.

Because we see value. In the gift itself. But probably more so. Because we love the one. Who gave it to us. There are.

[18:58] Those of you here. Who will have. Bibles. And books. They belong to the one. That you love. Who is no longer here with you. For us in eternity. So you cling to these things.

You love them. They are irreplaceable. Because they speak. Into the love that you have. For that person. And we can think about ourselves.

Amazingly. It should humble us. Not make us proud. We can. Listen in to Jesus' prayer. And understand that. If we are.

If we are. Disciples. We are loved. By Jesus. Christians. Firstly. Because. Just of who we are. In ourselves. But also. Because of the one. Who chose us. And who gave us.

[19:58] To Jesus. Jesus says in John 15. You didn't choose me. I chose you. If we are disciples. If we are. Christians.

We belong. To Christ. We have been chosen. And given. To the son. By the father.

Through the work. Of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we. We lose our way. Don't we? Sometimes we can. We can lose our bearings.

You know. We. We lose that connection. With the. The people. Or the place. That we. We thought we belonged to. But if you are a disciple. You belong to Christ.

And no one. And nothing. Will be able to. Snatch you. From his hand. Disciple is one. Who belongs.

[21:02] To Jesus. And secondly. A disciple. Is one who believes. In Jesus. To verse 7. Now they know. That everything. You have given me. Comes from you.

For I gave them. The words. You gave me. And they accepted them. Then you. With certainty. That I came. From you. And they believed. That you sent me.

Disciple is one. Who believes. In Jesus. Jesus. There are many. Nice people. There are many.

Religious people. There are many. Pious. And sincere. And spiritual.

People. Who are not. Disciples. And who don't know God. And who are not. Saved. Because they don't. Believe in Jesus. Disciple is one.

Who believes. In Jesus. A disciple is one. Who accepts. The words. Verse 8. That Jesus spoke.

Disciple is one. Who accepts. The word. Made flesh. Jesus. And puts their faith.

[22:01] In him. John 3.16. You know it so well. For God so loved the world. That he. That he gave his one. And only son.

That whoever. Believes in him. Shall not perish. But have ever. Lasting. Life. For God did not send. His son into the world. To condemn the world.

But to save the world. Through him. Whoever. Believes. In him. Is not condemned. But whoever. Does not believe. Stands condemned.

Already. Because he has not. Believed. In the name. Of God's. One. And only son. John. Why did you write. Your gospel. John.

Why are we reading this. John. Why is this. The focus of our study. What's the point. Of your. Your gospel. Here. What's the point. Of what you've written. Well John answers that.

[22 : 55] In John 20. Verse 31. He says. These things are written. That you may. Believe. That Jesus. Is the Christ. The son of God. And that by believing.

You may have life. In his name. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe.

That Jesus. Is the Christ. He's the promised one. Do you believe. That Jesus. Is the son of God. Do you have.

Eternal life. In his name. That's the absolute. Monumentally important question. Not what are you doing.

Don't tell me about. Your study. Do you believe. In Jesus. Christ. Not even. Do you see him. And understand.

[23 : 57] That he. He came to this world. And that he died. On the cross. But do you believe. That he's the Messiah. He's the promised one. Of God. Do you believe. That he's the son of God.

Do you believe. That he died. And rose. For you. I sat with someone. The early part of this week. Who's immersed.

In studies. Spiritually speaking. And who is. Trying to. Live a life. Which is. Very religious. And very pious. And yet. Has lost. Their faith.

In Christ. As the Messiah. As the son of God. As the savior. And there's not. A glimmer. Of life. In her eyes. Because of the distance.

Between her. And Christ. A disciple. Is not. An academic. Student. A disciple. Is not. Somebody. Who's involved.

[24 : 54] In religious. Activity. Disciple. It's one who believes. in Jesus who has trusted their soul to Christ and if you believe in Jesus you belong to Jesus and Jesus is praying for you I pray for them verse 9 I'm not praying for the world but for those you have given me for they are yours all I have is yours and all you have is mine and glory has come to me through them I will remain in the world no longer but they are still in the world and I am coming to you so let's be camp for a moment it's Jesus' prayer he prays for himself he prays for strength to persevere with the work that he knows that he came to this world to do and then he prays for disciples what is a disciple?

