

# Jesus' prayer for you

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning again and welcome to this passage, a great passage, John 17, as we were told so much in it and so many things and we're going to take our time a little bit to go through and pray that the Lord will bless us as we hear Jesus pray.

It's a rare privilege to be able to hear the Lord pray to his heavenly Father. Jesus' disciples were with him for three years and they called him their teacher, their rabbi, but the only thing we actually hear them asking him to teach them is to teach them how to pray.

And that, as you know from the Gospels, is the preface to Jesus then teaching them what we know as the Lord's Prayer. I wonder if the Lord was with us now, what you would ask him to teach you? Would prayer be the thing that comes to mind to teach us how to pray?

We did speak a little bit about prayer last week and throughout John chapters 13 to 16, you'll know that Jesus has spoken about prayer on a number of occasions.

The importance of praying in the importance of praying in the Father's name and then also that open promise that he will give to us whatever we ask in his name.

[ 1 : 27 ] And so prayer has been certainly one of the threads running through these chapters and now we hear the Lord himself pray.

The Bible, of course, does give us many clues on how to pray. It teaches us to pray. We have the Psalms. Many of them are prayers of the saints.

We have prayers of Paul scattered through his letters. We have Jesus teaching us the Lord's Prayer and we catch glimpses of Jesus praying. He prays earlier in the gospel at the graveside of Lazarus.

But our passage today is a lengthy prayer. It's at a momentous time. And once again, we can go to school on this prayer of Jesus. We can learn about his desires in prayer for himself, his disciples and his followers, as the headings in our Bible kind of outline.

And so I'm hoping that there'll be something here for us all as we contemplate our own prayers and we think about the things that we pray about. So let's look at the passage now together.

[ 2 : 39 ] As you know, it occurs at the end of Jesus' farewell address to his disciples, chapters 14 to 16, which we've been looking at. And that occurs in the context of his last meal with the disciples, that meal set up in chapter 13.

It's very simple. After Jesus had said this, all that he's been saying from chapters 14 to 16, he looked toward heaven and prayed. Does this strike you as a little bit unusual if he looks towards heaven?

Jesus did the same thing in the first prayer recorded in this gospel when he was at the tomb of Lazarus in chapter 11. He looks towards heaven.

Now, in one of Jesus' parables about prayer, he compares the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector. And one of the differences is their difference in posture. The Pharisee stands up.

The tax collector wouldn't even look up to heaven. He looks down because he knows he is so unworthy. And often when we pray, we will look down.

[ 3 : 47 ] We'll maybe be on our knees or we'll bow our head because we have that sense of unworthiness. Now, I don't want to make too much of this, but Jesus looks up to heaven.

He can do this because he is the obedient son who can look to his father without any sense of shame or unworthiness. As we might feel.

This is a significant moment as Jesus prays. And I think the looking up reflects the relationship that Jesus knows he has between the father and the son, that perfect relationship.

This is a very deep passage. It has many, many things in it. And a lot of the things mentioned, no doubt, felt a little bit familiar, even a bit repetitive, as these ideas Jesus has spoken about many

times in the previous chapters.

Jesus has talked about a lot of the content of this prayer. And it's good because it kind of summarizes many of the main themes of what has gone before while he's been speaking with the disciples.

[ 4 : 56 ] So it acts for us not only as an opportunity to hear Jesus pray, but it also summarizes many of the things that have been on his mind that he's been talking on this night as he farewells his disciples.

But it also means that we see Jesus praying on the basis of his own words. He's kind of taking his words and turning them into prayer before the heavenly father.

And in a roundabout way, I think that reminds us about one of the things that we do, can do, maybe should do in our own prayers.

Prayer is, to use the words of one writer, answering speech. When we pray, we are answering God. We may think we're speaking to God, but we are answering him.

God speaks to us first and we respond to him. We pray in response to him and his word. And one way to learn to pray, of course, is to hear the words of God and then to turn them back into prayer to him.

[ 6 : 05 ] And we've already kind of done that in this service. I don't know if you noticed our first psalm reading from Psalm 145. A couple of the themes were then picked up in the songs that we sang.

