

The Gospel of John

Spiritual Protection

John 17:13-16

INTRODUCTION:

We are continuing in what is referred to as the "High Priestly Prayer" of Jesus. On the way to the Garden of Gethsemane in the darkness of Friday morning, Jesus stopped and had His eleven gather around Him and He prayed this intercessory prayer for them and also for all who believe in Him through their word that they, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, left for us in the form of the New Testament.

So as we are reading these words from John 17, we are hearing an intercessory prayer, not only for the eleven, but for us as well.

As we come to this prayer, we meet Him as the Great High Priest. In just a short time from now He will go into the garden and He will pray, and He will wrestle with temptation. He will come out of that temptation triumphant. Judas will show up with the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees with lanterns, torches, and weapons and they will arrest Him. They will take Him into the darkness to mock trials before Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests, and then before Herod, and then before Pilot. Later that day, they will crucify Him on the cross. And He will rise from the dead on the following Sunday morning.

Before we get into our scripture text this morning, I believe that it is very important that we understand how Christ's high priestly prayer and His crucifixion fit together. This would have been more obvious to the Jews in Jesus' day than it would be for us today.

The truth of the matter is He could not qualify to be the High Priest if He did not offer the sacrifice for his people. In the Old Testament, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, which symbolized the presence of God. He would enter with incense which symbolized prayer for the forgiveness of the people and he also had to bring the blood of the sacrifice and splatter it on the mercy seat that was on top of the ark of the covenant.

That is what our Lord does here. He has a right to enter into the Holy Place to pray with God on our behalf and to intercede for us, because He Himself, not only sprinkles the blood, but He Himself is the sacrifice and the blood is His own blood.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all

things just as *we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶ Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need.

Many religions offer morality and virtue and charity. But only Christ offers salvation from sin, death, judgment, and eternal damnation. This person has no equal. He is the perfect High Priest who has passed through the heavens into the presence of God, with the blood of His own sacrifice to intercede for His people.

This would be very clear language to the Jewish people reading the epistle to the Hebrews. Every Jew would immediately understand the meaning. After offering the sacrifice, the priest would carry some of the blood and incense and begin into the Holy of Holies. In order to get there he had to go through three series of curtains. He started in the courtyard then he went into the Holy Place and from the Holy Place, he went into the Holy of Holies. After he had sprinkled the blood to seek forgiveness of his people and waved the incense symbolizing the prayers, he left. **There was no place to sit down.** In the Holy of Holies there was no bench, there was no chair, no place to take a seat.

But our Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, also went through three curtains, if you will. He went through the first heaven, the atmospheric heaven; then He went through the second heaven, the stellar heaven; and then He went into the third heaven, the eternal abode of God. When He arrived there He presented His own shed blood from the cross to sprinkle on the heavenly mercy seat. He then did what no high priest has ever done: He **sat down** and ever-lives in the presence of God Himself, continually offering prayers for His people. It is not incense symbolizing prayers, but it is our Great High Priest remaining inside the Holy of Holies, **seated there**, interceding for His people.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 17:13-16 (NASB)

¹³ But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full 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 am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one.

¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Prayer

So now as we come back to John 17, we are reminded that He has the right to be the Great High Priest and to intercede for us, because He will offer His own blood in just a few hours as the sacrifice that God accepted. Now in this prayer, we see how the Lord prays for His own, because here He is praying for those who believe in Him, the ones that are with Him, "The men whom God gave Him." He's thinking, of course, of the disciples who are with Him, the eleven.

But He's not just praying for them.

John 17:20 (NASB)

²⁰ "I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word,

Salvation comes by hearing the Word, which means the revelation of God in the New Testament. So all believers throughout all the rest of human history will be saved because they have heard the message of Christ recorded in the New Testament. They will

then believe because of what the apostles preached and wrote. So the prayer then is not just for the eleven but it is for all who will believe from their ministry in the future.

Last week we saw that He prayed for our spiritual security and our spiritual unity. Not praying that we all get along together in life but that we have an invisible spiritual oneness. Just as Christ and God are one, Jesus wanted us to also be one with them. We receive this oneness because Christ is in us and we share his attributes. Including eternal life which we have now because we have been made alive by the very life of God.

The third request that He makes to the Father is that we have spiritual joy.

BODY:

I. SPIRITUAL JOY.

John 17:13 (NASB)

¹³ and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My **joy** made full in themselves.

Notice that He once again says, “**But now I am coming to You;**” This is on His mind. He has said that already in this chapter:

John 17:1 (NASB)

¹⁷ Jesus spoke these things; and raising His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, so that the Son may glorify You,

It is going to be 40 days until the ascension. The joy that He desires for us to have is based upon an event that has not happened. That they would have heaven’s resources at their disposal. That they would have the Holy Spirit. That they would have the revelation of God and know the truth. That they would be given words to say when they proclaimed the gospel. That they would be hated and persecuted by the world and thrown out of the synagogues. That they would be martyred – and all but John were. And all these things will produce joy in their lives.

There is an important lesson in this. Life on earth is difficult and disappointing but our joy is not tied to that. What is happening here is exactly what the Bible says will happen. “In this world you will have trouble”.

