

Jesus Our High Priest: He prayed a prayer

If you've ever studied the life of Jesus Christ you know that He fulfilled many rolls. He had a heart of compassion on display as He healed the sick; His power was revealed as He raised the dead and fed the hungry, His grace was revealed as He gave salvation to the sinner.

In John 17, we are hours away from the end of Jesus life. He knows what's coming and can feel the quickening of His heartbeat at the thought of it. Yet on this night He is found serving as our great High Priest making intercession with the Father.

In fact, the Bible declares Him to be our Great High Priest

And so, dear brothers and sisters who belong to God and are partners with those called to heaven, think carefully about this Jesus whom we declare to be God's messenger and High Priest. Heb. 3:1 NLT

As He prayed that night, His prayer focused on four great themes that I would like us to consider today. As we look into these verses and listen in on the prayer of our Lord, please understand that what Jesus prayed about that night in the Garden still impacts your life and mine this today. This was a prayer that *had* power then and *will* have power throughout the remainder of time and into eternity.

What we will learn today is that there is a lesson about prayer and several lessons about the Lord's will and love for His people. This is a very encouraging passage! When you stop to think that on the eve of His death, Jesus took the time to pray for you and me. I find that pretty encouraging! Join me as we encounter Jesus: The Great High Priest.

1. Jesus prayer had an upward focus God

Abraham Lincoln said "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heaven and say there is no God."

There is a pattern here for us. I try to remind you all the time that the vitality of our connection to God directly affects the consistency of our Christian life. You quit acknowledging God in your life and quit connecting with Him daily and you will find yourself drifting away from God's way in your life. Jesus knew that this upward focus was critical. Look at these three areas that He focused on hours before His sacrificial death:

A. The Father's glory

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. John 17:1,4 NLT

The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit. It is not an aesthetic beauty or a material beauty, but it is the beauty that emanates from His character, from all that He is. James 1:10 calls on a rich man to “glory in his humiliation,” indicating a glory that does not mean riches or power or material beauty. This glory can crown man or fill the earth. It is seen within man and in the earth, but it is not of them; it is of God. The glory of man is the beauty of man’s spirit, which is fallible and eventually passes away, and is therefore humiliating—as the verse tells us. But the glory of God, which is manifested in all His attributes together, never passes away. It is eternal.

May the glory of God be on us and in us at all times.

B. The Father's gift

⁶ “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. John 17:6 NLT

I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them. John 17:26 NLT

Those who followed Jesus and His teaching were a gift to Jesus. I can tell you that Jesus calls us to be fishers of men and women everywhere to bring them to Jesus. I am not Jesus of course but I can tell you what brings me the greatest joy as a pastor and that is to hear that someone is actually living out the word of God in their life. What feels like it’s not a gift? When people do the exact opposite of the what the word of God teaches yet view themselves somehow as still Christians.

C. The Father's grace

⁶ “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word . . . for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹ “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰ All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹² During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

God’s grace is founded in His message of salvation and the promise of a changed life. Jesus recognized it and worked hard to get the first Christians to believe and understand it.

2. Jesus prayer had an inward focus

Himself

A. He prayed for assistance

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. John 17:1 NLT

Jesus knew what was ahead of Him and He knew He would need divine assistance. Where else do you turn when you need help? Let me tell you why it is important to talk with God daily; If you talk to Him daily you won't need to get reacquainted every time you need Him in a crisis. It's pretty awkward to have to go through the ordeal of saying how sorry you are you haven't had any contact since the last crisis.

Do you need help with something today? I assure you God is waiting to hear from you.

B. He prayed about His accomplishments

For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him.³ And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.⁴ I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.⁵ Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. John 17:2-4 NLT

Sometimes when you know you are about to go through a tough time it is good to realize that you have done some things right. Jesus completed the work that the Father gave Him to do. In other words, He had done the Father's will. That's all God wants from us is that we practice His presence daily by doing His will and not ours.

C. He Prayed About His Assurance

Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. John 17:5 NLT

Jesus came to this earth as a man and to do so He laid aside His heavenly glory assured by the Father that when His task was over He would be coming home. We share that promise from the Father. Do His will while you are able and then prepare to go home for eternity. It is a lost concept in most of America but really heaven is better than what we have here. We are instructed over and over in the New Testament to look forward to eternity.

Blessed assurance Jesus is mine; Oh what a foretaste of glory divine.

Jesus then moves on in His prayer to pray for others.

