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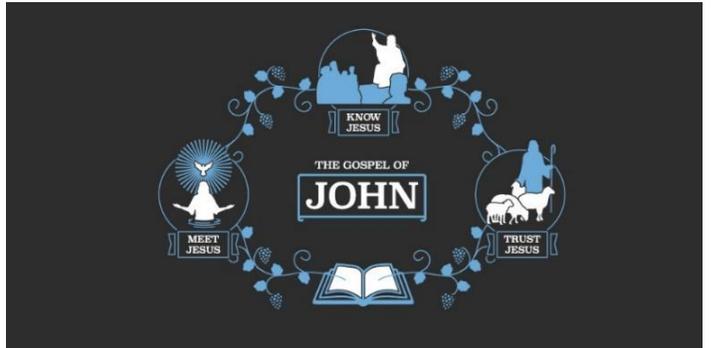
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

The Prayer of Jesus

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 17:6-19

Tim Badal | May 22, 2022



Turn in your Bibles to John 17 this morning. I want to welcome those of you in the room and also on line. We're in the last moments of Jesus' earthly ministry, and moments away from His arrest. We're also hours away from His crucifixion. Jesus dedicated this time to praying to His Father in heaven.

In His prayer, we learn some truths about praying. Earlier in his Gospel John tells us about the miracles and the messages of Jesus, as well as His methods of loving the world. But here we see Jesus, in the most important time of His earthly ministry, dedicating these minutes to a conversation with His Father.

As we hear Jesus' words and realize He was praying specifically for us, we're reminded of the importance of prayer in our lives as well. If Jesus, who was all powerful and all knowing, considered it right to pray, then surely we who are finite and broken should pray all the more.

E.M. Bounds says this about prayer: "Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed." Do you enjoy the opportunity you have to pray? Is it something you see as a duty or a drudgery, or is it something you have the privilege of doing? Bounds says prayer is "a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty."

In John 17 we have what I like to call "the real Lord's Prayer." In it we not only discover the importance of prayer, but it also gives us insight into what our prayers should contain. For example, we don't see much about Jesus' health issues or His other circumstances. Rather, He prayed that His people would fulfill the mission God has for them. If you're like me, if we didn't have this example, we might think our prayer lives are okay.

But when we compare them to His prayers, it can seem like our prayers are much more self-centered than they should be. Jesus' prayer is clearly selfless. We know He had a lot to worry about, and yet He dedicated this time right before the forces of evil would do their best to destroy Him to pray, not for Himself, but for us. We will see next week where He also prays for those who have yet to believe, who are to receive the message of the gospel from us who are His followers.

Jesus is giving us a great example in this prayer. But as Christians, we'll still do what we usually do with regard to prayer. We'll accumulate all kinds of information about prayer, tools to help us in prayer, and we'll think that's all we need. One of our greatest excuses for not praying is that we don't know how to pray or we don't know what to pray about.

So we buy all kinds of books and other resources to teach us how to pray. But sadly, this never seems to get us to praying more. For example, there was a popular book on the subject of prayer that took the world by storm. It was called The Prayer of Jabez. How many of you remember that? Yours was one of the ten million copies that were sold in the United States.

The book focused on an unknown passage of Scripture in 1 Chronicles. I don't have any issues with the book, but I want to use it as a reminder that we have more knowledge about prayer than we know what to do with. Eventually we not only had the original book, we had The Prayer of Jabez for men, the Prayer of Jabez for women, the Prayer of Jabez for teens, for kids, for dog

lovers, for cat lovers. You had the Prayer of Jabez key chains, chewing gum, mints...man, we had the Prayer of Jabez everywhere.

A study was done some years afterward, a survey of the people who had bought the book, who had gone through the study guides and had gotten involved in all that. The question was: "Are you praying more?" and the answer across the boards was, "No." We love to talk about prayer, but it doesn't move us to pray.

So as we look at prayer as it's modeled for us by Jesus, I want to show you how it reveals what He thinks about prayer and about us. My hope is that you would take what you hear today and that it would convict and compel you to pray. Jesus isn't so concerned about how you pray or the posture of your praying or the timing of your praying. He just wants you to pray.

One theologian put it this way. "Prayer is simply a conversation between friends." I want to show you how much Jesus thinks of you and the kind of friend He wants to be to you. In turn, I want you to recognize, "If that's what Jesus thinks of me, I want to be in an ongoing conversation with Him."

