

What Did Jesus Pray for? Part 1
John 17:1-16
July 26th, 2026

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1. Jesus prayed for Himself: _____ Your Son (17:1-5)
2. Jesus prayed for His people: _____ them (17:6-16)
3. Applying the word
 - a. Jesus' Words should bring us _____ and not fear (v. 13)
 - b. You can _____ God.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 17:1-16

1. How would you explain the terms glory or glorify to a child to help them understand what the glory of God means? How do the following passages illustrate or explain the terms? (Isaiah 43:7; Rom. 3:23; Ps. 24:10; Luke 2:9; Rev. 21:23)
2. In what way does Jesus have “authority over all flesh” (v. 2)? (See John 5:26-27; Matt. 11:27; 28:18)
3. How does v. 3 explain eternal life? How does that compare to most people’s ideas about heaven?
4. What does v. 5 tell us about Jesus’ existence prior to His physical birth on earth? See also John 1:1-14
5. What descriptions of Jesus’ followers are given in 17:6-8?
6. What reason does Jesus give in 17:10-11 for praying specifically for His followers rather than the whole world?
 - a. See also the repeated phrases in 17:2, 6, 9, 24
7. How many references to the “world” do you see in this chapter? What can you learn about the “world” from those references?
8. What do the following passages add to your understanding of “the world” in the New Testament? John 7:7; Ephesians 2:1-2a; 1 John 5:19; James 1:27; Romans 12:2
9. How does that description of the world lead into the specific prayer requests in vv. 11 and 15?

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Big idea: On the eve of His death, Jesus prayed for the Father to glorify the Son and keep, sanctify, and unify His people.

Intro

Throughout His life, Jesus prayed to the Father.

We have many, many passages that tell us **that** He prayed and something about the circumstances about **why** He prayed.

Luke 5:16 But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Luke 6:12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

Luke 9:18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?"

Luke 11:1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

But we have few passages that tell us **what** He prayed for. John 17 is one of those passages, and it's by far the longest one.

Don't you want to know what Jesus prayed for after 4 long chapters of telling His disciples that His death was coming and He would be leaving them? When He knew that in the next few hours He would be arrested, crucified, and buried?

Would it surprise you to know that, among other things, He prayed for you?

Over the next couple weeks we will be looking at this prayer. It's less of a passage about what we are to do and more of a passage about what Jesus has done.

1. Jesus prayed for Himself: **Glorify** Your Son (17:1-5)
 - a. Spoke these things
 - i. Chapters 13-16 are devoted to instruction Jesus is giving to His disciples on the eve of his trial and death.
 - ii. 13 - Humble service and love for one another
 - iii. 14, 16 – The coming helper
 - iv. 15 – the importance of abiding in Him to bear fruit
 - v. He is preparing them for His departure.
 - vi. Now He prays, apparently right in front of them so they hear what He is praying to the Father.
 - b. The hour has come
 - i. Several times John tells us that Jesus' hour had not yet come.
 1. 2:4 When His mom wanted Him to do something about the wine
 2. 8:20 In a tense moment in the treasury when the Pharisees were riled up
 3. But now it has come. God's plan of redemption is about to be kicked into high gear.

