

"THE OTHER LORD'S PRAYER."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

April 14, 2024, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: John 17

Introduction:

A friend of mine used to say, "Its fun to hear, but its more fun to overhear."

That's what John 17 is, it is a God-given, Holy Spirit inspired opportunity to eavesdrop on a conversation, a conversation like no other, between two members of the Godhead.

This other Lord's Prayer, the so called High Priestly prayer of Jesus, stands alone among the prayers of the Bible. There is nothing else like it. We know Jesus prayed often, we hear a few very brief prayers of His like in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. This is the only long prayer of His the Holy Spirit recorded in Scripture. We have lots of sermons, parables, teachings and conversations, but only this prayer. It is the longest prayer in the NT.

The prayer is about 625 words, it takes less than four minutes to read it, but it takes a lifetime to fully comprehend and plumb the depths. If the great English pastor Martyn Lloyd Jones is any gauge, he preached 50 sermons on this one chapter. It is safe to say there are words, phrases, thoughts, expressions, ideas in this prayer that no one has yet fully unfolded.

High Priestly Prayer.

Why is it called that? To understand you have to remember something about the OT high priests. In the OT sacrificial system, sacrifices were offered every day at the Temple. The Temple was divided into three parts, the courtyard where the sacrifices were made and then two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies.

Once a year the High Priest on the annual day of atonement went into the Holy of Holies where the ark of the covenant was and present sacrifices for the sins of the people and pray for them.

The high priest's intercession followed a specific pattern of three concentric circles, first, he prayed for himself, second, he prayed those who were consecrated along with him in the service of the Temple worship, and then, third, he prayed for all the people of God.

Against this background we understand why this is called the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. As our great High Priest who makes an atoning sacrifice in His own blood for all our sins, He follows the exact same pattern in His prayer.

In verses 1-5 Jesus prays for Himself. In verses 6-19 He prays for His disciples, and then in verses 20-26 Jesus prays for the rest of His followers, He prays for us.

He starts with His few remaining hours on earth, then encompasses the ministry of the Apostles as they spread the Gospel, and then His prayer expands outward to encompass His entire church in all ages and times and places, including this church and each of us.

In this prayer, Jesus brings us into the Holy of Holies, into the throne room of Almighty God, our heavenly Father. Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father in glory, ever lives to make intercession for us.

John 17 is us eavesdropping on Jesus as He prays for us, as He continues to pray for us. This is us hearing His heart beating for us.

John 17:1-5, Jesus prays for Himself, and for His glorification.

Jesus starts by saying, “Father, the hour has come.” This prayer is not a stand alone prayer, it comes at the end of the Upper Room, the final time Jesus had with His disciples during Passover. It started in John 13.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

After His farewell speech comes His farewell prayer. Jesus prays for Himself. What does He pray? For deliverance, for strength, for help?

“Father, glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.”

The glory of God is the external expression and manifestation of God’s being and character, of His invisible attributes and perfections revealed in creation and in redemption.

Now the time has come for Jesus to return to the glory He had with the Father before the world was created.

Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Jesus says He has accomplished the work the Father gave Him to do. The second Adam did what the first Adam didn't do. Jesus was able to say, "It is finished."

Nowhere is the glory of God more on display than on the cross, the glory of the Father and of the Son. The cross supremely reveals all the glory of all the attributes of God the Father and the Son. Our knowledge of the depths of God's holiness/wrath and of His love/grace is impossible without the cross, which is why Jesus prayed for the cross and this revelation.

The glory of God is unspeakably and incomprehensively magnificent.

I saw a glimpse of that glory in creation this past Monday. On Monday there was a great comingling of glory as the glory of the moon passed in front of the glory of the sun, and then at totality revealed another kind of glory of the sun, a greater glory.

I was so impressed by the power and glory of the sun even at 95 percent covered its brightness still lite up and warmed the earth, and you couldn't look at it with the naked eye even at 99 percent. Such is the incomprehensive glory of the Father who dwells in unapproachable light.

We can only look at the Father through the Son, we can only approach the Father through the Son.

Jesus asks for three things, glorification through the cross, re-glorification in heaven, and glory through His people for whom He died and redeemed.

Never forget that the overarching, global, historical purpose of God in everything that He does is to display and communicate His beauty, His worth, His greatness, His glory.

Jesus prays that the desperately painful path He is about to take will bring the Father glory and that after it His followers will be kept from evil and kept for the priceless privilege of seeing Jesus' glory.

John 17:6-19, Jesus prays for His disciples, truth.

Jesus starts with His reasons for praying for them and why the Father should hear and answer, vss. 6-11a.

