The Lord's prayer for His own - 2

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Preacher: Rev J.J.Murray

[0:00] Turn now to the Gospel according to John, chapter 17, verses 20. The Gospel according to John, chapter 17, verse 20.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me, see their word. That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee. That they also may be one in us. That they all may believe that thou hast sent me.
And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. That they may be one, even as me are one. I in them, and thou in me. That they may be perfect in one. And as the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.
Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am. That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. For thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.
That I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name. And will declare it, that the love for which thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.
[1:16] To be done last, Lord, for the evening to look at this, the high-feely prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. This prayer in which he speaks to the Father. This prayer of the Son of God.

And we mention what a great privilege it is for us to hear such a prayer, to overhear such a prayer. It is also a blessing that this prayer has been recorded for us by the Apostle John.
It has been written for us, and that it is here for our edification. And we saw that this prayer was divided into three sections. There was first of all a prayer that Christ prayed for himself in verses 1 to 5.
And this prayer is that he might be glorified. But first of all, that he might be glorified on the cross. And then secondly, that he might be glorified in heaven.
The first prayer for himself is that he might be glorified in the cross. And when he is glorified in the cross, then two things will happen. The Father will be glorified, and the people will be saved.
[2:23] So therefore, it is not a selfish prayer. It is a prayer for his own glorification, in order that the Father might be glorified, and that the people might be saved.

And then the second section is verses 16 to 19, in which he prays for the apostles, for the disciples. And he prays for them that they might be kept.
First of all, that they might be kept in the Father's name. And secondly, that they might be kept from the evil one, from this world, or the one who is the prince of this world, the devil.
They are not belonging to the world. And our study wants them to be kept from the evil of the world. And we saw the tension there was between the fact that we are in the world, but we are not of the world.
So how do you relieve the tension? Well, you relieve the tension by going as a mission into the world. You are not of the world, yet you are in the world, and you are sent into the world.
[3:28] And that's why Jesus prays in verse 17, Consecrate them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. He wants his disciples to be consecrated to mission. To be consecrated to do their work in the world.
To continue the work that he began, which was a mission to the world. And that's his prayer for them. Now in verses 20 to 26, we come to the third section of this prayer.
And that is the prayer for the church. The prayer for future believers. The prayer for the entire body of Christ. Neither pray I for these alone, not for the apostles, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word.

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For all future generations of Christians, he's now praying. For all who will believe in generations to come, he offers this prayer to the Father. And there's two aspects to this prayer.
[4:38] The first aspect is that he prays for the unity of all believers. And then he prays that all believers might share his glory.

And we'll look at these in turn. He prays first of all for the unity of all believers. And then he prays secondly for the desire that he has that they will share his glory in the world to come.
I do not pray, he says, for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. The prayer for the church in the future.
For all the generations to come. For all the Christians that are going to be in the world after the apostles have left this world. And his prayer is that they all may be one.
Now this is a well known phrase to us today. You might call it the proof text of the ecumenical movement. Of the great unity movement that's in the world today.
[5:43] And the sad thing is that this phrase is taken out of context. We hear people proclaiming on every hand that they may be one. This is the great goal that we must set ourselves in the royal church.

We must seek to be one. And the whole thing is taken out of context. Because what we must look at this evening in this prayer of our Lord. Is the nature of this unity that he's speaking about.
What is the nature of the unity that our Lord is speaking about here? Well, there's two things to consider. And first of all, we must remember that this unity that he is speaking about is a unity with the apostles.
It's a unity with the apostles. I pray for those who will believe in me through their message. Through the message of the apostles.
Jesus sees generation after generation of Christians. And what is true of these generations? Well, this is true of them. That they are all going to believe through the apostles' words.
[6:55] They're all going to believe as a result of the apostles' words. The apostles bore a testimony to Christ. And their words have been recorded in scripture.