- a. **John 12:23** And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
 - b. **John 13:1** Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
 - c. **17:1**
- ii. God's plan has not gotten out of control as Jesus approaches the cross. God's sovereignty bleeds from the pages of John's gospel.
 - 1. God's plan never gets out of control.
 - 2. No unintended consequences – our plans sometimes get out of control
 - 3. My favorite story about unintended consequences was from several years ago. I read about a small family farm that came up with an innovative approach to manage weeds, fertilization, and insects. They released free range chickens into their cultivated fields that could move in and around their crops. They eat the insects, scratch at the weeds, provide natural fertilization. The chickens also provide an additional source of food and revenue. What they didn't plan on was the eagles. The first year, a couple eagles found their farm and carried away a few chickens. By the next year, the number of eagles had doubled, but it was still a relatively small loss. Somehow the word got out in the eagle network and it became a feeding ground for dozens and dozens of bald eagles. They slaughtered the chickens. Great idea, didn't pan out.
 - 4. This doesn't happen to God's plan. It stays on track, unwavering, all the time.
 - 5. That's good news for your life, isn't it?
- c. Glorify Your Son, That the Son May Glorify You (17:1b)
 - i. Glory conveys the idea of honor, praise, brightness, splendor, majesty, reputation, esteem.
 - ii. Not a self-seeking request, but desiring to bring glory to God the Father.
 - iii. What's amazing is that He is speaking of the cross. For Jesus, the cross was not a place of shame but the place of greatest honor.
 - 1. The humiliation of the cross was a moment of glory for the Son because it brought glory to the Father.
 - 2. Paradox that the true glory of God is not seen in outward splendor but in the Son of God living in lowliness for men and suffering for them. (Morris, paraphrased)
 - a. The Lord of Glory hung on the cross of shame.
 - iv. The cross displayed the glory of God unlike any other event in history.
 - 1. Holiness of God who judges sin.
 - 2. The love of God that extends a substitute for sin.
 - 3. Sovereignty of God in bringing together a plan that had been promised and foreshadowed for thousands of years.

- d. Jesus glorified the Father by bringing people into relationship with him (17:2-4)
 - i. Jesus has been given authority to give eternal life to those whom God had given Him. (v. 2)
 - 1. We are described as a gift from the Father to the Son 5 times in this prayer.
 - 2. Morris – the authority of Christ is God-given and it is an authority over the whole human race – it is an authority for the express purpose of conferring eternal life
 - ii. Jesus glorifies God on the cross because it brings people into relationship with God. (v. 3)
 - 1. Eternal life is not just existing forever but really knowing God in this life and living with Him after this life.
 - a. Not just knowing He exists but really *knowing* Him.
 - b. Eternal life refers to quality of life not just quantity of life.
 - c. Now we see dimly but one day fully as we dwell with Him and He wipes away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:3-4)
 - d. This should astound you that we can know God!
 - e. The joy of *knowing* a person – sharing life together, mutual understanding – when that is lacking, we suffer which is why there is growing concern about the crisis of loneliness.
 - 2. The cross gets our sin out of the way so that we can know Him, and that brings great glory to God.
 - e. The means to save people and glorify God was the finished work on the cross (v. 4)
 - i. The cross is so certain in Jesus' future that He can speak of it here as an accomplished event. (v. 4)
 - ii. He says, "I've done what you sent me to do. I revealed you to people. I healed the sick. I taught the crowds. And now I'm heading to the cross. It's as good as accomplished."
 - f. A return to glory (17:5)
 - i. Jesus is returning to the position of glory that He has held from eternity past – even before the world was made. (v. 5)
 - 1. We must remember that the story of Jesus doesn't begin with Christmas and it doesn't end with Easter.
 - 2. Jesus was with the Father in all the glory of deity before the world even was created. He laid aside that glory in the most extreme act of humility ever engaged in. And after His death and resurrection, He returned to that glory.
 - 3. What we see in his 33 years on earth is a parenthesis.
2. Jesus prayed for His people: **Keep** them (17:6-16)
- a. What characterizes those Jesus is praying for?
 - i. Jesus manifested God's name to them
 - 1. God's attributes and character

2. **John 14:9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
3. You'll notice when we get to the request to "keep them" – He prays that they would be kept "in your name" – not wandering from the true and living God, not being satisfied with a vague and general deity.
- ii. God gave them to Jesus out of the world (6a, 9, 10)
 1. Described as gifts from the Father to the Son
- iii. Kept God's Word – perfect tense (6b)
 1. Despite some misunderstanding, they embraced the truth He gave them
 2. John 8:31 – "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine"
- iv. Come to know Jesus is from God and speaks from God (7, 8b)
- v. Received Jesus' words (8a)
- vi. Describing the disciples in every way He can – these are the things that mark my disciples – these are the ones whom I am praying for.
 1. *Do these things describe you?*
 - a. Do you believe Jesus' words? Do you follow Him?
- vii. His followers are the objects of His prayer, not "the world" (v. 9-10)
 1. Specifies that His prayer is for them – for those whom the Father has given Him out of the world – NOT for the world
- b. Why Jesus prays for God to keep and protect His followers
 - i. We belong to God (v. 9-10a)
 1. V. 2 "all you have given Him", 6 "the men whom you gave me, they were yours, you gave them to Me", 9 "those whom You have given me, for they are Yours", 24 "whom you have given Me"
 2. Do you get the point? Does this repetition tell you anything important?
 3. 7-11 principle – average message must be repeated 7 to 11 times before it sinks in.
 4. You're His, You're His, You're His – You're in the world, but You're His – you don't belong to the world, You're His!
 - a. You're at school, but you're His!
 - b. You mess up, but you're His!
 - c. You see the weaknesses in your parenting, but you're His!
 - d. You lose your job, but you're His!
 5. I think by v. 20 it is extended to all believers as well.
 - a. Not every person on earth, but those who have believed in Jesus through the words of the apostles.