So we'll be looking at four things from the middle part of Jesus' prayer in John 17 that He says about us or thinks about us, what He's doing for us, and how this should impact our prayer lives.

1. In His prayer, we see Jesus is proud of us.

The first thing I want you to see this morning is simple, and it might come across a bit odd to you, but it's this: Jesus is proud of us. Given the circumstances, this might not make any sense to us at all. As we'll see, in the next few minutes the eleven disciples who remained were about to do a bunch of dumb things. They would desert and even deny Him. They would doubt Jesus.

You might have thought that Jesus would feel some remorse or regret at having picked these men. You might have thought that somewhere in His prayer He would have said, "I pray for these men who have lost their minds. Even though I've taught them to stay faithful, they are utterly faithless."

But as we'll see in verses 9 through 16, there are no words of remorse or regret. Instead, there are words of deep love and possessiveness with regard to them and to us. In the disciples' worst moments, and in ours, Jesus says to the Father, "I love them," and then speaks words of affirmation about us.

First, look at all the possessive terms in these verses. In verse 6 we read, "*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me.*" In other words, He's saying to the Father that you and I as His followers belong to Him. He goes on to say:

Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ 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; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

You don't hear any remorse or regret in these words. There is no distancing of the disciples from Jesus. If there was ever a time He might want to distance Himself from His disciples, it would be in that moment. Let's be honest. They were about to do everything in their power to distance themselves from Him.

You and I need to hear this loud and clear this morning. In our worst moments, Jesus is never closer to us. In your most shameful moments, in your most sinful moments, Jesus is saying the same things about you that He said about His disciples: "You are Mine." To illustrate this, I want to go back to history.

About a week ago we celebrated the anniversary of an event, one of the most profound events that would ever happen in professional sports history. It happened at a baseball game in Cincinnati. In 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers were playing the Cincinnati Reds. This is the first year that Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major league baseball.

As a result, the individuals who did not want African-Americans playing baseball started to really give it to Jackie Robinson. He was receiving death threats and other terrible letters about his wife and children. There were hateful and bigoted things being

uttered from the stands for the entire game. I cannot comprehend how that man was able to endure the amount of sorrow and pushback he faced.

But it came to a fever pitch during the first inning of a game in Cincinnati. They had given him multiple death threats. "If you come here, you will die. You will not leave this road trip alive." He went out in the first inning, and they let him have it. The sports writers of that day said it seemed as if everybody was against Jackie Robinson in Cincinnati.

That was until the middle of the first inning. Pee-wee Reese was Cincinnati's hometown hero, a native, life-long resident of northern Kentucky. Pee-wee Reese did the unthinkable. In the middle of the game, he stopped the game and walked over to Jackie Robinson and put his arm around him. The sports writer that were there that day said the crowd went from hurling insults to becoming mute.

In that moment, the enemies of a man stopped accusing him, because another person was willing to be associated with him. The moment was memorialized in a statue that was placed in Brooklyn a couple years ago. It was called "The Embrace."

The lesson I want you to gain from that is this. When the world, your enemies and the devil himself accuse you of wrong and tell you how worthless you are—and unlike Jackie Robinson, you might deserve this pushback because of your sin—in that moment Jesus comes and puts His arm around you. By doing this, He renders our enemies mute, because He says, "I'm with them. They're with Me."

If we would grasp this, our prayer lives would change. Not only does Jesus accept us in the face of our sin, but look at how He does this. In verse six Jesus says to His disciples, and to us today, "*And they have kept your word.*" Jesus, You've got to be kidding. How can You say about the disciples that they've kept Your word?

Jesus doesn't see you where you are today—He sees you where you're going. Let me say that again, because obviously you're still sleeping. Jesus doesn't see you where you're at—He sees you where you're going. Jesus says, "I began a good work you. I'm seeing you now at completion." He doesn't see you in the middle of the race, running for your life. He sees you when you cross the finish line as the victor.

We do this as parents with our children, especially as our children grow older. We don't see our children in their mistakes or their sin. Let me use my three boys as an example. They're not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. They've done a lot of dumb things. They've sinned. Let's face it—their mom's DNA runs in them strong.

Actually, they're just acting like their father, not their mother. But when one of you will say, "Tell me about your sons," I don't give them a litany of their mistakes. In this moment, they're doing well. They're doing well in school. They're serving their communities. Of course, I'm so thankful to say they love Jesus and they love their mom. And they're not like their dad—that's huge. So I talk about where they're going, not so much where they've been.

