

# The Gospel of John

## God's Love for Us

### John 17:20

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing in the High Priestly prayer found in the 17th chapter of the gospel of John. This passage of scripture is a rare jewel in Scripture. It is so very rich and deep. We could literally spend endless time here in an attempt to pull from its riches.

It is the only place where we have the intercessory work of our Lord Jesus Christ literally laid out for us precisely as Jesus spoke them nearly 2000 years ago.

We know our Lord continually makes intercession for us before the Father. We can actually hear the Jesus Himself praying for us, His people, before His loving Father. His real work of intercession started at His ascension when He sat down at the right hand side of God and will continue until the end of the age when He will return to gather us unto Himself.

Do you remember how Jesus began this prayer?

#### **John 17:1b (NASB)**

...and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come;...

Christ's relationship with the Father was so close that He **looked** into the heavens and said " **Father, the hour has come**".

What hour is this?

It is the time of His glory. It will start with the crucifixion, be followed by the resurrection, then the ascension, then the exaltation, and then the coronation. It all begins on this night. This is **the** night that has been anticipated throughout all eternity and throughout all time up to this point. This is **the** night that begins a sequence of events that will shape the eternal destiny of all of God's people who have ever lived on this earth.

More specifically, it is Thursday night when it all begins. This is during Passion Week when the Galilean Jews celebrated the Passover. Since Jesus and the disciples were Galileans, they gathered in an upper room to celebrate. The Passover was a feast that God instituted back in Exodus 13 and 14 to commemorate His miraculous deliverance of Israel. After 400 years of slavery in Egypt He delivered them from their bondage. It had been around 1500 years since that deliverance and they were still celebrating.

It was an amazing and miraculous deliverance, as you know. You know about the plagues. You know about the slaying of the firstborn if the doorposts were not covered with blood. You know about the institution of the sacrificial lamb and the Passover meal.

You know about the deliverance of the people of Israel. You know about the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's massive army following after them. That great event was the most monumental deliverance that God had ever done on behalf of His people in history. But that night as Jesus met with His disciples to celebrate, they were on the brink of an even more monumental deliverance, the deliverance that God would give to His people through the death of His Son – a deliverance that was not physical, but a deliverance that was spiritual.

On that night, Christ transformed the Passover. That was the last official Passover to be held. The Lord **transformed** that commemorative feast into the Lord's Table, the Communion. That, of course, is where we remember Christ's death on the cross by eating the bread which reminds us of His broken body and drinking of the cup which reminds us of His spilt blood. It is, unquestionably, God's greatest act of deliverance. He delivered freedom from the bondage of sin and eternal life to all who would believe. Jesus was fully aware that the Friday was coming, and on that Friday He would die as God's chosen sacrifice for the sins of His people.

Throughout all of the sermons from this chapter, I have not placed much emphasis on the **love** that was required for God and Jesus to shower the eleven disciples and all who will believe with so many **blessings, promises, and gifts**. That is where I would like to go this morning.

It is little wonder that His soul is deeply troubled. And the horror for Him is not the Jews and Romans who are about to cause Him physical harm, but for what God is about to do to Him spiritually. That was to punish Him for all the sins of all the people who will ever believe throughout human history. Despite all of the terrors that lay in front of Him, His mind is not set on Himself, but on His disciples, and on how much He **loves** them.

This prayer is based on **love**. What most marks the righteous soul of Jesus was despite all He would be going through in the next few hours, He is still caught up in how much He loves His own. The boundless love of those unworthy eleven is expressed throughout this section, throughout that evening, and on into Friday morning.

### **John 13:1 (NASB)**

13 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.

Jesus loved his disciples to the max. He loved them infinitely.

He first expressed His love –chapter 13 tells us – by washing their filthy feet, something they would not stoop to do for each other. But He stooped to do for all of them. He even washed the feet of Judas. This was an act of **physical love**. But after Judas leaves **He explodes in spiritual love** on the remaining eleven disciples, and He gives them **love's promises**.

Now with that as an introduction, let's look at verse 20.

### **Stand and Read Scripture**

#### **John 17:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

## Prayer

### BODY:

#### I. LOVE'S PROMISES.

##### **John 17:20a (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask on behalf of these alone,...

What were the things that Christ asked for?

In the opening five verses He prays that He would be glorified; and then when He is glorified, He will pray continually, ever-living to make intercession to bring all His children to glory.

He had made promise after promise to them of things to come.

The promises of divine love: a promise of heaven. That He is going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house; the promise of power to do greater works than He did – not greater in kind, but greater in extent; they will literally cover the globe eventually – the promise that anything they would need He will supply from heaven through prayer; the promise that the Holy Spirit is going to come and be in them, and the Holy Spirit will empower them and tell them what to say, and teach them everything that God wants them to know.