6. The disciples had glorified Jesus but He was going to be leaving but they would be remaining in the world – an environment that would be hostile and yet provided great opportunity for God to be glorified.

c. The Environment: The World

- i. The world is referred to 18X in this section.
 1. Not referring to the planet itself. Not a place on a map. The word can be used that way, but it isn't being used that way here.
- ii. The world is the system that is **opposed** to God in its thinking and behavior.
 1. **John 7:7** "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.
 2. **John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

d. The Prayer: Keep them! (17:11-16)

- i. Because we are in this environment, Jesus prays for the Father to "keep" us. (v. 11)
 1. Jesus is going back to His position of glory with the Father, but His followers remain in the world that is hostile to God.
 - a. Speaks again as if it has already happened (I am no longer in the world)
 - b. Like the fear a parent might feel dropping their 18 year old off at college, knowing the temptations they will likely face in the dorms and the intellectual challenges they will face in the classroom. You can imagine them praying, "God, keep them!" Or a 5 year old in kindergarten, or a 12 year old at their first summer camp, or moving an adult child across the country.
 - c. Just as his task is to leave the world, so their task is to remain in the world – to be sent into the world.
 2. *Tereo* – guard, watch over
 - a. Acts 12:6 of guards watching over the prisoners in jail
- ii. Prays for their protection so that they will be unified (11b)
 1. Patterned after the unity of the Trinity
 2. Developed further in v. 21ff – a unity of purpose in fulfilling this mission and unity of love for God.
- iii. Jesus protected them while He was on earth so that none were lost except Judas (v. 12)
 1. Judas had a uniform but was never on the team.
- iv. Jesus knows this world will hate them because it hated Him (v. 14)
 1. **1 John 3:13** Do not be surprised, brethren, if the WORLD hates you.
 2. It will get angry when they don't share its values.

3. They will be accused of being self-righteous because they won't engage in certain behaviors.
4. They will be labeled as intolerant, bigoted, judgmental, antiquated.
- v. He doesn't ask God to remove us from the world but to keep us from the evil one (v. 15)
 1. They will remain in an environment hostile to faith with an enemy seeking to destroy them so He prays: Keep them!
 2. Not removed from danger, temptation, pain, struggle, persecution, or even the effects of evil but protected from the evil one – from Satan who rules the world system opposed to God.
 3. Some Christians have tried to remove themselves from the world.
 - a. Living in isolation in the desert or in a monastery or, today, pulling away from all contact with anything non-Christian.
 - b. I understand the appeal but that's not what Jesus prayed.
 - i. But that's not the idea here. We'll see more of that next week in the next section of the prayer in which we are sent into the very world we are in but not of.
 - c. He assumes we will still be in the world but prays for us to be protected and guarded from the world's influence while we are here.
 - i. Takes diligence on our part but need more – we need God's divine protection.

3. Applying the word

- a. Jesus' Words should bring us **joy** and not fear (v. 13)
 - i. These warning about the world can be intimidating and scary. We can be bummed out about the condition of the world that we remain in.
 - ii. But these things – not just in this chapter but all of Jesus' message – should bring joy and not fear.
 - iii. **John 15:11** "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.
 - iv. We can have joy knowing that Jesus has conquered death and reconciled us to the Father. The world can throw what it wants at us because our joy isn't rooted in the world (at least, it shouldn't be).
- b. You can **know** God.

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