

## Reflection 3: The Prayers of Jesus

### John 17: 6-19

*"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. **7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. **8** 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. **9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. **10** All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. **11** I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. **12** While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. **13** "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. **14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

The disciples as they heard Jesus' prayer would have wondered at the heart of Jesus. They had just heard him talking about his death but now after just two sentences when he asks the Father to glorify him he goes on to pray for his disciples and the church which will follow. He is about to face the most humiliating and painful death possible yet he shows immense concern love and care for his disciples in the midst of this act of utter obedience.

He prays for their protection in the world and he prays that they might experience his joy and that they might be unified in order to do the work he has set for them. But overall they would have heard his love for them even as he prepares to die. It is hard to imagine what they must have been feeling. Confusion, wonder, love, fear, awe. All tied up inside each of them.

There are five themes throughout this prayer for the disciples:

#### **1. Revelation and response**

Jesus makes it clear that the disciples came to him as a gift from the Father. They were always the Father's. The Father chose them and gave them to Jesus. The Father revealed them to Jesus.

#### **2. Jesus prays for the disciples**

Jesus prays for his friends. He is concerned for them. There is a special relationship between Jesus and his disciples because they have been given to him by God.

Jesus also says that, "glory has come to him through his disciples." This glory has come from their belief in him and from their witness to the world about him. They too have revealed who Jesus is and therefore who the Father is. They have revealed his name and therefore have revealed his character and what he stands for, Mark 6:6b-13.

#### **3. Protection and unity through the name of the Father**

After his work has been completed Jesus he will return home to his heavenly Father.

Jesus is concerned, however, for the disciples. He is afraid the 'evil one' will trick them and take them away from him and so he prays for their protection. This protection comes from

the powerful and authoritative name of the Father. God's name is powerful therefore he is powerful and this power is used to protect his people.

Jesus prays for their protection "so they might be one as we are one," that those who follow Jesus, might be united as the Father and the Son are united. In unity there is strength and power. In disunity there is weakness and fear and the possibility of betrayal. In unity we can reject the wiles of the 'evil one.' As we stand together supporting and encouraging one another the world cannot attack us and win.

It is to be noted though that their unity comes by union in God's name. Jesus prays, "*Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.*" They can only enjoy the unity of the Father and the Son through the power of the Father's name. Therefore the disciples must remain faithful and loyal to Jesus.

#### **4. The disciples are *in* the world but not *of* the world**

Jesus says I say 'these things' while I am in the world so that they (his disciples who are listening to this prayer) may have the full measure of my joy within them.

These things probably refer to the whole Farewell Discourse of John 14-16 and his joy is reflected in John 15:9-14.

The joy that Jesus enjoys is the love of the Father that comes through his obedience to the Father's commands. Love is the central theme here. The disciples will enjoy the love of Jesus and their heavenly Father if they remain faithful to them and share in love with one another. The joy the disciples experience is not dependent on external circumstances but from belonging to the Father. Their circumstances did not improve by deciding to follow Jesus but their assurance of belonging to the Father does give them great joy and hope for the future.

The word that Jesus received from the Father and gave to his disciples has caused the world to hate them as it also hated him. The word that Jesus has shared with them is the message of his saving works, that he is going to die for their sin, be resurrected and return to the Father. In doing this he will have saved them from their sins by offering himself as the perfect sacrifice for their salvation.

Jesus doesn't pray that they be removed from the world, but that they be protected while in the world. The disciples had work to do for God and this requires that they remain in the world while they do his work. Hence their need for protection from the 'evil one.'

The force of the 'evil one' is real. We are told in Ephesians 6:10-18 to be aware of the spiritual forces that work against us. This is to be taken seriously. So Jesus requests that the Father protect them from the 'evil one' for his force is real and needs to be thwarted.

#### **5. Sanctify them**

Jesus prays that the Father will sanctify the disciples by the Father's word, the word of truth. Knowledge of the truth will set them apart and separate them from the world. Knowledge of and belief in the truth about Jesus will make them holy as Jesus is holy, as the Father is holy.

While in the world they are to proclaim the knowledge they have received from Jesus to the world. They are to obey Jesus' command of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20:

When you are 'sanctified' you are set apart for God, for his purpose alone. Someone who is sanctified will only do what God requires of him. He will follow the words of Micah 6:8, "*He has shown you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*" One who walks humbly with God does so in obedience to his will. His will is that his disciples share the knowledge of the Kingdom of God with the world, the truth, that the world too might know God.

One who is sanctified, is made holy, loves what God loves and hates what God hates. Jesus' disciples are to be holy as he is holy. Leviticus 11:44-45 says, *"I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. 45 I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."*

1 Peter 1:16 says, *"For it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"*

### **Reflect on:**

Someone said, "What a man thinks he is. What do you spend most time thinking about? What do you think about this statement in the context of those who reflect constantly on God's word and doing his will?"

1. Carson says, "Christians often think of Jesus as God's gift to us; we rarely think of ourselves as God's gift to Jesus. God's gift of us to Jesus is for the good of the gift." (p210) What is your response to this statement in the light of vs6-8?
2. Jesus says that, "glory has come to him through his disciples." How do you glorify Jesus in your day to day life?
3. We often deny the reality of the 'evil one' or at the very least we ignore Satan's existence. Yet Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us to be prepared to defend ourselves from the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.
  - (a) Why do you think we are so careless in understanding how Satan and his cohorts are at work?
4. Unity is an important theme in Jesus' Farewell Prayer. If Jesus thought it important to pray for unity for his disciples, how much more necessary is it for us that we pray for unity amongst ourselves?

### **Concluding thoughts:**

I am eternally grateful that Jesus chose to allow his disciples to be present while he prayed at this time. For this prayer truly does reflect what is on his heart and the intimacy he shares with his heavenly Father that he promises will be the same for those who believe in him as the disciples did.

It is also good for us to know that we can read these words in the light of our post resurrection knowledge and our receipt of the Holy Spirit who indwells us and knows us and makes our prayers acceptable to God our heavenly Father.

There is so much to learn from this prayer that it is a little overwhelming but we can rest assured that the knowledge we need to be God's servants will be revealed to us. This is a great encouragement for because of this being God's servant is always going to be achievable. We just need to ask him how he wants us to be holy for him and he will show us. Micah 6:8 is of course always a guiding verse for us to hang our actions on.

*"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*