The apostolic foundation of the church. And it is through that word that the men and women in the future generations are going to believe.
And that's, you see, what our Lord is speaking about here in the first instance. He is speaking about the group of apostles.
The group of disciples that were with him. And he's speaking about the great multitude of believers who are going to come after them. And what does he say?
He says there's going to be an historical continuity between them. Between the apostles and between the subsequent generations of the church.
[7:52] And every age of the church is going to be linked with the apostles. It's going to be linked with the apostles. And it's going to come into being as a result of the apostles' doctrine.

The church is built, you see, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There's no other foundation. It's the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
The early church, the early believers, devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. And you see, if we're talking of unity at all, we must talk about unity of those who hold to the apostles' doctrine.
It's no use talking about unity with those who deny the faith. If any man denies the divinity of Christ, he doesn't hold the apostles' doctrine.
And as for you, don't speak of unity with him. If anyone denies the atonement, he's denying the apostles' doctrine. And as for there's no unity with such a man.
[9:00] If anyone or any church denies the resurrection, there's no unity with that church. Because they're denying one of the apostles' doctrines. And if you start on any other basis or not, then you open the doors to anyone and everyone.

And that's what's happening in the ecumenical movement today. When the ecumenical movement began, or when it was revived in Amsterdam in 1938, they thought that this movement would be the great warlock against communism.
Let us all unite and withstand communism and fight communism. But it hasn't worked. And now there are all shades of opinion brought into the ecumenical movement.
It reminds one of what Dr. Lloyd-Jones once said about that movement. Putting twelve corpses into one grave will not produce a resurrection. There's no use of unity unless it's unity in the truth.

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And then the second thing is, it's a unity with the Father and with the Son. There's a mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son within the Godhead.
[10:12] And likewise there's a mutual indwelling between the Church and the Godhead. This is a wonderful thing that he's praying about here in verse 21. That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee.

That they also may be one in us. That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. You see there's a unity in the Godhead. And that unity in the Godhead is also evidenced in the Church. There's a mutual indwelling of the Church in the Godhead. It doesn't mean to say that the unity is exactly the same. It's an analogy.
The unity between the Church and God, between the Church and the Godhead, is based upon the unity between the Father and the Son.
And you see it's an organic unity. They share a common life. And you can't have unity unless you've got a common life. There's no unity without a common life.
[11:18] Without the life of Christ. And that is what our Lord is referring to then here. The two aspects of the unity. It must be on the Apostles' doctrine.

And it must be an organic unity. A unity in which you are sharing the same life. United to Christ. Therefore you unite thee to one another.
And no unity is pleasing to Christ therefore, or is a fulfillment of his prayer. Unless it is an expression of the shared Apostolic truth and the shared life.
It's the same divine truth and the same divine life. That's what gives the unity. And if you haven't got that, you haven't got unity. But then, and we must say this with equal force.
Once you have that unity, then you are to pray and to work for it. You are to pray and to work for the outward expression of it. John Calvin said he would cross ten seas to promote the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.
[12:27] And that should be our attitude. We should grieve over this unity of true believers. And we should seek that unity with all our hearts. But how do you seek the unity?

Well, you seek the unity by the means that is consistent with the nature of the Church. If the unity is in the truth, then what will foster the unity will be the presentation of the truth and the belief of the truth.
That's what the important thing is. We find spiritual people, or so-called spiritual people often saying to us, Doctrine divides. But that's not so. Doctrine unites.
True Apostolic truth is Catholic truth. Catholic in the true sense. And it's error that's sectarian. It's error that divides the Church.
Truth never divides the Church. Truth is Catholic. And the more you believe the truth, the more unity there will be. The more you preach the truth, the more unity there will be.
[13:32] And therefore, truth promotes unity. And the more we preach the truth and believe the truth and proclaim the truth, then there will be more unity in the Church.

It's the truth that unites. And therefore, to foster unity, we must foster the truth. And we must foster that union with the Lord Jesus Christ.
And to see indeed that it is true union with the Lord Jesus Christ that will bring those who are His together. The purpose of the Church is indeed to show the unity, show the unity that is there.
And that purpose has an effect on the world. And we see that in verse 21. He prays that they may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
And verse 23, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. So that's the purpose of the unity, that the world might believe.
[14:39] Christ prays that those who believe in Him may so live in unity that others will come to believe in Him too. Now the unity is not the unity of a great structure.