And those songs were kind of prayer-like. And we can do that. We can pick up the words of scripture and turn that speech back to our Lord in prayers of praise, in words of praise, in requests and so on.

Now, I'm not saying Jesus is doing that, but he does an even more unusual thing. He is reflecting on his own words as the divine son of God and turning them into prayer before his heavenly father. And I guess if it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us. The prayer falls into three parts, as we heard. Jesus first prays for himself.

And then he prays for the disciples who are with him. And then finally, he prays for those who will believe through the testimony of those disciples. That is all future believers.

[ 7 : 08 ] And that's where we come into the prayer particularly. We are mentioned and we are prayed for in this prayer. So we're going to look at each section by section.

Let's look at the first part of the prayer then, as Jesus prays for himself. The key word and the theme of this prayer is glory. Very simple.

Jesus asks the father to glorify him so that he might glorify the father. And this request tops and tails the prayer. You can see that in verse five as well.

In essence, Jesus is asking the father to complete what he has started. Jesus is asking the father to enable him to complete his mission and then return to the father's side to the rightful glory that is his.

The glory that he, in a sense, left behind in order to complete his mission. What is that mission?

Well, Jesus tells us in verses two, three and four.

[ 8 : 10 ] That mission was to bring eternal life to those that the father has given him. How does he do this? By making the father known.

By revealing the father. By helping us to see who the father is and what he has doing. And Jesus, of course, does this by revealing himself. And in that interesting verse three, he gives us a definition of eternal life.

Now, this is eternal life that you may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Jesus refers to himself in the third person.

Jesus, the Christ, the promised one of God, because he is referring to himself as both the source of revelation and the content of revelation. Jesus reveals the father.

And we need to continue to remind ourselves about this. The only way to eternal life to the father is through the son. Eternal life is a life with the father.

[ 9 : 40 ] It's a life with the father through the son. It's a life that is with the father through the son in and by the spirit. Father, son and spirit gather us up into the life of God.

And Jesus has been continually trying to communicate this. We don't know the father and the son. We know the one true God, father, son and spirit.

Now, the death and resurrection of Jesus are key to all of this. And that's why he mentions in that very first verse. He says, father, the hour has come.

This is a climactic hour that has been building through the gospel. And it's the hour of Jesus death and his resurrection. The death and resurrection of Jesus are key to understanding who God is. They are key to understanding how much God loves and how God loves us. They are key to how we may enter life. In short, Jesus death and resurrection are the moment of glory.

[10:46] The glory of God's character being revealed. The glory of God's love being revealed. The glory of the son's humble, willing sacrifice for his people, showing the love of the father and the son for us.

All of this is revealed. And then it's followed by the glory of a resurrected body and a salvation accomplished. It's a moment of glory.

And Jesus asks the father to take him in and through this moment to its end, to glorify him so that he might glorify the father.

And it's like a circle. It just keeps going round and round and round. We are to glorify God, Jesus is saying. And we do that by glorifying the son.

Now, sometimes there's a little bit of criticism of all this talk of glory. And now I've said the word glory too many times. You know, when you say a word over and over again, you start to lose the meaning of what it means.

[11:51] But it's a massive word in the Bible. And people are often suspicious in our world when we see people glorify themselves. They talk themselves up. They make claims about their greatness.

We think that is egotistical and self-serving. And this is sometimes the criticism from unbelievers about the talk of glory in the Bible. Is our God on a massive ego trip?

Does he crave praise and glory because he is somehow insecure? And he demands glory from his creatures. Is he rather than the God of the universe?

Is he not somehow the most self-centered person of the universe? Now, I mean, that sounds blasphemous and wrong because it is. But why? Why do we talk about God and his glory?

Just a couple of quick points. Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are truly glorious. We rightly sing to God be the glory great things he has done because he is the only being, the only one, the only person worthy in the universe of all glory, honor and praise because of who he is and because of what he has done.

[13:07] It is not an ego trip to receive what is entirely due to you. God demands his glory because he is the glorious one that is there.

