

Intercession

John 17:9-21

Central Idea: When Jesus prayed for us, He prayed for the things we most need!

Introduction

One of the most cherished things in my life is to listen to other people pray for me. I know it may sound weird, but I believe that God gives us a word for people. A true intercessor has listened to my needs, has heard from God maybe some things I didn't necessarily explain or mention, and knows me well. So prayer becomes part of the relationship I have with that person.

Most of the intercession in prayer you see nowadays is stock and wooden, people praying for the needs of the masses. But my favorite kind is an intimate, one-on-one, intercession in which the person praying for me knows me, hears from the Spirit, and prays for my needs on a deep level. There is a power of the Spirit untapped by many of us when we pray simply because of our busy schedules, our poor listening skills and our lack of true relationship. But in this wonderful section of John 17, we have this rare glimpse into the most intimate intercessory prayer of Jesus, what I term the Lord's prayer. Let us read what Jesus prayed for you and me as we walk with Him today!

Text – John 17:9-21

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- I. Jesus prayed for God to preserve His saints (vv. 9-13).
 - A. Jesus longs for us to remain in relationship with Him.
 - i. This prayer of Jesus for His disciples, both then and now, reflects something that we may take for granted. This was not some five-minute willy-nilly, space filler prayer. Jesus prayed in earnest!
 - ii. The prayer of Jesus, which I like to call “The Lord’s Prayer” is a prayer that concludes one of the most intimate moments of teaching in Jesus’ ministry.
 - iii. Gathered around Him are eleven of His twelve disciples, who would become leaders in the church, and they are most likely at this point either leaving the Upper Room or even still in the Garden of Gethsemane.
 - iv. This was the night that Jesus would be betrayed. John 13-17, called by many scholars the Olivet Discourse, is the last teaching and words of Jesus to His disciples before He was arrested and tried and murdered.
 - v. This has the weight and importance of those who know they have a terminal illness, and they spend their last few moments on the most important things in their lives as they look at their legacy. This is what Jesus is doing, so He prays for us in His final moments!
 - vi. This means we should not take these requests of Jesus lightly, for they are the foundation of our continued success in God! Jesus starts with a request for His disciples to be preserved by the Father.
 - vii. There are a million things pulling and tugging at us in a million directions in life. This world has so many points of interest in which it tries to distract us from our walk with God. We must remain disciplined.
 - viii. But through persecution, demanding relationships and a host of other events in our lives, we can begin to slip away from Jesus little by little in our walk. Jesus knew that life would be filled with so much, more than we could handle, so He asks God to keep us in Him!
 - ix. Make no mistake! Jesus wants to be the center of our lives. He wants to be our go-to guy, our counselor, confidant, healer, comforter. And He can easily be all of those things and more, but we must not allow ourselves to be distracted by lesser good things.
 - x. Jesus wants us to remain in Him, to be His people, to have a direct and constant connection to Him, to live life with Him. So He opens His prayer for us asking God to keep us in Him, to preserve His saints in their most important and life-giving relationship, with Jesus.
 - xi. **Application:** What other things in your life are pulling you away from your first love, your constant connection to Jesus? What things demand your attention or try to steal away your prayer time, your Bible reading, your being with God and His saints? We let these things control us, but we

need to let these things know that Jesus is our first priority! Is there something that has higher priority than your relationship with Jesus today?

- B. Jesus longs for us to keep the faith in Him.
- i. To be kept in the name of God is to be kept in His reputation. We are people of God, and wherever we go, whatever we say, and whatever we do bears the name of God, His reputation.
 - ii. The problem is that we so often don't live up to the reputation that God has in the world. We need to remember that we walk as His family on earth, and people are watching.
 - iii. This is why Jesus asks God to keep us in His name. To keep us is to protect and preserve us, to keep us from evil and harm. We are in the hands of God, and He guards us against the dangers of this world.
 - iv. There is great joy in knowing that we are in God's hands, that we are preserved by Him. He cares so much for each of us, and He is daily watching us.
 - v. Part of that preservation is to preserve us from evil and from false doctrines. God does so much to keep us from the dangers in our world and to make sure we remain in Christ.
 - vi. Through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, we are taught the ways of God, the thoughts of God, and the doctrines about Him that are true and worthy of consideration.
 - vii. With the danger of apostasy and false doctrines all around us, the distractions and beliefs of others, it is easy to understand why Jesus prayed that God would keep us in His name and in His Word.
 - viii. **Application:** What are ways that you guard against the dangers of misunderstanding God's truth, or living false doctrines or even other religious beliefs? We have the danger of letting other religions and ideas that are not of God influencing us. Do you test every truth that you live by to make sure it is from God's Word? What in your life is not a biblical truth that you may operate by today?
- II. Jesus prayed for God to sanctify His saints (vv. 14-19).
- A. Jesus longs for us to influence the world.
- i. The request of Jesus for our sanctification is quite clear in this prayer. He is praying for God to set us apart from the world. He is not calling for us to isolate ourselves from the world, or start our own world.
 - ii. He specifically says that He does not ask God to remove us from the world, but to make us like the salt in the world, to make us influential for Him in it.