The science and extent of the Church will not impress the world. It's not the science that's going to impress the world. You may get a great structure together, but that's not going to impress the world. What's going to impress the world? Well, what's going to impress the world is this. The unity that transcends all human unity. That's what I think our Lord is referring to here.
Within the stewardship of those who are bound together by personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, the relationship of love reaches an intimacy and intensity unknown elsewhere.
For this experience, especially across the barriers of race, nationality and language, it is one of the most convincing evidences of the continuing activity of Jesus Christ amongst men.

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[15:49] And therefore it's the strength of the unity that's going to impress the world. How is this unity, the world would say? How can men and women be so united across barriers, across races, across languages?

How can they be one? How can this be brought about? Well, it's inexplicable apart from the work of divine love. And that's what we're going to convince the world.
It's not the size of it. It's the intensity of it. It's the beauty of it. And the world is going to say, only God could do this. The world will behold it and they'll say, only God could be the author of this.
He who brought this into being must be the sent one of God. This must be God's savior. This must be God's savior. This must be God's son. The one who is able to bring this about.
And when you see the intensity and the beauty and the glory of that unity between true believers, then they will say that God has sent his son into the world.
[16:54] That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. That the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. That's going to be the convincing factor.

That unity, that true unity between true believers, is such a unity that exceeds ever anything that can happen here upon earth by the power of man.
And it will be a unity that will convince the world. It will be a unity that will make men believe that God sent his son into this world. And so that's the prayer for unity.
And then secondly, there's the prayer for sharing his glory. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.
And here the scene shifts from history, you might say, into eternity. It moves from time to eternity. The consummation of all things.
[18:02] The consummation of the unity. The consummation of all things. What is God's ultimate design with his church? What is God's ultimate, the end of God's ultimate dealings with his church?

Well, it's this. That the church may behold and enjoy and contemplate the glory of Christ in heaven. That's the end of all things.
That's what God is leading his church to. That's the ultimate unity. That's the end of all things. He desires, or Christ is praying here, for the fact that his people may be with him, and that they may see his glory.
The people given him by the Father. I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. That's his prayer for them.
He desires that his people be with him, and he desires that they will see his glory. And surely that's all we need to know about heaven. The true facts about heaven.
[19:08] We shall be with him, and we shall see him as he is. We shall be with him, and we shall see him as he is. In heaven we shall enjoy the company of Christ, and we'll be granted the vision of Christ.

To see his glory, that will be heaven. That will be the glory of heaven. To see his glory. And what glory? The glory you give me because you loved me before the creation of the world.
And that's not the glory that Christ had from all eternity. It's the glory that was given him by the Father in the plan of redemption. It's his glory as Emmanuel.
His glory as Redeemer. His glory as the one who is exalted by the Father to be the Savior of the world. That's the glory that he's referring to.
And that glory will be the contemplation of the saints throughout all eternity. The glory that has been given Christ as Emmanuel, as Redeemer, as Savior.
[20:20] And what will they be doing? They'll be tracing the source of that glory. And where is the source of that glory? Well, the source of that glory is the everlasting love of the Father.

The glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. As one writer has put it, this saying of Jesus is that which leads us furthest into the divine depth.
Here is depth we cannot soften. Things too wonderful for us in this earthly life. But in the life to come, we are to behold the glory of Christ as Redeemer.
And we are to trace the source of that glory. And the source of that glory is the love that God had for his Son before the foundation of the world.
That will be the contemplation of the saints throughout all eternity. They will behold his glory and they will be with him. And look at that marvelous word at the beginning of verse 24.

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[21:26] Father, I will that thou also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. What a staggering statement. Father, I will.

