

John 13-17: Living Life with an Invisible Savior

John 17:20-26 – Jesus’ Prayer for You

April 2nd, 2023

I. Recap

All of John 17 is a window into the wondrous relationship between the God-head. In this section of Scripture we get to be a fly on the wall and hear an intimate conversation as the Son talks to the Father. While Matthew 6:9-13 is often called “the LORD’s prayer,” but this title would be better reserved for John 17 for only He could pray the words He makes. There are certain things Jesus cannot pray in Matt. 6 and we cannot pray any of John 17 ourselves. Although this was not Jesus’ last prayer on earth, it was His last recorded prayer for His disciples.

“But of all the prayers of Jesus, the one recorded here in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel is the most profound and magnificent. Its words are plain, yet majestic; simple, yet mysterious. They plunge the reader into the unfathomable depths of the inter-Trinitarian communication between the Father and the Son, and their scope encompasses the entire sweep of redemptive history from election to glorification, including the themes of regeneration, revelation, illumination, sanctification, and preservation. The veil is drawn back and the reader is escorted by Jesus Christ into the Holy of Holies, to the very throne of God.”¹

1. John 17 is often referred to as the “High Priestly” prayer. Why do you think that is an appropriate title? (cf. Heb. 7:25)
2. Why do you think Jesus prays aloud in John 17?
3. Throughout the gospel of John, and even in John 17, Jesus fully acknowledged and embraced God’s sovereignty over all things from the salvation of believers to even the crucifixion of the Son. Why is it so instructive to our hearts then to see Jesus praying here and throughout His life on earth?
4. What is the purpose of prayer? (cf. Matt. 6:10-13; 1 John 5:14-15; Ps. 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11; Phil. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:6-7)

II. Introduction

By this point, Jesus has prayed for His re-glorification (1-5) and for His eleven disciples (6-19). With particular love (6-8), He prays that they will keep the faith (9-11a) that God will protect them from the enemy (11b-16), and that they will be sanctified by the truth for the purpose of mission (17-19). Even though this prayer was directed toward His immediate disciples, we also receive these blessings by extension (21-22). But in the final verses (20-26), Jesus concludes his prayer by focusing on all future believers. These are the very words Jesus prayed with you in his mind. Jesus loved His own to the very end through service, instruction, and through prayer.

¹MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – John 12-21. (WordSearch 11), 235.

John 17:20-26 – Jesus’ Prayer for You

III. Prays for Believers to Be United

“20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, 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. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I 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.”” (John 17:20–26 ESV)

5. What does Jesus ask for in verses 20-21?
6. In the context of Jesus’ earthly mission, what does it mean for Jesus and the Father to be one?
 - a. *John 5:36: “But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.*
 - b. *John 7:16: So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*
 - c. *John 8:16: “But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.*
7. What then does this look like for us to be united with the Son and the Father?

“They are ‘in’ the Father and his Son, so identified with God and dependent upon him for life and fruitfulness, that they themselves become the locus of the Father’s life and work in them (cf. 13:12; 15:7).”ⁱ

8. Jesus prays that the unity between us and God would also lead to unity with one another. What does unity with each other look like?

John 17:20-26 – Jesus’ Prayer for You

“1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,” (Philippians 2:1–5 ESV)

9. In verse 22 Jesus said, ***“22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,”*** which, at first glance, makes it sound like Jesus is asking for us to have the same glory He will have in heaven (v. 5, 24). This of course is impossible since we are not and cannot ever become the Creator – and God does not share His glory with any other.² How do the following verses in John help us understand what kind of “glory” is meant here?

John 17:4 ***“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”***

John 1:14 ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***

“Glory commonly refers to the manifestation of God’s character or person in a revelatory context; Jesus has mediated the glory of God, personally to his first followers and through them to those who believe on account of their message.”³

John 17:21 ***“that they may all 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.”***

“When believers are in Christ (cf. ‘that they also may be in us,’ verse 21), then Christ is in them. This is their glory. By ‘the glory which thou hast given me’ Jesus refers to the fact that the Father manifested himself in the Son (‘thou in me,’ verse 21). By ‘I have given them’ he means that he (i.e., Jesus) manifested himself in the lives of believers. To be able to say, ‘Christ only, always, living in us,’ is their glory.”⁴

10. According to verse 21 and 23, why is unity with and one another so important?

“Similarly, the believers, still distinct, are to be one in purpose, in love, in action undertaken with and for one another, in join submission to the revelation received.”⁵

² Is. 42:8; 44:6; 43:11

³ D.A. Carson, 568.

⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI. 2004), 365.

⁵ D.A. Carson, 568.

John 17:20-26 – Jesus’ Prayer for You

11. Verse 23 Jesus says, *“that they may become perfectly one,”* which implies that the disciples are not perfectly or completely united yet. What is the missing factor that Jesus is asking for that will make the disciples perfectly united? (cf. Rom. 6:1-11)

IV. Prayer for Believers to be Perfected (24-26)

“24 Father, I desire that they also, 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. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I 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.”

(John 17:24–26 ESV)

12. What does Jesus pray for in verse 24?
13. What kind of knowledge defines true believers (v. 25)? Why is this so critical to embrace?
14. What does it mean for Jesus to make the Father’s name known to His disciples?
15. Why and how does Jesus continue to make the Father’s name known?

V. Conclusion

Jesus said he will build his church (Matt. 16:18). Do you know why the church is being built and won’t stop being built? Because Jesus prayed for it to happen. Your own salvation is an answer to Jesus’ prayer. Every evangelistic success is because of the prayer of Jesus in verse 20. The church, the assembly of the saints, is united supernaturally because Jesus prayed for it to happen. The disciples surrounding Jesus, and all believers who have succeeded the original eleven, have been preserved and kept in the faith and will be kept to the very end because Jesus prayed for it. Jesus loved his own to the very end. Jesus prayed with particular love for those whom the Father had given to Him as a gift. He didn’t pray for everyone in the world, but those whom the Father would draw out of the world. And He prayed that we would be able to see Him in the fullness of glory – either upon His return or upon our death – either way, it’s an answer to His prayer. In light of the instruction Jesus has given in John 13-16, and in light of Jesus’ high priestly prayer, we can now clearly and confidently live life with an invisible Savior.

ⁱ D.A. Carson, 568.