I want you to know that the Bible says Jesus takes our sins and casts them as far as the east is from the west. They're not even in His thoughts. He sees us as victors, as righteous, and He says, "I know what they're going to do. They're going to change the world. They're going to keep the Word. Yes, they're going to fail from moment to moment, but they are going to impact the world just as I knew they would."

Jesus says something in verse 10 that I think is really incredible. "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them." Underline that, because I think it will be helpful for you. Doesn't that hit you like, "Wait a minute. Something's wrong here. How can the perfect, infinite, all-knowing and all-powerful God, Creator God, Who is enthroned in praise and worship and adoration—how can He receive glory in me? How do I give Him glory?"

Again, I want to use the analogy of the parent-child relationship. As a young person, I got to play sports and be part of things, and I loved it. For some today, or maybe this week, you have had the joy of watching your child walk across a stage to receive a diploma, just as you did some time ago.

What I've come to realize as a parent is there is one thing better than getting your own diploma, there's one thing better than hitting the game-winning hit in baseball, or having the solo in the concert, or having the lead in the play, and that one thing is watching your children do that. Amen?

There are a couple truths I've learned as a parent that I didn't know as a kid. Number one—and kids, you should hear this—I had no earthly idea how much my parents loved me. If my parents loved me with a fraction of how I love my children, holy cow, I would have worked really, really hard to make my parents prouder than they were. I now know how much they loved me.

Number two, I had no earthly idea how proud they were when good things happened with me. So I stand in those moments—and you do as well—let's be honest. Your kid has the solo in the recorder concert, and it's terrible, right? What do you do? You're not going, "Oh, it's terrible." You're like, "That's my kid. That's squeaker—that's what we call him now. Man, he's great!" You glory in that.

Your kid's going to walk across the stage and get their diploma. "That's our boy. That's our girl." We are glorified when our kids find success. Listen, when you walk in accordance with the wisdom and Word of God, Jesus gets up out of the stands and says, "That's My brother. That's My sister. Those are the people I went to the cross to die for." He glorifies Himself in what you do.

You need to grab hold of that. You need to take ownership of that. So many of us are in our sin and shame, and we can't get beyond this. We think it's because the Lord is convicting us. No, the devil wants us to stay at arm's length from the Lord. If we're arm's length from the Lord, we will never pray.

And if we never pray, we'll never be effective, and the devil is laughing all the way home, saying, "I've got them thinking Jesus hates them." But Jesus is saying in this prayer, "I love them, and I couldn't love them any more than I do." We need to receive that, because when we do, that conversation between friends will be free-flowing.

I love what one of my friends, Ray Pritchard, says about this. "God never looks down from heaven and says, 'You're such a loser. I'm through with you.'" He's not ashamed to be the God of those who trust in Him. He does not judge us by what we are, but by what we will some day be. He has destined us for heaven, and no matter how many mistakes we make along the way, God's grace is more than sufficient to cover them all.

God intends to take all His redeemed children to heaven, and not one of them will fail to make it. Some of us will run triumphantly, and others will stumble across the finish line. But by God's grace, we will prevail, because God is not ashamed to be our God today, tomorrow and forever. Amen.

So, church, grab this truth. Jesus loves you. Jesus wants to be near you. And in your worst moment, Jesus is putting His arm around you, saying, "I've never wanted to be closer to you than I am right now." When we see Jesus in that light, all we're going to want to do is talk with Him. All we're going to want to do is spend time with Him. Jesus is proud of you.

2. In His prayer, we see Jesus is providing for us.

Second, Jesus is providing for you. Notice in verse six that Jesus says, "I have manifested your name." Some translations don't have "your name" there. It just says, "I have manifested you." I like that the ESV says, "your name." In the Hebrew culture, your name meant the totality of who you are.

Jesus is saying, "I have made evident, God the Father, all of Who You are, to Your children." That's important, because these Jewish people who were hearing Jesus pray this—John and the other disciples—they knew that according to the Jewish faith, no one can see the Father. In the Jewish faith no one hears from the Father. The Father is far off.

But with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that which was far off came near. God put on flesh and made His dwelling among us. We beheld the glory of the one and only Father, God in heaven. That's why the apostle Paul wrote that in Christ all the fullness of deity dwelled in bodily form. Jesus was right in saying, "If you have seen Me, you've seen the Father."

This is so important. Look at verse eight, where He says, "I have given them the words that you gave me." The picture is that Jesus and the Father in heaven had a conversation. Jesus left that conversation, and then comes to us and tells us the exact things the Father shared with Him.

