

**“The Lord’s Prayer”**  
**John 17:1-19**  
**June 16, 2024**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

As I near the end of the road of my active ministry in this church, I have been drawn to this section of John’s Gospel, where we find the last lengthy words of Jesus prior to his departure. The words recorded in John 13-17 were spoken by Jesus on the last night of his life before his crucifixion. While all of Jesus’ words are important and essential, we are not wrong to take note of his last words as a unique expression of his heart. That is even more so the case in the form of the words in this chapter, words of prayer.

The Gospels record twenty-one of Jesus’ prayers, most of which are quite brief. This is by far the lengthiest of them all. Someone has called this passage the “Holy of Holies of Sacred Scripture” because it takes us into the inner sanctum of Jesus’ heart. Prayers are a window into the heart, and this prayer reveals the loving heart of Jesus for his people. As I prepare to step down as your pastor, my heart’s desire for you is that you know and trust the loving heart of Jesus for you. That’s a very different thing than the glib assertion of God’s love that so many settle for. The heart of Jesus, which is identical to the heart of the Father, is shocking in its love for his people. It is, as Tim Keller states it, a prodigal love from our prodigal God for his prodigal children. God’s heart is full of blessing. In the first half of the prayer, these blessings are listed. In the second half of the prayer, which we will consider next week, Jesus explains the impact these blessings are to have on the world. But today, let’s consider the four blessings mentioned in the first part of his prayer.

**I. The Blessing of God’s Glory**

There is a great deal of talk of glory in the first part of Jesus’ prayer, focused initially on the mutual glory of the Father and Son. Jesus prays that the Father would glorify him in order that Jesus might glorify the Father. Jesus glorifies the Father by accomplishing the work for which he was sent (v. 4). Jesus prays for the restoration of the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the creation of the world (v. 5). When you think of glory, what comes to mind? Perhaps it’s a stunning mountain vista or a glimpse of the immensity of our universe. Or maybe it’s some other part of creation. It could be a beautiful work of art or a story ending in redemption and restoration after all seemed lost. Glory can take many forms, but all of them have this element of breathtaking awe. The Bible says that our God is the God of glory. He is both the one who is most deserving of glory and the one who shares his glory.

I want to point out just a couple of things about God's glory. First, the text makes it clear that God is glorified in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Notice the first words of Jesus' prayer. **"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."** Throughout John's gospel, when Jesus refers to his time or hour, he is referring to his death and the ensuing resurrection. The place where the glory of God is most clearly and potently revealed is at the cross. It reveals both the love of God and the justice of God. As the Son of God hung there in shame, with his face covered in the drying spit of others and his own blood, the glory of God was uniquely revealed. It shows that God was willing to go the whole way in loving his people. He couldn't simply pardon them without a payment being given, because to do so would be unjust. But the payment would be the greatest imaginable, the death of his only Son. The hour of Jesus' death brings glory to God by revealing the depth of his love and justice.

The second thing I want to point out is that we get to share in this glory. Deep in the human heart is a longing for glory because we were created to share in God's glory. The Garden of Eden was a paradise because of the presence of God's glory there. The reason God wants us to glorify him isn't because of some need in God, but because of a need within us. The only path for true and lasting glory is through knowing and glorifying God. That's why Jesus says in verse 3, **"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."** And we come to share in this glory by the grace of God.

If there is any single truth that I have wanted to mark my ministry, it's the truth of God's grace. We see it throughout the Bible, and preeminently in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We see it clearly in verse 5 of our text. **"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word."** He is speaking about the twelve disciples, minus Judas. To manifest the name of God to them means that Jesus has shown them what the true God is really like. The name of God refers to his character and attributes. Those who have been shown this have been given to Jesus "out of the world." The word "world" in John's Gospel always refers to the sinful and rebellious nature of the fallen world. For example, in John 7:7 Jesus says, **"The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil."** The twelve, like us all, were native-born citizens of this evil, God-hating world. But by his grace, the Father and the Son have set them apart and called them to experience the most breath-takingly beautiful thing in the world—the glory of God.

Note too the puzzling thing Jesus says about them. **"And they have kept your word."** Wait a minute. Aren't these the same disciples of whom it is recorded just minutes before Jesus prayer that **"a dispute also arose among**

**them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest”** (Luke 22:24)? Aren’t these the same disciples who will all abandon Jesus when he is arrested? How can Jesus say that they have kept his word? Let me offer two answers. First, there is a difference between the singular and plural “word.” To say that they have kept Jesus’ *word* as opposed to his *words* means that they have accepted the basic gospel truth of salvation through the name of Jesus. Second, this is yet another unveiling of the true nature of God’s grace. Instead of highlighting the sins of the disciples, Jesus points out what they got right. When you picture the stance of God toward you, what stance comes to mind? Do you picture him with arms crossed and a frown on his face as he shakes his head in disappointment with you? Or do you picture an excited father encouraging his toddler as that toddler takes his first steps? Perhaps only one or two steps are taken, but the proud father celebrates as if his toddler had just won a gold medal in the Olympics. That’s what we see here of God’s grace.

