"Jesus' Prayer – Part 1"
November 8, 2026
John 17:1-19

I. Introduction

At the Passover table and on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had promised peace & joy, strength & answered prayer, spiritual power through the Holy Spirit and an intimate relationship both with Himself and with the Father. Jesus had concluded His teaching by saying in John 16:33, **"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."** Then Jesus turned from His disciples and talked to the Father—the One who would give the power to **"overcome the world."** In John 17 we are allowed to listen as God the Son converses with His Father just before He made the ultimate sacrifice. It's just hours before the cross and from the human perspective, the circumstances were certainly dismal, but Jesus' prayer was anything but pessimistic. Instead, it was a confident declaration of undying faith and certain glory. Jesus was looking forward to the cross, not in a mood of hopelessness but one of hope and joy. Hebrews 12:2 says, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."** The cost would be immense, but the glorious result would be eternal.

In His longest recorded prayer, Jesus first prayed for Himself then for His disciples, and, finally, for all believers—those that make up His church, including all of us. This morning, we only have time to look at the first 19 verses: Jesus' prayer for Himself and His disciples. Although Jesus began this prayer by praying for Himself, He actually prayed for God's glory. This prayer—the true "Lord's Prayer"—may be simple, but, as Martin Luther wrote, *"It is so deep, so rich, so wide. No one can fathom it."*

II. Jesus Prayed for Himself

A. Theme 1: Glorify the Father Jesus began His prayer with His primary focus—submitting to the Father's will and glorifying Him in everything. From the beginning, Jesus had submitted Himself to the Father's will—in John 6:38 He said, **"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."** *This is the 1st theme of Jesus' prayer: Glorify the Father.* Jesus had glorified the

Father in His teachings and His miracles. But Jesus would bring the greatest glory to the Father through His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection. **"The hour has come"** for Jesus to do all that had been planned from before the foundation of the world—all to glorify the Father.

B. Theme 2: Glorify Your Son Jesus then asked the Father, **"Glorify your Son."** *This is the 2nd theme: Glorify Your Son."* This is Jesus' only request for Himself in the entire prayer. The Father had glorified the Son when Jesus was baptized and God had spoken from heaven, God said, **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"** (Matthew 3:17). The Father had also glorified Jesus at His transfiguration in Luke 9:35 and when God the Father spoke from heaven in John 12:28. Knowing what was ahead, Jesus prayed that the Father would grant Him the glory that would be His through His death, resurrection, ascension and coronation, just as it had been planned. But Jesus wasn't just seeking His own glory but also the Father's glory— Turn to John 13:31-33. Jesus' glorification would lead to the Father's glorification.

C. Theme 3: Eternal life In keeping with God's eternal plan, the Son **"was granted authority over all the people that he might give eternal life to all those"** the Father had given Him. Jesus alone was given the authority to grant eternal life, through His death on the cross. *This is Jesus' 3rd theme: eternal life.* John 1:12 says, **"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."** Jesus is the only Way to heaven—only Jesus can grant eternal life.

Seven times in His prayer Jesus said that believers are the Father's gift to His Son (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11-12, 24). Basically, believers are the Father's love gift to His beloved Son. At the same time, eternal life is God's free gift to those who believe on His Son—as John 3:16 says, "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** Peter said in Acts 2:21, **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."** From the human viewpoint, one receives the gift of eternal life when he believes on Jesus Christ. But from the divine viewpoint, we have already been given to the Son in divine election. Jesus summarized these two viewpoints in John 6—turn to John 6:39-40. Election and free will is a mystery that the human mind cannot fully understand or explain—if we could, we would be God—we can only accept it by faith.

Jesus then defined eternal life: **"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."** It is not enough to just believe in God. James 2:19 says, **"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder."** Knowing God is to have a personal, intimate love relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ. John 14:6-7 says that one cannot know the Father apart from the Son. Earlier in John 10:30 Jesus said, **"I and my Father are one."**

D. Theme 4: Work Completed The Father is glorified, the Son is glorified and eternal life is possible because **"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."** *This is the 4th theme: Work Completed.* This work included Jesus' messages and miracles, the training of the disciples for future service, and, most of all, His sacrifice on the cross—Hebrews 9: 28 says, **"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people."** On the cross, He said, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). From the human point of view, Calvary was a revolting display of man's sin; but from the divine point of view, the cross revealed and magnified the grace and glory of God. The work was completed.

Having accomplished everything according to God's plan, Jesus knew that He would be exalted to the place where He had been before His incarnation—at the right hand of His Father. He prayed, **"Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."** Jesus looked beyond the humiliation and suffering, to the result of eternal life for those who believe on Him and to the glory that awaited Him—the glory that was rightfully His as the second member of the Trinity and by His perfect submission to the Father. Isaiah wrote, **"He will see the light of life and be satisfied"** (Isaiah 53:11).

III. Jesus Prayed for His Disciples

Jesus then interceded for His disciples. He knew that they would abandon Him, that their faith would be shaken and that their hearts would be grieved. Understanding their concern about His leaving and knowing what was ahead, Jesus had spent much of His time with the disciples on the evening before His death comforting them. He reassured them that He would continue to love them and provide for their needs. Now Jesus prayed to the Father concerning them. Jesus began by describing what it means to be a disciple.