God doesn't need our glory. In fact, we benefit from our glorying of God. And we've heard it here in this passage. The glory of God, the Father and the Son that Jesus prays for here brings life to his people.

This is eternal life, to know that glorious God. And that closed circle where the Father glorifies the Son and the Son glorifies the Father wondrously breaks open and we are included.

And Jesus will talk about a little bit later on how we share in God's glory. It's a glory that spills out. It's a glory that is other person-centered.

It's the glory of the character of our God that is marked by concern and interest in others. And the third very simple point is that we as people, as God's creatures, we are made to give glory to someone else.

[14:16] We are made to give glory to God. We are made for the glory of God. It is a natural thing to want to give glory. Again, we saw that in our service earlier.

After we'd sung to God be the glory, great things we had done, some of us couldn't resist applauding because we realize how good God is. When we go to a concert or a performance, if we sit there in silence at the end, it feels kind of weird.

We should give glory to what we see and appreciate. And of course, God himself is the one who has given us everything and he deserves our glory.

And it completes us by giving him the glory. This is what we were made for. But glory is tricky. Every day there is a battle in our lives for glory.

When you wake up in the morning, you may not ask this question consciously, but a question that will come to you is, who this day will you give glory to? Who will you give glory to?

[ 15 : 19 ] Will you give glory to yourself? Will you give glory to someone else? Or will you give glory to the God who alone deserves it? And we live in a world that encourages us to give glory to anyone or anything except the creator God who alone is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise.

Jesus' prayer places this question front and center. We serve a glorious God, Father, Son, and Spirit. So we should pray that our lips and our lives can be ever more clearly focused on his glory and all that means.

So I'm going to pause now and lead us in prayer before we move on to the second part. So please join me as we pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Father, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power.

Jesus, as the lamb who was slain, you are worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise. Father, thank you that you answered your son's prayer and that this means life for us.

[ 16 : 40 ] Thank you that we can gaze on your glory in the cross and look expectantly for the day when we will see Jesus in all his glory, seated at your glorious right hand.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the second part of the prayer, Jesus turns to pray for his disciples.

Now, before he does this, he recalls who the disciples are. Now, when we read the word disciple, we're tempted to read ourselves in straight away. We need to just kind of pause for a moment.

Jesus is now praying for the original disciples, the 11. Judas has left. He's gone out into the dark. And Jesus, when he's praying about his disciples, he means the original disciples that he has chosen.

They are the ones, Jesus says, to whom Jesus gave the words of God. They are the ones who, by God's grace, accepted these words as the word of God.

[ 17 : 40 ] They obeyed, Jesus said. Jesus revealed the Father to them and they understood his mission. They might not have understood it fully, but they understood and they stuck with Jesus.

They believed and they knew. God can't be known without believing, but believing also involves knowing. And Jesus prays for them, therefore.

He prays for two connected things. He prays for their mission and he prays for their protection. In fact, he prays that they will be protected while they continue the mission that he has set them apart for.

So in verse 11, Jesus prays that his Holy Father would protect the disciples by the power of his name. Let's just pause a moment on that phrase, Holy Father.

It's just an interesting way to refer to God. And this is the only time in the gospel that Jesus does that. Holy and Father. We're reminded of the complete transcendence of God.

[ 18 : 42 ] The fact that he is wholly other than us. He is the creator. We are creatures. He lives in unapproachable light and his righteousness and his holiness are way beyond.

It makes him kind of distant. But we serve the Holy One who is our Father. The one who has come close. And so we need to hold both these truths as we understand who our God is.

We rightly sing his praise as the Holy One, but we rightly address him as the Father who loves us as children. And so it's a really good phrase to remember as it brings these two aspects of our God together in thinking about it.

Jesus prays that the Holy Father would protect the disciples by the power of his name. In verse 12, Jesus says he kept the disciples safe by the same name.

And then in verse 15, he prays that they will be protected from the evil one. So Jesus prays for protection. He prays that they will be guarded. But what from?

[ 19 : 44 ] Well, he talks a little bit about Judas. Judas, the mention of the one who was lost, that's a reference to Judas, suggests that protection is not from physical harm, but that word loss is then also paired with the word destruction.