That means when we listen to the words of Jesus, we have everything we need to find success in this world. That's why the apostle Paul says we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing under heaven. We have everything we need, the apostle Peter says, for life and godliness. There's nothing we're lacking, and the reason why is when Jesus came, He announced to us all

the Father wanted us to know. That means that when we hear from Jesus, when we read these words of Jesus, we know the mind and heart of God Himself. We have everything we need to accomplish what God requires of us.

3. In His prayer, we see Jesus is protecting us.

Jesus is proud of us, Jesus is providing for us, and number three, Jesus is protecting us. He moves in His prayer to a time of supplication, just like we do. This is a little odd, because Jesus, Who needs nothing, is requesting something. As we learned in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is serving as our sympathetic Savior. He is identifying with us in our needs, and He is interceding for us with the Father.

Now, I'm going to share some things theologically that are going to sound a little odd. I want to affirm some things first, and then I'm going to talk to you about them. First, God knows everything. He has a limitless knowledge, and knows everything about us. But there's a difference between knowledge and experience. Would everybody agree with that? I can know things that I haven't experienced.

God has some things in His life that He's never experienced. God has never experienced telling a lie, because God cannot lie. God has not experienced falling into sin, because He can never be tempted and then fall into sin. So there are things God hasn't experienced.

One of the things God hasn't experienced prior to Christ was being human. He knows what it's like to be God—He's experienced that. But I think what Jesus is saying to the Father here, as a sympathetic God-Man—that means 100% God and 100% man—is this: "Father, I know what it's like to be human. It's not easy."

Some of you need to hear that today. Some of us think Jesus is looking down His nose and saying, "I lived perfectly—why can't you?" Jesus knows what it's like to be frail like us. He knows what it's like to have the world tempting us and the devil trying to deceive us. He experienced all that.

Now He goes to the Father, Who has not experienced that. God the Father has not experienced life here on earth. He knows it, but He hasn't experienced it. Notice what Jesus says on our behalf, as our sympathetic Savior. He says, "You've got to keep them. You've got to watch over them." Look at what He prays, beginning in verse 11.

¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

Jesus is interceding with the Father on our behalf. He says, "Father, I want to tell You something You've not experienced. I want to tell you what it's like to be a human. It's not easy. It's taking all of Who I am to be faithful and true, and I have been that. But now I'm asking that You will give them the help they need." What is Jesus asking for? He's petitioning the Father to send the Holy Spirit to guard and keep us, just as He had done with the disciples. Therefore because of what He's asking, we have 100% success in being kept in the faith once we've come to faith.

But then He brings up something important—the man Judas. He says, "I kept all of them except Judas," and He calls him "the son of destruction." He then mentions that this was to fulfill the Scriptures. Here's what we need to know about Judas. Judas did not surprise Jesus with his betrayal. Earlier Jesus had told the disciples, "One of you is the devil." Later He also told them, "One of you is going to betray Me."

As Judas is contemplating betrayal, Jesus tells him, "Go do what you're planning to do—and do it quickly." Jesus always knew that although Judas was with Him, he wasn't really with Him. Does that make sense? That's a stark reminder, church, that you can hang around Jesus, you can experience the blessings of Jesus, you can sit under the teaching of Jesus—and never be with Jesus.

One-eighth of the disciples thought they could gain salvation by osmosis, by proximity. Could it be that one-eighth of this group here today might be falling under the same thinking? Some of you are like, "I'm with Jesus because my parents are with Jesus. I'm with Jesus because my pastor is with Jesus. I'm with Jesus because my friends are with Jesus." But you, like Judas, aren't really with Jesus. You're hanging around, you're seeing all He's doing. You might even enjoy it.

We never hear a bad word from Judas, except when the woman breaks the alabaster jar, and he says very hypocritically that the money could have been given to the poor. But we're told that Judas was stealing at that point. Judas is a picture of the world that Jesus is trying to protect us from. Judas allowed the world in.

Brothers and sisters, the world is just as dubious and scheming now as it was then—and some of us are falling prey to it. We're more entangled with the world than we are enthralled with Jesus. Jesus says here however that those who are with Him will remain faithful.

Yet we know that Peter, James and John failed Him. To be with Jesus doesn't mean perfection. What it requires is perseverance. Judas didn't persevere, and it proved he was never with Jesus. I don't want to strike fear in any child of God by implying that they're Judas. But I do want to speak to any Judas' in this crowd and say, "Turn to Jesus before it's too late. Stop thinking that because you're close to Jesus, or because you're here, you're in."