We don’t ever hear about Jesus laughing, but the Scriptures clearly tell us He wept. There was joy set before Him. Jesus considered His death on the cross as joy because He understood the significance of that event. And it is the same with us. There is joy set ahead of us. There are tastes of it here, but full joy, “**My joy made full,**” that is the joy that is equal to Christ in its fullness, that is future.

John 16:20-22 (NASB)

²⁰ Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy! ²¹ Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you.

The answers to prayer that the Lord gives us continue to elevate our joy. When we see the Holy Spirit come and take up residence within us and give us love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control – all the fruits of the Spirit, we have a taste of heavenly joy. But the "full joy" is yet to come.

We have His life, we have His love, we have His joy, we have His peace, because we are in Him and He is in us. We talked about that last time. We have literally been drawn into the life of the Trinity and it is all motivated by love.

So He intercedes for us, for our spiritual security, our unity, and our joy. In verses 14-15 **He prays for our immunity.**

II. SPIRITUAL IMMUNITY.

John 17:14a (NASB)

14 I have given them Your word;...

We are all familiar with what immunity means. We are in the middle of the **Coronavirus pandemic which is also called COVID-19.** Vaccination has now been developed to prevent our bodies from the **threat** of becoming infected by the virus.

In essence, Jesus has vaccinated us with His Word in order that we would be immune to the deadly, damning, viral threats of Satan. That we would be immune to the worldly sin that surrounds us and condemns us.

John 17:14b (NASB)

...and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one.

The world has always rejected God. Being "of the world" is the condition of being concerned with worldly affairs instead of the spiritual truths of God. The world's wisdom is not wisdom at all. Instead it is foolishness.

1 Corinthians 3:18-19a (NASB)

18 Take care that no one deceives himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God.

We see that today in the endless discussions of "spirituality" by men whose spiritual wisdom is based on nothing more than worldly illusions. True wisdom that comes from God is in total contrast to the foolish "wisdom" of the world throughout Scripture. The message of the cross is foolishness to those with worldly wisdom who are perishing because true wisdom comes not from man's philosophies, but from God's Word. True godliness is always opposed by the world. Many of the Jews in Jesus' day were part of the world because they chose to observe man's law instead of God's law.

John 1:11 (NASB)

11 He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him.

As prophesied, and necessary for God's plan of salvation to occur, most of the Jews, God's chosen people, did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. When the long-awaited Messiah arrived, many did not believe His words. They based their relationship with God with a

physical lineage from Abraham. But, it was not that physical lineage that made them God's people. They had to have a **loving** relationship based upon the scripture. They had interjected their own man-made rules and departed from the truth of the Old Testament. So when the Messiah arrived in the person of Jesus, they did not recognize Him for Who He was. Listen to how Jesus describes them.

John 8:37-44 (NASB)

³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you are seeking to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father."

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus *said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born as a result of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would **love** Me, for I came forth from God and am here; for I have not even come on My own, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

For the Christian, the choice is clear. We are to avoid worldliness, we must mature in the faith so that we are no longer spiritual infants, tossed about by the lies of the world. We must come to know the difference between the wisdom of God and the foolishness of worldly wisdom, and that is only achieved by careful and diligent study of the Word, seeking God's wisdom in prayer, and enjoying the fellowship of other mature believers who can encourage us to reject worldliness and embrace godliness.

We must compare the way we are living and loving to the scriptures to ensure that we are not making the same mistake as the Jews in Jesus' day. We must be certain that we are basing our relationship with God upon spiritual wisdom instead of worldly knowledge.

Do you remember what He prayed earlier in His prayer concerning the true Christian?

John 17:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ "I have revealed Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and **they have followed Your word.** ⁷ Now they have come to know that everything which You have given Me is from You; ⁸ for the **words** which You gave Me I have given to them; and **they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You,** and they believed that You sent Me.

That is the definition of true salvation as found in verse 3.

John 17:3 (NASB)

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

We become one of God's people when we read, believe, and follow God's word. The result is that the world will hate us because we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world.

The statement is repeated in verse 16.

John 17:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

This is another way to say that my people will be just as I am.

What a statement!

They are righteous just as I am righteous, because they are in Me. They are as I am: at peace, because they are in Me. They are as I am: filled with joy, because they are in Me. They are as I am: hated by the world, because they are in Me." That's why Paul said his wounds, essentially, were the marks of Christ. People were trying to bruise and beat Christ. He was no longer here, so they persecute those who are His.

John 17:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but **to keep them away from the evil one.**

Jesus says that the world will hate them because they are not of this world. But I do not want you to take them out of the world. Why?

Look at verse 18.

John 17:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world.

You cannot take them out of the world because people cannot believe unless they hear and they cannot hear unless there is a preacher. They have the task of fulfilling the Great Commission, right?

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The intercessory work of Christ is a work of protection. We need that protection because the world hates God and His word with a passion.

CONCLUSION:

So the Lord, our Great High Priest, the one who gave the satisfactory sacrifice, has now entered into heaven. God has accepted His sacrifice, His blood has been sprinkled on the heavenly mercy seat. He took a chair there and He continually intercedes for us, praying us into glory, praying for our spiritual security, unity, joy, and immunity. There's one more; but that is for next time, because it deserves attention all on its own.

Family of God.