- iii. We are in the world. We live here. We work here, for God's Kingdom. But we are not to be like the world in thought, motive, desire, action and word. We are to represent Christ!
 - iv. All too often in our world, we have settled to be influenced by others rather than be the leaders and influencers. We have accepted rather than tolerated. We have given in and given up rather than given out.
 - v. The salt of the earth displays Jesus' desire for us in this world. We must live in the world, but we don't have to accept the world's standards and customs. We can be that salt that gives the world God's flavor.
 - vi. This is exactly what Jesus prays for, that we would be separate from the world in standards and beliefs, not physically. When we separate ourselves like hermits, how can we bear witness? Rather we must be in the world, not of it.
 - vii. Jesus' request to protect us from the evil one might be the kind of understanding we are to have when we pray in the Model Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil..."
 - viii. Several times in this section, we see the word for sanctifying or consecrating. This is from the root for the word holy. Jesus is serious in praying that you and I become holy like Him!
 - ix. Holiness is part of the requirement of being a believer. We are to live in a different way than the world. To be holy in this context means to be set apart, and though we want to fit in, I'd rather fit in with God's family than with the world!
 - x. **Application:** Jesus prayed for you to become holy like Him, to be separate from the world in your actions and thoughts, to be like Him, to be the influencer rather than the influenced. We are called to be salt in this world, a difference and a flavor that shows people God's Kingdom and His ways. If people see Jesus in your life, then you Jesus' prayer is being answered!
- B. Jesus longs for us to know His truth.
- i. Throughout John's Gospel, a key thought is that of truth and how it plays out with love and grace. Here, Jesus talks about how to be sanctified. In His prayer, He gives us the vehicle that will make us holy like Him, God's Word.
 - ii. The Word sets us apart from the world, because it is the truth of God. When we have the truth revealed to us, we are different than those around us, having the light of truth while others are still in darkness.
 - iii. And that knowledge of God and His Word makes us not only different (sanctified), but also set apart for service in this world (consecrated). We

offer the valuable service of introducing others to the truth of God, the person of Jesus Christ.

- iv. You see, as Jesus has already said, truth is not objective or relative. That's the "What is truth?" question. The proper question concerning the truth is "Who is true?" And the answer is Jesus.
- v. In John 14:6, Jesus told us that He is the Way, TRUTH and Life. Jesus is the truth. He is the Word (John 1:1) and the Truth (John 14:6). Truth is not a thing; truth is a Person.
- vi. Pilate later will ask at Jesus' trial, "What is truth?" But he does not wait to hear the answer from the Truth. He leaves the room and moves on with his pragmatist approach. I would have loved to hear Jesus' answer!
- vii. To know God's truth is to know Christ. And to know Him is to show others this wonderful Truth we have discovered and gotten to know. That creates a mission, an act of service, for which we must be set apart. People should be coming to us in their search for the Truth, for Jesus, because we know Him!
- viii. Jesus prayed that you and I would serve Him by showing Him as God's Truth to those seeking the truth. God's Word, His Son, His Truth, is a Person that we have the privilege of introducing the world to!
- ix. **Application:** Are you fulfilling Jesus' desire for you to know Him as Truth and to share Him with others who are truth seekers? Many are looking for the truth, but they have not seen the light of the Gospel, that good news, that the truth is not merely some system of laws, but a loving God who shows them how He created and designed all things. We have the truth, but we must share Him with others!