It is not prayer now. It is a statement. And what a contrast to what he said, what he was to say in the garden of Gethsemane. Not my will, but thine be done.
And here he says, Father, I will. And why does he say, Father, I will? Because he knows that his will is identical with his Father's will. His Father's will is that these people be in heaven with him.
And it is his will as well. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. He desires his people to be there.
That's his longing. That's his desire. And perhaps sometimes we have thought of keeping our loved ones as with us as long as we can in this world. And yet Christ is praying in his high priestly prayer, Father, I will that they may be with me.
[22:35] Because he wants them in heaven to be with him and to behold his glory. And that his desire for his people that they be there ultimately with him.

And it's his last will and testament to his people. As Thomas Martinus put it, when Christ made his will, heaven is one of the legacies which he bequeathed to us. This was his last will and testament. Heaven is ours, a legacy left us by Christ. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.
That's his last will and testament. That's his desire for his people. And my friends, if communion with Christ upon earth is indeed sweet. If communion with Christ in his ordinances is precious, what will it be like in the while to come?
What will it be like in heaven? The king there in his beauty without a veil of faith seen. It were a well spent journey, so seven deaths lay between.
[23:42] Samuel Rutherford, the land with his state army that's on Mount Sion stand. And glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. Yes, it's worth it, says Rutherford, for seven deaths lay between.

Such is the glory of that a land to be with Christ and to behold his glory. And the great difference between the church and the world is this.
That the world does not know God, says Christ. O righteous Father, the world does not know thee. The world doesn't know God. The world has no understanding of God.
But Christ knows him. I have known thee. And Christ has made him known to his people. I have, and these have known that thou hast sent me. Christ has communicated this knowledge to his people.
And what he has done, he will continue to do. I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it. That the love for which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.
[24:49] And this is an ongoing work. Christ is telling us. The revelation of God to his people through Christ is an ongoing thing. It's ongoing in this life, and we believe it will be ongoing in the life that comes.

God loves Christ with a love of complacency.
And the people of God are going to discover that love more and more in the world to come. For that love of complacency will not only rest upon Christ, but it will rest upon the people that the Father gave him.
That the love for which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. And he will make them so glorious that there will be nothing seen in them but Christ himself.
I in them. They will be transformed completely into his likeness. They will be made completely like Christ. The work will be finished when you will find that they are completely like Christ.
[25:59] Like the Son. And God will love them with that love of complacency with which he loves the Son. And throughout eternity they will be discovering that love.

It will be something that will never be exhausted. It will be something that will go on throughout the whole of eternity. That as the Father sees the Son in his people, the image of Christ, the likeness of Christ, then his love will be manifested to them throughout the ages of eternity.
And this is a prayer that Christ is praying for his people. And we can be sure that this prayer will be heard. This prayer will be answered. And that's why we have such an assurance that the Church indeed will be presented without thought before the Father's throne.
Because Christ is interceding for them. He interceded for them here upon earth. And he's continuing that intercession in heaven. And earth for all that he has prayed for will be accomplished.

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And will be fulfilled. And if you are a child of God tonight, you can be assured that this will be your portion. That this will be yours in all its fullness.
[27:15] It may stagger you. You may not be able to comprehend it. And yet it's yours. It's yours. And it will be yours. Because of what Christ has done.

And because what Christ is praying for you. You will behold all this. You will be caught up in the glory. You will see the glory. You will be with Christ. You will find and discover the love of the Father throughout all eternity.
This is the glory that awaits the people of God. The glory that will be yours. Because of Christ's work. And because of Christ's prayers.
But oh my friend, if you don't know anything of what this means tonight. If you don't understand it. Then all you can do is to come to him who will enable you to understand it.
The Christ of God. The Saviour of the world. He is the one who can reveal these things to you. No one else can. Because he came to reveal the Father.
[28:18] He is the sent one of God. And he has come to reveal the Father. And if you want to know the Father, you must come to the Son. These have known that thou hast sent me.

And you can only know the Father through the Son. And therefore you must come to the Son. There is no other way. He reveals the Father. He makes known the Father.
And if tonight you would like to know something of this. Then come to the Son. He says, all who come unto me, I will in no way cast out.
He is willing to receive you tonight. And to reveal these things to you. That you might be partaker of these blessings. May he bless our meditation on his word.

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