

The 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel contains what is called Jesus' high priestly prayer. In the first part, Jesus prays for himself. In the second, for the disciples gathered around him. The third part begins, **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.** Jesus prays for all those who will believe in him through the disciples' message. In other words, he prays for us.

### Jesus Prays For Us!

Since this prayer was spoken by Jesus in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday evening, in the shadow of the cross, we know it touches on things that are serious and important. Since this is a prayer for us, we want to look carefully and see what blessings Jesus wants for us.

By implication then, these blessings are not something we possess on our own. Jesus came into this world because he saw our need for them. He saw what sin has caused. He knew what sin deserves. Sin causes distance, division, darkness, and death. Sin separates us from God and from one another. He died on the cross to take away the guilt of our sin, to lift that unbearable burden. He didn't just die to take away; he died in order to give.

He had a plan to convey these blessings to us, through the disciples' message, the Word, the means of grace.

<sup>20</sup> **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.**

What does Jesus want for us? Unity! Oneness!

**He prays that we may be one.** He wants us to enjoy a oneness with all his people, united by the truth and united in love. He wants us to enjoy a oneness that is like the oneness he enjoys with the Father who sent him. The Father is in Jesus and Jesus, in the Father.

In his first epistle, John refers to this oneness as fellowship. This fellowship is created by the Word, by the proclamation of Christ. He wrote, <sup>3</sup> **We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.** <sup>4</sup> **We write this to make our joy complete.** (1 John 1:2-4) People are drawn together and connected by the Good News of what Jesus has done. This connection is reason for joy. It is marked by the love Christ's people have for one another.

Note: This blessing is meant to reach beyond us. It is a witness to the world that Jesus was sent by his Father. **May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**

Jesus makes it clear that this oneness is of great importance to him. Here's what he says next: **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—<sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

He has given his disciples glory, so that they may be one. This unity is evidence that Jesus is no mere man. He is the Son sent to redeem us. And on top of that, this oneness tells the world: the Father who sent Jesus has loved us just as he loves Jesus.

What does Jesus want for us? Listen for it! <sup>24</sup> **"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.** Jesus wants you to be with him. More than that, he wants you to see the glory that was Christ's before the creation of the world. To be with Christ, to see Christ's glory, that holds another blessing. Again,

quoting from John's first epistle, chapter 3: <sup>2</sup> **Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** To be with Christ and see him as he is will transform us and make us like him.

Jesus goes on to say that the world doesn't know the Father. We often use the word "know," in two different ways when talking about people. If someone asks you if you know someone who graduated from the same school as you, but in the class before you, you might answer: I know who they are, but I don't know them. I know a few things about that person, but I can't say that I really know them.

This world can know many things about God: his power, majesty, wisdom, control, his holiness... But it doesn't know him. That is, it doesn't know his heart. He is a stranger to fallen man.

Jesus prays, <sup>25</sup> **"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.** And he promises what he will continue to do > <sup>26</sup> **I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."**

What does Jesus want for us? He wants us to know the Father. Near the beginning of this prayer Jesus said, <sup>3</sup> **Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.** To know the Father means to know his heart and those who know his heart have eternal life.

Here's how the Lord expressed the same idea through his prophet Jeremiah: <sup>34</sup> **No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** The Lord will do something and then people will know him. He's talking about the Gospel's proclamation of forgiveness. The Father says to you, "I forgive you. I forgive you." Then you can say you know him.

Jesus continues to work through the ministry of the Word, making his Father known. He does this because he wants the Father's love to be in us. And he himself wants to be in us.

See what blessings Jesus wants you to enjoy. Look to the cross and know how much he wants you to enjoy them. Here's what Jesus want for you and me. Jesus wants us to...

- Be one
- Be in the Father and in him, the Son, evidence to the world that Christ was sent by the Father.
- Be with Him
- See his glory
- He wants the Father's love to be in us.
- He himself wants to be in us.
- He wants us to enjoy eternal life.

What difference does this make from day to day? It tells us we dare not think of our Christian faith as something we hold privately and individually. If Jesus wants us to be one in faith and love, how can anyone say, "I don't have to go to church to be a Christian!" Jesus died to make us one, to connect us to himself, to his Father and to one another. Our unity testifies to the world that the Father sent his Son and that he loves us as he loves his Son. We gather around the Word, the apostolic message that his given us life.

All these are things Jesus wants for us. And if he wants them for us, they are most certainly good.