He's talking about spiritual loss. Jesus quickly makes the point that Judas's loss, his judgment, was according to Scripture. Judas was not carelessly lost, but he was cut off by Jesus as an unfruitful branch.

And Jesus prays, though, for the disciples because he's sending them out into the world, a world that he has already warned them about back in chapter 16.

This is a world that will kill some of them, thinking that this is bringing glory to God. This is a world that will persecute, will ignore, will reject the disciples.

And this can lead sometimes to disciples of Jesus thinking that it's not worth it and giving up. Jesus told them back in chapter 16 that he's telling them all of this. He's warning them.

[ 20 : 49 ] You remember this, that when it happens, they would not stumble. They would not be lost. And now he prays in the same way. He's praying that they may stay in the Christian faith, that they will stay true to him in the midst of the world.

They need this protection because Jesus is not taking them out of the world, but rather he is keeping them in the world. He is, in fact, sending them to the world.

And he is confident that God can and will answer this prayer. What are the disciples to do in the world? Well, they've already brought glory to Jesus through them in verse 10.

And it will happen again. They are to bring glory as they proclaim Jesus' message and as they are unified as they are one.

And Jesus now prays. He consecrates them. He sets them apart to the mission that God has given them. And at the very end of that section, in verses 17 forward, he sanctifies them, he says.

[ 21 : 57 ] Sanctify them in the truth. Set them apart for the task. Dedicate them to the task of proclaiming God's truth, God's message. Their task is to testify to Jesus who embodies God's truth.

This mission is part of his mission. Verse 18. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And so there's a connection between Jesus' mission and the disciples' mission.

They will be his witnesses. They can't do what Jesus did in his mission. They can't die for the sins of the world and reveal God in that way.

But what they can do is they can participate by spreading that message, by expressing God's offer of love and life as they testify to who Jesus is.

In the end of that prayer, Jesus himself sanctifies himself. Verse 19. I sanctify myself. He sets his face towards what lies ahead as the mission is completed in his death and resurrection.

[ 23 : 06 ] And that is the beginning of the disciples' mission based on Jesus' death and resurrection. So Jesus prays for protection for these original disciples.

He prays that they may be equipped and empowered to do the mission that he wants them to do to testify to him. We can thank God that this prayer of Jesus was answered.

We can thank God that these disciples were protected. We can thank God that these protected disciples went and proclaimed, and not only proclaimed, but they also wrote down for us the words and the deeds of Jesus, the message of God, so that we can now benefit ourselves.

And as we sit here this morning in a church called together in Jesus' name, we sit here as believers hearing the same message because of their witness to us.

We are here today because that message started way back, way away, and it's reached here. It's even reached the ends of the earth. It's reached Australia of all places.

[ 24 : 17 ] And here I am able to speak because of their witness and because of that great chain that's going on. And we can now think about our own role in Jesus' ongoing mission.

So once again, I'm going to ask us to pause and to pray, and let's thank God that this prayer was answered for the protection of those witnesses. Now, Father, we thank you that you heard and answered Jesus' prayer for his disciples.

Thank you that you kept them safe in the world so they could proclaim your message of truth and continue to bring glory to the Lord Jesus after his ascension. Thank you that we benefit today from their faithfulness, enabled by your preserving power.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. The third part of the prayer. In the third part of the prayer, Jesus prays for all who will believe through the message of the disciples.

See how this prayer expresses confidence in God's answering of the prayer. There will be future disciples. The message will bear fruit as they proclaim.

[ 25 : 27 ] There will be future believers, and that's us. So this is what Jesus is praying for us. And as he does, he picks up two threads to this particular prayer.

He prays for unity, and he prays for mission. And these are the things that he is praying for his people. And these two themes, unity and mission, coil around each other as Jesus speaks between verses 20 to 23.

He prays that we might be one. He prays that believers will be one, so the world might know the truth that Jesus came to proclaim.

Our unity is part of our witness, part of our mission to the world. Let's think about unity first of all. The unity that Jesus talks about is the same unity, he says, that he shares with the Father. The language is so close. See what he says? There's phrases like, in me, in you, in us. In verse 21, there's shared glory, such as our unity and our oneness.