## **II. The Blessing of God’s Word**

Throughout his prayer, Jesus keeps returning to the central importance of God’s word, which is available to us today through the Bible. Jesus begins by stating that his words have their origin in the Father. **“For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you”** (v. 8). Notice that Jesus joins together the receiving of his words with the recognition of his identity. These two things are inseparable. You can’t endorse Jesus as the Son of God and then reject his words. Nor can you do the opposite and accept his words while rejecting his divine nature.

Jesus also believed and taught that everything in the Scriptures had to be fulfilled. Even the most tragic events of life, including the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, happened **“that the Scripture might be fulfilled”** (v. 12). Every promise, every prophecy, and every last part of God’s word will be fulfilled, from the smallest to the greatest. Death will be defeated. All God’s people will one day be fully conformed to the character of Jesus. A new heaven and earth will be established. Judgment Day is inevitable. Everlasting joy will come to God’s people. All these and more are certain of fulfillment because of the certainty of God’s word. What a gift it is that in this world filled with such uncertainties God has given us his certain word.

The Scriptures also serve to divide those who belong to God and have received his word from those who don’t belong to him and reject his word. According to verse 13, the word of God brings a fullness of joy to God’s children. But the very next verse reminds us that this same word brings hatred of God’s people because of those who hate his word. **“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world,**

**just as I am not of the world”** (v. 14). We don't want to compromise God's word in order to make it palatable to the world. We should accept the inevitable opposition that faithfulness to God's word brings.

God's word is a primary means of our growth as Christians, a growth we describe with the word "sanctification." Jesus prayed, **"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth"** (v. 17). Satan himself unwittingly affirms the importance of God's word by attacking it repeatedly. The first words Scripture records coming from his mouth are the words, "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1). He attacked it again with the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, this time through the distortion and misappropriation of God's word. And he is still attacking it today.

As I prepare to step aside as your pastor, I want to charge you to be faithful in the fight for God's word. Study it on your own and study it with others. Come to church each Sunday prepared to hear God speak through the ministry of the preached word of God. Evaluate the quality of preaching in the new pastor God will give you not by its entertainment value but by the simple question, "Has he been faithful in the explanation and application of God's word? I have experienced this congregation as one that has done precisely that, and I want to encourage you to continue to have hungry ears to hear God's word.

### **III. The Blessing of God's Joy**

Jesus has come and brought his words to his people, and one of the results of that is **"that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves"** (v. 13). Jesus is full of joy, and he shares that joy with his people. Everyone wants to be joyful, but tragically many seek it from sources that will never provide a fullness of joy. Fleeting joys can be provided from many things in this world, but solid joys only from knowing, trusting, and obeying Jesus.

What happens if you look outside of Jesus for joy? Two bad things result. First, any joy you find will be fleeting. It will be like the Turkish delight in the Chronicles of Narnia, sweet tasting at first only to turn bitter. Second, the search for this joy will result in rejecting Jesus and his word.

On the other hand, if we seek joy in the Lord, two good things will happen. First, we become able to enjoy the good things of this world, even the simple things, as gifts from God. Our world is filled with little gifts from God, each able to bring joy and delight to the human heart. But without the Lord, these good things lose their ability to delight our hearts. There is an ever-present noise of anxiety and unease in our hearts that no earthly joy can quiet. But the love of God through Jesus can quiet this noise, and we then become able to enjoy life

as an adventure with God. The second good thing that happens is that our love for Jesus deepens.

#### **IV. The Blessing of God's Protection**

Jesus is honest about the dangers we face in this world. As mentioned previously, God's people can expect to be hated because of our faithfulness to Jesus and his word. Jesus prays, **"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one"** (v. 15). There is evil in this world, and there is a shrewd and experienced author of this evil. Satan's goal is to destroy God's people and to destroy God's Church, and we are no match for his schemes. But there is one who will protect us, and Satan is no match for him.

Perhaps in the coming months after Wendy and I have moved to Chattanooga, you may feel some vulnerability. There are indeed real dangers, but I want to remind you of Jesus' prayer here. He assures us of his protection. There is only One who is indispensable to this church, and it's not me. The Lord Jesus is King and Head of the Church, and he's not going anywhere.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

You are a blessed congregation, and I have been so privileged to have had a small part to play in what God has done here. I want you to move forward into the future with great joy and expectation of what God will continue in and through you. And I also want to ask you to pray for Wendy and me. We too are entering a time of uncertainty. As we walk together into the future, let us both do so with the joy of God's grace, God's words, and assurance of God's protection.