The way you know you're in is that you obey Jesus and you love Jesus and you live for Jesus. When you fail, you run back to Jesus, and you seek His forgiveness and His cleansing. If that cycle is not part of your life, then you should take stock of your life and ask, "Am I really in Christ, or am I like Judas, deceiving myself and deceiving others?" Sadly, Judas didn't know this until it was too late. Some of us are living that betraying life.

So what are we to do? We pray. I was meeting with a mentor this week for lunch, and I asked him about his prayer life. He said, "Tim, I've written books on theology and done lots of big Bible studies and all that. But my prayer life is low level. I pray a simple prayer every day: Lord, forgive me. I'm a sinner. Have mercy on me." I find myself saying that over and over and over again. "Forgive me, Lord. I'm a sinner. Have mercy on me."

That resonated with me. I think we think we have to pray long verbose prayers. But it's simply a conversation. "Lord, would You be with me? Lord, would You forgive me? Lord, would You have mercy on me?" If we would just come to the place where we're reminded that we're a sinner and our sin is great, but our Savior is greater, and greater is His mercy. If we did that, the Judas elements in our lives would run away.

The devil wouldn't have the opportunity if we'd be praying that instead of watching some of the things we do, instead of reading some of the things we read, instead of participating in some of the things we do. If that would be part of our lives, it would be amazing how the temptations we face on a daily basis would flee from our lives.

Judas loved the world, and he got entangled in the world. So instead of being enthralled with Jesus through prayer, he lost his soul. Could it be that some here today might be on the same path, missing the blessing that would come? Notice the blessing Jesus describes in verse 13. *"But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."*

Jesus is saying, "The world will tell you, just like the world told Judas, that getting money will make you happy. The world is telling us that if we believe their lies, we'll be happy." Jesus says, "If you'll walk with Me, if you'll engage in an ongoing relationship with Me, My joy will be fulfilled in you." I know the joy of the world. There's a lot of joy you can find there. But I'll tell you I'd rather have Creator Jesus' joy than the counterfeit joy of the world.

4. In His prayer, we see Jesus is partnering with us.

Finally, Jesus is telling us that we need to partner with Him, because He is partnering with us. Look at the places in the text that tell us He is with us.

¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

If you are a follower of Jesus, Jesus is with you in the good, the bad and the ugly of your life. He is your closest friend. He will see you through to the finish line. But that doesn't mean He's dragging you along. Rather, He has called you and empowered you to walk in step with Him. That's what He means when He says, "Sanctify them."

So what does sanctification look like? It means looking less like the world and more like Jesus. Our goal isn't to try to get ourselves to the finish line. The goal we have is to simply be ready to run the race we've been given—and then leave the results to God. We run to the best of our abilities, and then leave the rest to God.

Let me ask you: how well are you running this race? How far are you in this process of sanctification? Jesus tells us that His Word is the key element in that process. Are you in the Word? Are you praying? You might be thinking, "That doesn't seem like much fun." But it's the discipline that will get you through life. Are those things part of your life? Jesus says we need to be sanctified. We need to be less like the world and more like Him. He says He fulfilled His ministry, He did His work, so that you and I could have this confidence: that in running our race, we will win the victory.

This last week our teenagers had state track. That's near and dear to me. I remember going to state for track, and I remember my coach telling me this. "If you would throw your best...." I know it surprises you that I wasn't a two-miler—I was a discus and shotput thrower. But he said this. "If you would throw your best, you'll win state. Be confident. I know what you throw, I've seen you throw. I know what everybody else is throwing. If you do that, you'll win." Well, I didn't do that...end of the story. So sad.

But what Jesus is saying to you as your friend and as your coach, "If you live up to what I've given you, you'll be victorious. You don't have to worry about the person running next to you. You don't need to worry about the devil getting in the way. You don't need to worry about the weather. You don't need to worry about anything else."

If you will live up to what Jesus has already done for you, you're already a victor. Here's the cream on the top. Jesus says, "But I know running that race is hard. So you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to run alongside you every step of the way." If that warms your heart, then I would encourage you to start talking with that friend, engaging with that friend, Who says, "I saw you from the beginning, and I'm going to see you to the end." Amen?

So run the race with perseverance, that which is marked out for you, and in the end you will be the victor. Jesus says, "I already see you at the finish line," and He is cheering us every step of the way. Man, if we would grab hold of this, how our prayers would be different.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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