

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 22nd May 2010

'The Lord's Prayer'

John 17:1-15

Introduction

One day Jesus' disciples said to him, '*Lord, teach us to pray.*' (Luke 11:1) There was just something about Jesus praying, and the way he prayed. They realised that he prayed differently from everybody else. There was something special about his prayer-life. It wasn't like the other Rabbis. He prayed with power and authority, because he always prayed in line with God's Will. It was obvious that Jesus had a special relationship with his heavenly Father. He prayed as a child to a Father.

In response to their request, Jesus taught his disciples to pray like this:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...' (Matt 6:9-13)

That prayer is commonly called 'The Lord's Prayer' and in some church traditions it is recited regularly to this day. But it's not really the Lord's Prayer. It should be called the Disciples' Prayer, because it was actually the model that Jesus used to try to teach his disciples to pray. I don't think it was meant to be rhymed off like an empty repetition. It was meant as a type of prayer, a model of the kind of prayer that we as disciples can and should pray to God.

It's this prayer in John ch.17 that *should* be regarded as 'The Lord's Prayer' - because here we really do get an insight into how Jesus himself prayed to his heavenly Father. It is sometimes known as Jesus' Great High Priestly Prayer, because after Jesus died, rose again, and ascended back into heaven, the Bible tells us that he is now at God's right hand interceding for you and me. That's what Jesus is doing now – he's praying for you and for me in heaven. And it's in John ch.17 that we get to see exactly what it is that Jesus is praying for us as our Great High Priest.

We're going to look at this prayer in two parts over the next two Sunday nights. Jesus prays for six things in this prayer, so we can look at 3 of them tonight, and another 3 next Sunday night. Let me list the things that Jesus prays for, so you will know where we are going with this:

1. Jesus prays for **his own** Glorification (vs.1-5)
2. Jesus prays for our Salvation (v.3)
3. Jesus prays for our Preservation (vs.7-15)

4. Jesus prays for our Sanctification (vs.16-19)
5. Jesus prays for our Unification (vs.20-23) – (within the church)
6. Jesus prays for **our** Glorification (vs.24-26)

So tonight we're going to be looking at the first three of these prayer requests, so we'll be looking at the first 15 verses of this great prayer: the Lord's Prayer:

1. Jesus prays for his own Glorification (vs.1-5)

After Jesus had taught about the Holy Spirit in John chs.14-16, and after he had taught about the need for each one of us as believers to 'abide in Christ' in John ch.15 - after he had taught all of that, we're told in John 17:1 that he looked towards heaven and he prayed. So we're about to get an example of what it means to abide in the vine, and of what it means to be helped by the Holy Spirit to really pray in accordance with God's Will, because that's how our prayers are going to be effective, if they are prayed in accordance with God's Will, and with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus begins

'Father, the time has come.' – (or the hour has come).

Jesus knows that the moment of his death is fast approaching. In the very next chapter he is going to be arrested and led away to be ill-treated and then to be nailed to a cross of wood, and left to die for our sins, and to purchase our salvation. Jesus knows that the '*hour*' he has been waiting for throughout his life, and particularly throughout his public ministry – it has now come. This is God's Will for him, so he doesn't flinch from it, but he prays through it. He prays towards that end.

'Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.'

This was the whole point in doing the Father's Will, as far as Jesus was concerned – his whole purpose was to bring glory to God the Father. And the only way he could bring glory to God the Father, was to go through with the cross, because even though humanly speaking the cross would be a terrible humiliation for Jesus, that was in fact how God the Father was going to glorify His Son, by afterwards raising him from the dead, and by so doing, he would in turn glorify the Father.

In fact it was only by dying and rising again, and ascending to heaven, that v.2 could become a reality, and yet Jesus prays it as if it was already accomplished: *'For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.'*

Compare that to Philippians 2:8-11 – which again speaks of this as a reality:

'And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Do you see how the cross and what would follow it was going to not only bring glory to the Son, but it would ultimately bring glory to God the Father also?

But come back to John 17, to verses 4 & 5, and you'll see this is exactly what Jesus had in mind. In prayer to his Father he is able to say these words:

'I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.'

Notice two things here: Jesus was able to bring glory to His heavenly Father while he was here on earth, by doing the Father's will – by completing the work that the Father had given him to do. Not until Jesus could cry out from that cross in his dying breath, '*Tetelestae!*' – '*It is finished*' would that work be complete, the work that was necessary to make it possible for us to be saved.

But by rising again on the third day and returning to sit down at the Father's right hand, would really ensure that the work that was necessary for our salvation was complete. A High Priest never sat down while he was on duty in the temple. There was no chair in the Holy of Holies, symbolic of the fact that an earthly priest's work was never done. But as Hebrews 10:12 says,

'But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.'

It was at that moment, that the Father glorified Jesus with the glory that he had with Him before the world began. You see, here we are reminded that Jesus didn't begin as a baby in Bethlehem's manger, or as an embryo in Mary's womb, he had already existed from before the world began, he had always been there, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. He had always been God in eternity past, then he was God come in the flesh to this scene of time, but now he has returned to the Father's right hand – to the place of power and authority, and it's there that he is still interceding for us, praying for us, and sending, or pouring, his grace into our lives day by day.

That's why Jesus prays firstly for his own glorification here, because by being glorified himself, that would be proof that all the work that had been necessary for our salvation had already been accomplished. It was finished! – And so...

2. Jesus prays for our Salvation (v.3)

Right in the heart of this section is a verse which explains clearly what is involved in our salvation – what we need to do in order to be saved. Listen to this – from Jesus own lips – in prayer to his Father (v.3):

'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.'

