

**Sermon: Praying for Life**

**Text: John 17**

**Discussion Questions:**

John 17 takes place late in the evening on the night before the crucifixion. Jesus has just spent the previous hours with the disciples in the upper room, washing their feet and instituting what we now call the Lords Supper. Judas has gone into the night to find the Roman soldiers in the world's supreme act of betrayal, and Jesus has been walking with the eleven disciples outside the walls of Jerusalem on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane. In these pivotal moments, Jesus has given the disciples (and us!) absolute clarity regarding their purpose in life: Go and bear good fruit in my name! This happens when we love others—and can ONLY happen as we “remain” in Jesus as a branch remains in a vine.

Jesus has also made it crystal clear that by intimately and obviously identifying ourselves with Jesus and His cause, we will inevitably face great struggle and opposition. Others will hate us for being a lover of Jesus. That's the bad news. The good news is that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit living within us—and the resurrected Jesus watching over us and praying for us from heaven (see John 16).

Here in John 17, just before Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane where He will be arrested, Jesus pauses to say a prayer over His disciples. He knows that the task that He is giving them is enormous. He knows the road ahead will be very difficult. Before we dig into exactly what Jesus prayed, put yourself in this situation—

Why do you think Jesus took this critical time (as the clock was ticking down to His arrest) to pray over His disciples?

How passionate do you think Jesus was in His prayer?

Make a list of the things you might think Jesus would pray for in this moment—and identify what you think Jesus would make as His highest priority request.

Since Jesus took the time to pray over His disciples like this, how important is it that we take the time to pray over those that we love? Why?

**Examination:**

- Read **John 17:1-5**
  - There are four things we need to take notice of in verse 1—four things we can learn from Jesus about prayer that can make a big difference in our own prayer life.
    - We see that Jesus “looked toward heaven and prayed.” This speaks to His posture—and how He chooses a posture that helps Him focus on God. What can you learn from this?
    - We see that Jesus addresses God as “Father,” which wasn't the common practice of prayer in the first century. Jesus uses a term of intimacy and

endearment that defines His relationship with God. What can you learn from this?

- Jesus realizes the urgency of prayer as He acknowledges that “the hour has come” for Him to go to the cross. This wasn’t just a “now I lay me down to sleep” sort of prayer. There is great urgency. What can we learn from this?
  - Most importantly, in this prayer we see that Jesus prays, “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” This shows us the purpose of prayer—which is to bring glory to God. What can you learn from this?
  - Over what did Jesus have authority, and what could He give (v.2)?
  - How did Jesus describe eternal life – and what is the essence of eternal life (v. 3)? Is this different from what we often think of with respect to eternal life?
  - What did Jesus do on earth, and how did He do it (v. 4)?
  - How did Jesus describe the glory He would receive (v. 5)?
- **Read John 17:6-19**
    - There is A LOT going on in verse 6! What did Jesus see as His responsibility with respect to the disciples? Why was revealing the Father such an important task? What do you think it means that the disciples were “yours”—implying that these eleven men belonged to God, and were literally given over to Jesus? How had the disciples obeyed God’s word?
    - Discuss the progression that occurred in the hearts of the disciples that we see in verses 7-8: Know—Accept—Knowing with Certainty—Belief. Is this the journey that every follower of Christ takes? How long does this journey take? Is a person truly a follower of Christ if they progress through stages 1, 2, or 3—and fail to move into belief?
    - What do you think Jesus means by “protect them” in verses 11-12 & 15?
    - Jesus returns to the theme of joy in verse 13. Why do you think He is talking so much about joy in these few chapters (see John 15:11; 16:20-24)?
    - What does Jesus mean when He says “Sanctify them...” (vv17-19)?
  - **Read John 17:20-26**
    - When Jesus talks about “those who will believe in me through their message...” (v. 20), who is He talking about?
    - What is Jesus’ prayer for this group of people (vv. 21-23)?
    - Of all the things that Jesus could pray on behalf of future believers (us!), why do you think unity is the ONE THING that He prays for (see v. 21 for a clue)?
    - According to verse 24, what does Jesus want for all believers? Why?
    - What do you think Jesus meant when He said that He will be “in us” (v. 26)?
    - What do you think it means to have the love that God the Father has for Jesus “in us”? Have you ever experienced the love of God like this? Is this something that God wants us to experience on a daily basis? How does this happen—and how might this impact our daily lives?

**Application:**

Give some thought to the changes that might need to be made in your life in order for Jesus’ prayer of truth and unity to be true in your life. Perhaps there are brothers and sisters in Christ that you need to stop criticizing. If so—how will you demonstrate unity with them moving forward?