A. What it means to be a disciple: *1. Disciples know the real nature of God.* In John 17:6 Jesus said, **"I have revealed you (**really "I have revealed your Name"**) to those whom you gave me out of the world."**

In Biblical times the "name" of someone meant knowing the whole person—his character, his nature, his attributes. *Disciples know the real nature of God.* Psalm 9:10 says, **"Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."** During Jesus' time with the disciples, by His words and His deeds, Jesus revealed the nature of God to them. Hebrews 1:3 says, **"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."** So perfectly and completely did Jesus reveal God's nature and character that He could say in John 14:9, **"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."** Disciples know the real nature of God.

2. Disciples are a gift from God. Jesus said back in John 17:6, **"You gave them to me."** Earlier in John 17:2, Jesus said that God had given believers to Him. In John 6:37 Jesus said, **"All that my Father gives me will come to me."** Disciples are a gift from God. *3. Disciples have obeyed God's Word.* Jesus said, **"They have obeyed your word."** A disciple keeps or obeys God's word. Discipleship involves submission beginning with salvation as one makes Jesus his Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9). *4. Disciples believe that Jesus came from the Father.* Jesus said, **"They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."** As they were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, the 11 didn't understand Jesus' purpose and certainly didn't understand His death and resurrection, but during their 3 years with Jesus they had made tremendous strides. They knew that He had come from God, and they believed that God had sent Him. Turn to Matthew 16:13-16.

B. Jesus' Prayed Specifically His Disciples He didn't pray for the whole world; He prayed for those who the Father had given to Him, those who are His disciples. In John 17:11 Jesus prayed, **"Protect them by the power of your name."** *1. He prayed for spiritual protection.* Jesus asked the Father to guard the disciples according to His holy character and His attributes—His omnipotence. As Jesus said in John 10:29, **"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."** Later, in John 17:15 Jesus again asked for protection, He said, **"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."** Disciples are to reach the lost world with the truth of the Gospel. That is the primary reason for remaining on earth—as Rom. 10:14 says, **"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom**

they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" But to do this, the disciples—then and now—need God's protection.

2. He prayed for unity. Jesus then prayed that **"they may be one as we are one."** Jesus asked for the spiritual unity of the eleven as they faced the world. This is the unity that all believers have because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the eternal life we all have in common with one another. This is the unity that crosses all barriers. This unity produces a common love for the Lord and testimony to the lost—1 John 4:19 says, **"We love because he first loved us."**

3. He prayed for joy. Looking forward to the joy at completing the work God gave Him to do and to the joy of returning to the Father, Jesus asked in John 17:13 that His disciples **"may have the full measure of my joy with them."** This joy isn't based on outward circumstances but on inward spiritual resources that only those in Christ have. In Jeremiah 15:16 Jeremiah said, **"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty."** .

4. He prayed for sanctification. Having prayed for their spiritual protection, unity and joy, Jesus asked the Father to sanctify the disciples as they prepared to preach the truth to the world. "To sanctify" means to be set apart. Jesus' request for the disciples' sanctification was a request that the disciples be set apart for God and in God. Only sanctified believers, believers who are set apart from the world, are ready to be sent into the world just as the Father sent Christ into the world. True sanctification comes from the working of the Word of God. 1 Peter 2:2 says, **"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."** Having been set apart from the world and transformed by God's grace, the disciples were being sent into the world as witnesses by Jesus.

But salvation wouldn't be possible if it were not for the sacrificial death of the Son. **"For them I sanctify myself."** For the disciples' sakes Jesus would sanctify Himself, that is, He would set Himself apart to righteously obey the Father's will by dying on the cross. It was only because He atoned from their sins (and ours) that the disciples would be sanctified.

IV. Conclusion

As well as being for the eleven that were walking along with Jesus, these verses apply to those who are Jesus' disciples today. True disciples of Jesus—Christians—have an intimate relationship with God—they know His true nature—Romans 8:15 says, **"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"** True disciples today must believe and obey God's Word, including Jesus Christ, in order to be saved and walk as children of God.

Jesus' prayer reveals His incredible love for His followers and His eagerness to return to His Father. Jesus is our Lord and Shepherd as much as He was the Shepherd of that small circle of men. Romans 8:34 says that "**Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."** As He interceded for the disciples, Jesus invites us to listen, to hear the quality of the love and honor shared between Himself and God the Father. He invites us to listen too as He prays for believers, **"so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them"** (17:13).

If we are going to be the disciples we should and can be, if we are going to be filled with joy, we need to know God's truth. It isn't enough to merely study the Bible and learn a great deal of doctrinal truth. We must also love Jesus Christ more and more as we spend time with Him and learn all that He is and all He has done for us. Learning and loving should lead to living, i.e., allowing the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—to give us the strength to obey His Word and to love the lost as God does. This is how we glorify God in this present evil world.

If you are a child of God, trust Him, He will protect you. Rom. 8:31 says, **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** We cannot be overcome by the world when we walk with the Lord. Seek His will and He will fill you with joy. Obey His commands and you will be sanctified—set apart to do great things for Him. Love Him with all of your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37) and you will be united with Him and all His children.