3. Jesus prayer had an outward focus

Others

A. He prayed for our preservation

⁶ “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word . . . for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹ “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰ All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. John 17:6-11 NLT

B. He prayed for our protection

He not only prayed for our preservation but also our protection. It is a heartfelt prayer prayed on the eve of Jesus own death and filled with concern for others. It is interesting also to note that the bible promise that Jesus will always be making intercession for us.

C. He prayed for our purity

¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸ Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth. John 17:17-19 NLT

IF you are looking for it you will see that God never gives up on His people being holy. He thought it was possible in the Old Testament and in the New. There are people that believe this means that God doesn’t care about how we live as long as we have what Dallas Willard refers to as the Jesus “barcode.”

It makes no difference what is in the bottle or package that bears it, or whether the sticker is on the “right” one or not. The calculator responds through its electronic eye to the bar code and totally disregards everything else. If the ice cream sticker is on the dog food, the dog food is ice cream, so far as the scanner knows or cares.

On a recent radio program a prominent minister spent fifteen minutes enforcing the point that “justification”, the forgiveness of sins, involves *no change at all* in the heart or personality of the one forgiven. It is, he insisted, something entirely external to you, located wholly in God himself. His intent was to emphasize the familiar Protestant point that salvation is by God’s grace only and is totally independent of what we may do. But what he in fact said was that *being a Christian has nothing to do with the kind of person you are*. The implications of this teaching are stunning.

The theology of Christian trinkets says there is something about the Christian that works like the bar code. Some ritual, some belief, or some association with a group affects God the way the bar code affects the scanner. Perhaps there has occurred a moment of mental assent to a creed, or an association entered into with a church. God “scans” it, and forgiveness floods forth. An appropriate amount of righteousness is shifted from Christ’s

account in the band of heaven, and all our debts are paid. We are, accordingly, “saved”. Our guilt is erased. How could we not be Christian?

Please don’t subscribe to a theology that teaches that God doesn’t care how you live your life as long as you believe in Him. Purity and holiness matter to God. They always have and they always will.

4. **His prayer had an ongoing focus** **He prayed for us!**

A. **He prayed for our harmony**

²⁰ *“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.*

²² *“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. John 17:20-23 NLT*

The churches inability through the years since Christ left the earth does nothing to promote the message of Jesus Christ. People look on and really want nothing to do with a faith that fights each other. Think about this: Jesus prayed for our unity just hours before His death.

It’s the principle of unresolved conflicts and the Christian. You can’t be a Christian and harbor unforgiveness in your heart toward someone else. It just isn’t possible. I know that in some cases there are people that have been deeply hurt and scarred and I am not minimalizing that in your life. But I still believe that in you don’t forgive by God’s grace you are doing more damage over a longer period of time to yourself than the abusive person did.

Let’s not focus on the extreme situations. For today let’s think about the petty little things that divide Christians. Even within our families there are petty little things that make us not talk to each other or fellowship with each other. They are silly and childish yet we hold onto our little grudges like they are the biggest deal in the world. I’m telling you and encouraging you to get over and get over yourself and let the grace of God flow through your life. Some of us have damned up the grace and mercy of God because our hearts our full of unforgiveness and hateful feelings toward other people in our lives.

Husbands/wives; children/parents or siblings; inlaws/outlaws; church member/church member; neighbor/neighbor; Seriously get over it and move on, life is too short to waste your energy on hating someone else.

B. **He prayed for our home going**

²⁴ *Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!* John 17:24 NLT

Jesus loves us; He really, really loves us! He actually wants you and I to be in heaven with Him someday. Again I'm not sure we really want to go to heaven but it ought to be the greatest call and pull in our hearts. It is our goal and at the top of our "bucket list." It should be at the top of our list of priorities.

I don't know what it does to you but it is a big deal that God's Son came to this earth because He loved us so much and He spent thirty three years here before giving Himself up to a horrible death. Because of who He is He arose from the grave to give us eternal life and the ability to follow in His steps. We pick up our crosses and follow Him and someday we will be with Him. My good friend Jim Hill wrote a little song about forty years ago or so that says it like this:

What a day that will be; when my Jesus I shall see; when I look upon His face; the One who saved me by His grace. When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the promised land; what a day glorious day that will be.

C. He Prayed For Our Hearts

²⁵ *"O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶ I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."* John 17:25-26 NLT

Does your heart matter? Does whether you really love Jesus matter? YES it does. And if you love Him you will serve Him by living a faithful life. You will lay aside the things that crucify Him afresh and live a holy and God-filled life.

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." Col. 3:16-17 NLT

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:1-2 KJV

¹⁹ *When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Galatians 5:22-25 NLT

⁷ Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. Galatians 6:7-9 NLT

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21 NLT