[ 26 : 36 ] Then he says, I in them, you in me. A unity that sounds like a plant, maybe, a vine and branches, as he's spoken about in John 15.

A unity of love, a unity of purpose, a unity of action, the same mind, the same heart, the same will. A unity that is convictional and spiritual and personal, recognising that others are, to use the phrase, on the same page as us, or singing from the same song sheet.

A unity that can embrace differences, but still remain unified. It's a spiritual unity, and that's why our language struggles a little bit to express it.

And that's why Jesus has to say it in so many different ways. The unity between the Father and the Son is, I am in him, you are in me, we are in us. All of this language is trying to give us the feeling, the sense of the unity that is there.

It's a unity that the Lord gives us. It's a unity created from above. It's a unity that's based on the fact that we are part of one body, as the New Testament talks about.

[ 27 : 52 ] We are indwelt by the same spirit, by one spirit. We share one hope, the same hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, as Paul says in Ephesians 4.

And all of this means that we are one, as we have also sung there. Jesus says that it's a unity that is lived in the world for the sake of the world.

The unity seen amongst believers is so the world will believe that the Father sent the Son. The world will know that the Father loves his people as he has loved Jesus.

The very existence of the Christian church is a testimony to God's great act of unification, of him reconciling the world in Christ.

And it's even better, Jesus seems to be saying, when that church is unified and speaks with the same voice, expresses the same love, so that the world around can see.

[ 28 : 56 ] Now, what do you think when you hear the Lord Jesus pray for unity? Some people kind of get a little bit disappointed, not in the prayer so much, but as they look at the church around.

There's sometimes talk, confusion, maybe even guilt when we read this passage. For many people, unity or lack of unity is one of the great problems with Christianity.

They say there are so many Christian groups, so many denominations, all apparently disagreeing with one another, all apparently divided. Where is the unity?

And this is a massive issue in a world that is also not united and needs desperately to see how it can be more united. And maybe because of the guilt of the world, it starts to point the finger, particularly at the church.

We say you talk about unity. How do we think about this kind of unity? Again, let me make just a couple of points. The unity Jesus is talking about here is first of all, a spiritual unity in the truth in God.

[ 30 : 08 ] We so easily confuse organizational unity with spiritual unity. But Jesus' unity is first of all, a unity between people based on the truth of God that we recognize that we are one together.

It's a unity that can cross organizations and it can cross churches. It can cross groups. It can cross denominations because it is a spiritual unity, not an organizational unity.

We don't need one worldwide church because in a sense, we already have one worldwide church. It's just that it's invisible. We can't see it.

We see visible churches, but there is one worldwide group of God's people that is unified, but it's dispersed throughout the world and meets in different congregations.

When we talk about unity of the church, people often tend to think of global unity. But when the New Testament talks about church, it means this congregation.

[ 31 : 13 ] It means congregations. That's its first point of reference. Unity of the church is first and foremost a matter for this congregation to think about first of all.

We can talk loosely about the church, but when the New Testament talks, it means the congregation. Now, Jesus is not using the word church here, but the point applies.

As we think about putting this passage into practice, and as we think about how do we even begin to apply what Jesus is saying about unity, here is where it starts.

This unity is where we make every effort to maintain the unity we've been given in Christ. Here is where we keep the unity of the Spirit, the unity that's been gifted to us by the Spirit, the oneness of being brothers and sisters again as we sang in this family, in this congregation.

This is where we start by thinking about it. And right through the New Testament, we see evidence of Christians trying to work out practically the unity they share in Christ in their congregations.

[ 32 : 24 ] You might know the book of Philippians, where Paul urges two women in the congregation, Euodia and Syntyche, to agree with one another because they are fighting.

There's a dispute. We don't know what it is. And the congregation is asked to help these two women to unite, to put aside their differences and to come together in unity in the congregation.

Paul writes a letter to Philemon and urges unity between Philemon and his runaway slave Onesimus to welcome him back, not as a slave, but as a brother united in Christ.