There can't be a clearer verse in all of Scripture which explains to us how we can have eternal life. It says, '*Now this is eternal life...*' - Well what is it? It is knowing God the Father, as the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ personally - the one he has sent into the world. In other words, in short, salvation, eternal life, involves a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.

So let me ask you: Do you know God? Do you know Jesus personally? Do you know that he died on that cross for your sins, personally? Do you know that he has saved you? Have you ever known a time when he came into your life to be your Saviour? Do you know Jesus at work in your life day by day? Do you know him speaking to you through his Word, the Bible? Do you know what it's like to talk to him personally in prayer? In other words, do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you know that God is your loving heavenly Father? Do you have the Holy Spirit in your heart assuring you of all of this?

Jesus prays for his own glorification, yes, but he does so, in order that we would know his salvation in our lives, by knowing him personally as our Saviour and Lord.

But then thirdly...

3. Jesus prays for our Preservation (vs.6-15)

One thing that sometimes puts people off coming to faith in Christ, is they wonder whether they will be able to keep going as a Christian. Will they be able to keep it, or will they wander away and go back to their old way of life after a short time of following Jesus. Will the going be just too tough to keep a it? Well the good news is, that it's not you who does the keeping – it's Jesus!

Here in vs.6-15 Jesus prays that we would be kept going in our faith; kept from the world, kept from the Evil One. He doesn't pray that we will be taken out of the world, but that we would be kept in it, as distinct followers of Jesus.

Here Jesus is praying specifically for his original disciples. Look what he says:
*'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.
They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.'*

Just think about those words in v.6 for a minute: *'Those whom you gave me out of the world'* - It's God the Father who calls people out of the world, out of the general population, and gives them to Jesus to be saved. It's Jesus who opens our eyes and reveals God the Father to us, and enables us to obey His Word, by responding to the Gospel in faith for salvation.

So we need to realise that salvation doesn't start with us, it starts with God! It's God who gives us the ability to respond to the truth of the Gospel, and to be saved. In fact Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all involved in convicting us of our sin, revealing Jesus to us as our only hope of salvation, and then giving us the faith to put our trust in Him alone as our Saviour.

That's why that verse in Philippians 1:6 is so important to grasp: We can be...
*'Confident of this, that He who began a good work in you,
will carry it on to completion, until the day of Christ Jesus.'*

Salvation is of the Lord, from beginning to end. Our salvation starts with God, and it finishes with God. It's not down to us; it's up to Him, not only to save us, but to keep us going on in the faith as well. That's why Jesus prays to his heavenly Father for our preservation – for it is God who does the keeping!

So this is what Jesus was able to say about his early disciples (v.7-8):
*'Now **they know** that everything you have given me comes from you.
For I gave them the words you gave me and **they accepted them.**
They knew with certainty that I came from you,
and **they believed** that you sent me.'*

Jesus was able to speak about the assurance that was in the hearts of those early believers. They had clear assurance of salvation: *'They know...they accepted them...they knew with certainty...they believed that you sent me.'*

I wonder does this certainty refer back to those few verses in the previous chapter? Look at vs.29-32 – *'You believe at last!'* Jesus said. (Do you?)

Jesus knew that they were now believers, but he knew that hard times lay ahead. They would soon be left confused and bewildered as they saw him arrested and nailed to a cross. They would be scattered. So that's why he prayed as he did in vs.9-12. He asks his Father to keep the disciples by the power of his name. He says that while he was on earth he had protected them and kept them safe, but now he was going back to the Father, he would remain in the world no longer, so he asked the Father to keep his disciples. He prayed for their preservation.

Only one would be lost – the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled – that one of course was Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus in the very next chapter. Jesus already knew all about it, nothing takes him by surprise, because He is God!

But why did Jesus pray all this in the hearing of his disciples? Why did he allow them to listen in on this personal prayer to his Father? Verses 13-15 tell us why:

'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world (why?) so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.'

Doesn't it bring you joy to know that it's not so much you holding onto God, but it's God holding onto you? That's what keeps you going in your salvation. Well, I'm sure it had the same effect on those first disciples, to know that Jesus was praying for them to keep on going in their faith, despite what lay ahead – I'm sure that brought them joy.

Another reason why we need the prayers of Jesus to keep us going in our faith is that we live in a hostile world – a world that is no friend of the Gospel or of true disciples. (See vs.14-15)
Jesus doesn't pray that God the Father would take us home to heaven out of the world, at least not yet, instead he prays that God would keep us in the world, and that he would keep us, or protect us, from the Evil One.

This is where we have an echo with that other prayer, commonly called the Lord's Prayer that I said earlier should be called the Disciple's prayer:
'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.'

Jesus knew right from the beginning of his ministry, just after he was baptised what it was like to be tempted by the Devil, and it lasted right up to the Garden of Gethsemane, the Devil never gave up! Jesus knows what it's like for us, that the devil never gives up on us either, so that's why he prays earnestly for us to be kept going in our faith, as He in turn keeps us from the Evil One.

Conclusion

So in Christ, our Great High Priest, our Intercessor, we have all that we need.

- **Yes, he prayed for his own glorification.**
- **But he also prayed for our salvation.**
- **And he prayed for our preservation.**

Next week we'll see him praying for our sanctification, our unification, and our glorification, and so we will come full circle from Jesus praying that he would be glorified in heaven, to him praying for us to be glorified with Him one day in heaven too. Does all of this apply to you? Do you know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? Do you have eternal life? And are you sure of it?

© *Ian Grant*