a disciple is one who believes in Jesus because they believe in Jesus they belong to Jesus and these two go around in circles they come they fit together so that's who Jesus is praying for and the final thing I want to look at today the time that we have left is what does Jesus pray for them and what does Jesus pray for us and the first thing he prays for them and for us is for protection Jesus prays for our protection look at verse 11 holy father protect them by the power of your name the name you have given me you gave me so that they may be worn as we are worn while I was with them I protected them and kept them safe by the name you gave me none has been lost except the war and doomed to destruction so that the scripture would be fulfilled Jesus prayed for your and my protection if we are disciples as he prayed for the disciples who were gathered around him on that day but notice the kind of protection that Jesus prays for it's not the kind of protection that removes us from the world it's not the kind of protection that has us if I can use the children's talk sitting outside the ice lake on a bench the kind of protection that Jesus prays for us is the kind of protection that keeps us in the world on the ice verse 15 my prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one and that's the protection that we have as believers because that's the protection that Jesus prayed for it's the kind of protection that Daniel had remember

Daniel was protected when he was inside the lion's den it's the kind of protection that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had when they were in the fiery furnace it's the kind of protection that David spoke of in Psalm 23 when he said even in death's dark veil we fear no other for thou art with me protecting me Jesus prayed for and we are assured this protection in the world from the evil one because the power of the name that underwrites the protection is the name that is above all names it's the strong name of Jesus it's the protection that Jesus prayed for it's the protection that Jesus assures us of sometimes we take out assurance policies we put our faith in a company they promise that if A, B, C happens they will pay out they will give us protection sometimes they go burst we pay out we get nothing they're exposed the name was not reputable but the name of Jesus is the name that is above all names so the protection that he promises is a protection that is absolutely bonproof

Jesus prays for protection that's the first thing he prays for the second thing he prays for is joy verse 13 Jesus says I'm coming to you now but I say these things while I am in the world so that they may have the full measure of my joy within now here's a question in that location and it comes first to

myself how joyful are you some of us have faces that you know are very expressive of joy I see you and then there's people like me sometimes our faces don't tell the true story but here's the question how joyful are you if we are believers Jesus prayer for us is that we will be joyful always Paul the apostle as he's inspired by the same

God as he speaks as an apostle of Christ his instruction to the Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians 5:16 be joyful always now some of you might be sitting here just now and saying how can you say that to me how can you say that to me how can you say that I should be joyful always don't you know what I'm going through don't you know the storms are hitting my life at present and the reality is I might know a little of them but not that much but Jesus knows them and he has promised to be with you and he has promised to protect you not from them but in them sometimes we can be sitting on a fierce fierce night and the wind is absolutely howling and we hear the rain and the hail on the window and the temperature is freezing but we're in our wee house and the fire is on and we're warm and we're cosy and you look out the window and you can see the storm and you can smile because you know that you're not in it you're safe within it you're kind of in it but you're not in it because you're protected within it and if you're in Christ you're safe eternally and there's nothing and there's no one who can destroy you because Christ is the one who has promised that he is protecting you

[32 : 26] Romans 8 we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I'm convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord if you've grasped that what constancy of joy that brings when we look at the storms we waver like Peter did on the water but when we look to Jesus when we look to the cross we remember that we are safe no matter how fierce the storm is and that is what restores to us the full measure of joy that Jesus prays that we should have we're going to sing at the end so that

Jesus hath leaned for repose I will not I will not desert to his foes that soul though all hell should endeavour to shake I will never no never no never forsake Jesus prays for our protection in the storm and his protection is so comprehensive he prays for and he enables us to have joy not sometimes but always the next thing Jesus prays for here and we're almost done is he prays that we will be sanctified to verse 14 I've 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 verse 16 says they are not of the world even as I am not of it sanctify them by the truth your word is truth as you sent me into the world I have sent them into the world for them I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified to be sanctified if I can put it in its absolute simplest form is to be set apart for the Lord and with the Lord to be sanctified is to become more and more like Jesus now the reality is you and I become more and more like the people who are around us and the disciple of Jesus his and her first primary calling is that we will be with Jesus and we are with Jesus as we are in the word we are with Jesus as we are in prayer we are with Jesus as we come together with the Lord's people in the place that he has promised to be we are with Jesus as we become more and more like him now I want to ask the question in that location just before we move on towards the conclusion here how much spiritual ambition do you have