When you read the New Testament, we see the struggle the New Testament church had to unite Jews and Gentiles, these two different ethnic groups, to be united, to express the unity that they have in Christ.

And Paul is full of one another statements, which are aimed at helping Christian people in congregations to bear with one another, to love with one another, to be united to one another, to work out, to live out the unity that is here.

[ 33 : 32 ] The New Testament is really honest that unity is not easy to live out in practice. Like all things in the Bible where there's plenty of dirty linen, dirty washing being shown, where there's no hiding the fact that we are sinful people, wonderfully saved by a gracious God on the way to the kind of perfection that God has already won for us.

We are unified in Christ by the Spirit, but living it out isn't always easy. But the point is, unity starts here. And so that puts the question to us, are there brothers and sisters sitting around us whom we might need to start thinking about how to love better, how to be more unified with?

These things can happen in congregations. What about denominations? Well, it's no problem that different churches organise themselves differently in different places.

This has always been the way. We believe in unity, not in uniformity. Denominations are a curious thing. I'm from the Anglican denomination.

I don't think you call yourselves denominational, but you're part of the BEM group of churches.

Sounds like a denomination to me, except you don't have a bishop. I don't kind of get that because I'm an Anglican. But we believe in spiritual unity and that can run across denominations.

[ 34 : 57 ] We believe that feelings of unity, feelings of being one will run across denominational lines and between churches. And many times, I felt a greater sense of unity with believers from other denominations and other churches, sometimes than from my own Anglican church, as various parts of the Anglican church depart from the truth of God's message in quite often radical ways.

I mean, just think about today. Here I stand, an Australian white guy, Anglican, talking to Malaysian and a group of people who are in the BEM group of churches.

And yet, I sense a profound unity. We are all singing from the same song sheet. We believe the same things as we've heard in the service, all that kind of stuff.

There is a unity that is expressed. I recognise you as brothers and sisters and I hope you recognise me as a brother. We are on the same page, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

This is the kind of unity that the scriptures are talking about that we pursue. Of course, division is never a good look. But we need not be, but we need to pursue the true unity.

[ 36 : 13 ] We don't give up the spiritual unity based on the truth for the sake of organisation or gloss. That in the, I don't know if you know the phrase, that's just putting lipstick on a pig.

It's making it look nice, but it's not changing the reality. The reality is that we, our unity in Christ is based on the truth of the gospel, based on a shared commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who reveals himself, who reveals God, sorry, as Father, Son and Spirit.

Finally, in verse 24, Jesus looks to the eternal future and he prays for the destiny of his followers. And he prays that they will be where he is, that is, they will be with the Father.

The desire of God is to be with his people forever. And that's the picture we're given right at the end of the Bible in Revelation where God comes from heaven to earth and the dwelling of God will now be with his people.

We will be in his presence and there will be a final unity when we will be gathered, a vast, unnumbered people from every tribe, language, nation and tongue, we're told.

[ 37 : 23 ] Revelation chapter 7, gathered around the throne, singing the praises of our God together in a glorious picture of unity, offering praise and worship to our Father and the one who sits upon the throne and the Lamb.

And all of this, Jesus says, is made possible because he was sent to make God known by living, by speaking, by dying, by rising.

Jesus enables us to know God and to live. And he will continue, he says, to make God known. We may know, we can know today, as we've been saying a number of times through these talks, we are loved and we are included in the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

That is our destiny. And so Jesus talks about glory in each segment and commences to give glory to God. He talks about unity amongst the original disciples and about ourselves and all of this is for the sake of the mission that the world around us may know the same glorious truths that we know and that will go full circle and it will bring once again glory to our glorious God.

Let's conclude in prayer. Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to us and gathering us into one family through the death of your son, Jesus.

[ 38 : 55 ] Please help us to express the unity that is ours in our common life together in this congregation. Please help us to live harmoniously with one another, sharing the same truths, the same faith with our other Christian brothers and sisters.

Father, we ask that you will use this unity and our verbal witness to bring more people to yourself.

Father, we pray that many will have the opportunity along with us to live knowing you as their father and they with us will seek to bring you glory in all that we do and say and this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.