These are the ones who belong to the Father, who took them out of the world and gave them to the Son, to whom the Son has revealed the Father, and they have kept and obeyed the Word.

They have infinite worth and value because they are a gift from the Father. We have infinite worth and value not because of anything we have done, but because of what Jesus has done in and through us.

Jesus is about to leave His disciple and He prays two things for them, protection and sanctification.

Vss. 11b-16 Jesus prays that His disciples be protected.

The dangers are real and urgent, and unrelenting. They remain to this day. The world hated Jesus, the world hates the truth and those who espouse the truth.

Jesus is clear, by protection, He doesn't mean that they be taken out of the world, out of harms way, but that they be protected in the world. Moses, Elijah and Jonah all prayed to God to be taken out of the world. God didn't answer any of their prayers when they prayed them.

The Christian life is inherently dangerous, it is a hard, narrow path filled with conflict and trouble. In this life you will have trouble, but we will be preserved and protected to the end. There will be trials and troubles. Before we can wear the crown, we must bear the cross.

Let us trust our lives and our times and our trouble to the perfect wisdom of Jesus. Let us bear with patience and contentment whatever He gives us, knowing we are safe in His care and prayer.

Vss. 17-19, Jesus prays His disciples will be sanctified.

He prays that those who are set apart for God will reflect God, by the present power of the Holy Spirit in them. To be holy means to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

The means to this end that Jesus prays the Father will use is the truth, by the Word which is truth.

The Holy Spirit is the one sent to us to guide us into all truth (John 15:13).

The work of sanctification by the Spirit in us is to continually and increasingly bring us more and more into conformity with the Word of God, and to make us less and less in

conformity to the world and worldliness. The more we are sanctified by the Word the more useful we are in the world, as we are sent into the world.

Jesus' prayer is that while we are kept safe in the world and from the world, we may be sanctified by the Word for our mission in the world.

John 17:20-26, Jesus prays for us, those who will believe, unity.

Then comes the most staggering part of this prayer. Jesus prayed for us 2000 years ago. Jesus was thinking about us on the night He was betrayed, the day before He went to the cross to bear the most horrific crucifixion.

It is as if Jesus looks down the corridors of time straight into our own hearts and lives and church. Jesus prayed for First Christian Reformed Church.

Do you know how much Jesus prays for you? Do you know what specifically Jesus prays for you? Do you know how much of your life is a result of the prayer life of Jesus? Do you have any idea how much you have been spared from or blessed with because of the prayers of Jesus?

Hebrews 7:25 He always lives to make intercession for them.

First, He prays for our unity, with God and each other. He is praying that we will be one in purpose, in love and in mission.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus' prayer clearly implies that this unity He is praying for will be observable. The clearest picture is a love that is joyfully self-sacrificing, by a commitment to each other through thick and thin, through disagreements and differences.

Jesus doesn't stop at unity, but prays for complete unity.

John 17:23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

This kind of unity is infectious and inviting to the world, convincing them more than anything that God sent Jesus, that Jesus came and saved us, that He is in us and we are in Him.

It grieves me to see Christians at odds, fighting, name calling, refusing to forgive, harboring bitterness or critical spirits.

Commit yourself to living at peace with all people in so far as it depends on you. Do everything in your control and power to seek peace and promote unity and show love.

Vss. 24-26

Here is the crescendo, the pinnacle of Jesus' intercession. More than anything He desires that we be with Him where He is, and that they see my glory.

"I suffered and died for them, I experienced the torments of hell, the wrath of the Father for them and I want them to see my glory and to be with me where I am. I want those who believe in me and what I did for them, to see me and be with me."

What a prayer! What a Savior! What a comfort!

I John 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Oh, to see Jesus in all His glory. To behold Him face to face, to dwell in His presence forever. Even John's revelation can't do it justice. It exceeds the glory of an eclipse or an aurora borealis. It outshines 10,000 suns.

As the Father shares glory with the Son, so the Son shares glory with us.

Jesus' highest priority in life and death was to honor God and display His supreme value, worth and character, His glory.

This is the supreme end of all things, the glory of God. Like the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, hallowed by your name. Take this to heart.

Remember Jesus' intercession for you.

Remember the Father always hears the prayers of His Son, the Son's prayers for you.

Remember that the Son has brought you into the Father's family.

Remember that the Son loves you with the same love the Father has for the Son.

Remember that the Son dwells in you through His Holy Spirit.

Remember the Son has given you His Word, and the Spirit is sanctifying you by His Word.

Remember the Son wants you to be with Him to see His glory.

He wants this for you that your joy might be full.

Long for His appearing, pray for His appearing. Pray to see His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God. Pray like the Psalmist.

Psalm 42:1-2 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalm 63:1-4 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.
3 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.