Jesus prayer is that you and I will be sanctified not just saved not just get a ticket to heaven but sanctified Jesus prayer is that we will become more and more holy more and more like him how much ambition do you and I have to actually be that way we have ambition to be physically fitter so we cut down our calories and go to the gym we have ambition to be better at the jobs we do so we go and do the training that our employer suggest we have ambition to perhaps make a higher wage and so we apply ourselves in the workplace we try and get in the career path we might have ambition to get a higher mark in exam so we study a bit more diligently than we used to do we might have ambition to be better parents so we tear our hair out day by day we've got ambitions and they're good ambitions they're ambitions that we actually give ourselves to but do we have the ambition above all other ambitions to be sanctified and to become more like

Jesus because that's Jesus' prayer for you he's not praying that we're going to make a higher wage he's not praying that we're going to be superstars in our workplace he's not praying that we're going to be the ducks of the school he's praying that you and I will become more like him sanctified the next thing Jesus prays for is he prays that we will be unified look at verse 20 19 I think it was 20 holy father protect them by the power of your name the name you gave me so that they may be one

as we are one verse 20 my prayer is not for them alone I pray for those who will believe in me through their message that they that all of them may be one father just as you are in me and I am in you may they also be enough so that the world may believe that you sent me I've given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one

[38 : 15] I in them and you and 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 Jesus prays for our Christian unity and the unity that Jesus prays for here is a deep stable unity unity it's not a kind of pseudo unity that's founded on an institution or a denomination it's unity that finds its foundation in Christ it's unity that finds its stability in the truth of the Bible I read a quote this morning I'll just share it with you it's from a minister called Simon Manchester he says on this verse unity is in the truth unity unity is not the denominational structure it's not sentimental campfire singing

God has made us one family by his spirit how are we going to be united in mind and heart by sitting under the Bible a biblical teaching on sin and salvation on the atonement of Christ are not the foundational bricks of our unity it's not Christian unity it's not something that will enable the world to see why Jesus came it's not something that will enable the world to know the Father's love God's love and so Jesus prays for unity but the unity that Jesus prays for his people is centred in him and in the truth of his word we move away from the world we lose the unity and finally

Jesus prays that we will be glorified so Jesus prays that we be protected that we will be joyful that we will be sanctified that we will be unified and finally he prays that we will be glorified Father verse 24 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 before you loved me and before the creation of the world righteous Father though the world does not know you I know you and they know that you have sent 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 Jesus' final prayer is that we will be ultimately and eternally with him and like him

Jesus prays that we will see him in his glory and that we will be like him glorify we're going to sing over the next few weeks the carol away in the manger it's so simple and yet there's a line in that carol that comes back to me again and again as I was thinking through this it's that line that says and fit us for heaven to be with thee there it's what Jesus is praying for that you and I will be fitted for heaven to be with him there it seems impossible and yet what was impossible for us became possible through the one who loved us and gave himself for us final word to John 1 John 3 how great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are the reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him dear friends now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known but we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is glorified what a prayer what a prospect for those who are the children of God the disciples of Jesus let's pray

Lord God we thank you for this chapter that we have been able to read we thank you for the wonder of all that we have been able to see the beauty of the relationship within the Godhead the depth of the love that we are enabled to get a sense of as we hear Jesus pray and Lord we thank you for the wonder of the fact that Jesus prayed for us and we ask Lord that as we hear that prayer as we meditate upon it as we take it with us from you we ask Lord that we would live out our lives as an answer to the prayer of Christ we thank you that as we go from here we know that if we are disciples we will go and we will go as those who are protected protected in the world protected from the evil one nothing is able to break through that protection not our circumstances not illness not disease not even death we thank you for such protection and we pray that as we meditate upon that we would have a great sense of joy

[45 : 08] Lord we see and we live in a world that so much lacks joy we pray that we would feel and that we would share the joy of the Lord day by day as we look to the Lord and that we would have that strength given to us as we fix our eyes upon Jesus we pray that day by day in this world you would enable us to become more like him and Lord we pray for unity we ask Lord that you would enable us to bear with one another in love to love each other deeply and we pray that your word would be the means of and the foundation upon which that unity is is actually sitting and resting on anything else we know is false and it's not lasting but the unity and the truth that is eternal is an eternal thing and Lord we thank you for the promise that when Jesus comes if we are in him we will see him as he is glorified and we will be made like him glorious

Lord we ask that on that day we would be found ready we would be those who are called to come to Jesus as those he knew as those he loved as those who believed in his name and Lord that we would not hear these words depart from me so hear our prayers and help us as we go from here to keep our eyes on Christ we pray these things in his name Amen we're gonna sing to you