III. Jesus prayed for God to unify His saints (vv. 20-21).

A. Jesus longs for us to spread His good news.

- i. Jesus didn't just pray a short-sighted prayer. Instead, He prayed for all of the disciples that were there then, and that are here now. Jesus prayed not just for Peter and John and Andrew and the others, but also for you and me!
- ii. He was thinking of each of us as He prayed this prayer. It is not just intended for those back then, but for us today. Each one of us through the word and testimony of another believer has come to know Christ.
- iii. Because of the good news, the gospel, we have heard of Him, and now follow Him as many who have gone before us. Jesus knew that there would be many to come to Him.
- iv. The reason is that He just dedicated His disciples to share this good news of Jesus, and they would surely preach about Him as He prepared them to do effectively.

- v. So Jesus prays for a unity between all the believers, from generation to generation, and from believer to believer. Now there are a lot of things that can challenge that brotherly and sisterly unity among us, from personality differences to doctrinal differences.
 - vi. Indeed in our day there are many denominations and flavors of Christianity. There is a whole 2,000 year history demonstrating the ease with which we ignore Jesus' petition for us to be united together.
 - vii. And yet this is exactly what Jesus prayed for, for us to be united with all other believers. We may not be able to unite under every piece of doctrine with others, but we can unite together under the singular banner of our one Lord Jesus, and His Holy Spirit.
 - viii. There are essentials that make us all Christians that we can unite with others who do not believe every little detail that we do. Such unity is not about watering down the Word of God, but about gathering under one Lord.
 - ix. **Application:** Do you focus on the big picture of Christianity, or do you try to find the little things to separate yourself even from others who are believers in Christ? We need to become a people who seek to fellowship with those who are of like mind. We play on the same team, and there is nothing wrong with joining with other believers as well as those we are more familiar with! Let us avoid friendly fire unless it is absolutely essential to us!
- B. Jesus longs for us to fellowship with one another.
- i. This idea of being one together reminds me of the Trinity as one. Jesus has spent a lot of time in John showing that He and the Father are one. And He prays that believers throughout the ages will be one as well.
 - ii. To be one is expressed in two ways in the Lord's Prayer. The first I have already described, as a unity amongst all believers in Jesus, coming together and fellowshiping under the banner of Christ alone.
 - iii. But the other facet of oneness here is to be one with God, to have such a close personal and corporate relationship with Jesus that we are one with Him, moving as one. One mind, one act, one will.
 - iv. This truly is one of the greatest requests that Jesus could have prayed, for how many times throughout even one day do we disconnect ourselves from God and do things on our own, not even seeking His thoughts or ways or strength?
 - v. More than ever, believers need to unite themselves and become one with God first, and then with other believers. What can God do with a united body? What can He accomplish?

- vi. To be united with God or one with God is not some mystical understanding or weirdness. It is to seek Him first and to seek to be in His will and Word.
- vii. Oneness with God does not mean that we become God or that we have some special power, but rather that we are so close to God's heart that we know His will perfectly and execute His will in our world as if He was here instead of us.
- viii. The oneness of the believers is for the sole purpose of ministering to this world and doing the mission of evangelism and discipling that God has put us on the planet to do.
- ix. Through our oneness with God and other believers, we can do great things for Him. It is the environment that gives us clarity in the Spirit and in the spiritual realms. It is the environment that gives us power to act as God would wish in this world.
- x. **Application:** Jesus prayed for you to be one with Him and with His people. What's stopping you from utilizing that power of oneness and that clarity of purpose in the body of Christ? Do you know what your mission is? Do you have the saints behind you, helping you and resourcing you to do what He has called you to do? That is a power untapped by the body of Christ, but Jesus prayed that you would have that oneness!

Conclusion

Jesus prays for you. Jesus prays for me. He asks God for these vision-filled possibilities with His saints and disciples. He asks for the power of unity, a people dedicated to service in His Kingdom on this earth, and for the protection of God both spiritually and physically so that nothing could keep us from completing the mission He has for us. What part of His prayer do you need to apply today? Jesus has already asked God for these things for you and His Church. Let us endeavor to be what He has prayed for us to be! Let us see His prayers answered in our Church and in our lives!

Action Points

- What needs to change in your life to make your relationship with Jesus the highest priority?
- What are you doing in your community to show the Truth, Jesus, to those who are searching for Him? Do they know they can come to you as they search? Do you push Jesus on them, or share Him when they ask?
- Are you one with the Lord, knowing His purpose in your life and what you are here to do? Are you one with His people so that you can gain the encouragement and resources to do what God has called you to do? We don't need to be one just to be unified. We need to be one so we can do what God has for us to do!