Love's promise also granted them peace, His peace. He promised them forgiveness of sin, of course, but He also promised them fruitfulness, that they would bear much fruit. He also promised them persecution, hatred, and even death. But in the end, He promised them that He would overcome the hostile world, and He promised them a joy that no one could ever take away. All those are the promises of divine **love** given to a group of men who were weak, and struggling to understand, and self-centered, and preoccupied with their own ambition. They were promises of love, but they were promises of grace as well.

#### II. LOVE'S GIFTS.

##### **John 17:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, **but for those also who believe in Me through their word;**

We have learned from this chapter that He prays for the eleven disciples. But He also extends that prayer "**for those also who believe in Me through their word**".

This is the third "**do not ask**" by the way. This is the third time He has had a negative in this prayer.

##### **John 17:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

He doesn't pray for unbelievers.

## **John 17:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

He is praying only for believers; He is praying for believers in the world; and He's praying not just for the eleven, but all believers in the world. He needs us in the world to spread the gospel. How can they believe without a preacher?

So He's praying for all believers through all of human history. And what is it He prays for? We saw that in verses 11 to 19.

He prayed **first** for our **spiritual security** in verses 11 and 12. Jesus protected all that God had given Him and did not allow anyone of them to perish except Judas so that the scriptures would be fulfilled. He now needs God to protect them as He faces the cross. He also knows that all of His children will need spiritual protection in this world.

**Secondly** He prayed for our **spiritual unity**," at the end of verse 11. 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.

In verse 13, He prayed for our **spiritual joy**. He prayed for our joy in the midst of a troubled world. And we have that joy! We have joy in our salvation with all its blessings.

**Fourthly**, in verses 14-16, He prayed our **spiritual immunity**. That we would be protected from the evil one. Despite the fact that we are in the world, we are not of the world, even as our Lord was not of the world. We are in a dangerous place, and He prays for our protection, our immunity from the devastating power of the evil one.

And **Fifth**, in verses 17-19, Jesus will pray for our **spiritual purity**. That we would be sanctified. That we would be made holy and set apart from sin and separated from evil.

Now all of this is His praying for us while we are **in the world**. Later He will pray for us when we leave this world. So as a result of His prayers and the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples will be transformed. They will literally transcend their weaknesses in a divinely granted usefulness that has no parallel. They will be eleven men who turn the world upside-down, and they will be the foundation for the spiritual temple of believers that is the dwelling place of God.

## **Ephesians 2:19-22 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

So it is His prayer that establishes these apostles as the preachers of the gospel. In that first generation, they become the foundation of the church. And despite of what it looks like, they are going to succeed because of the power of the Spirit and the prayers of the Son of God.

## **III. LOVE'S ASSISTANCE.**

### **John 17:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me **through their word**;

Jesus told this group of men who were weak, and struggling to understand, and self-centered, and preoccupied with their own ambition that they would preach to the whole world. At this point the disciples probably thought about how unlikely this would be possible. Jesus was leaving them. All of their expectations of Jesus were fading away fast. They did not understand the significance of Christ's death on the cross or that He would rise again from the grave. They were going to need **a lot** of help!

But remember Christ's promise at the end of chapter 15?

### **John 15:26-27 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father*, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup> and you *will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

You are going to be the first generation of gospel preachers. You will testify. You also are the ones that the Spirit of God will inspire, along with your associates, to write the New Testament. This seems so remote because they were a highly disturbed group. They were profoundly troubled. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, made another comforting promise.

### **John 14:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there you may be also.*

He also tried to give them some peace of mind later in verses 27-29.

### **John 14:27-29 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. <sup>28</sup> You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.

The fact that Jesus was going away and leaving them behind was very disturbing to them. How could they possibly carry on without Him? Jesus gives them one more promise.

### **John 16:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.

The possibility that they would be able to preach to gospel to the whole world was very remote in their minds and in the minds of anybody who knew the story only up to this point. That very night, their weakness would be on full display. The very night that Jesus was arrested, they would be seen as weak. In fact, before the arrest of Jesus in the garden, our Lord took them in for a time of prayer to pray with Him, and their weakness

was on full display because they fell asleep in the sleep of fear; and then when the arrest came, they scattered.

And it got worse; Peter, **three times**, denied that he even knew Jesus, and he did so with curses. How is it possible that these men, so weak, so fearful, so doubtful, so scattered, could ever fulfill the great commission? The difference would come from two sources.

**One**, the Holy Spirit will come upon them on the day of Pentecost and empower them for witness. And **secondly**, Christ Himself will pray or intercede for them.

**Now**, verse 20 becomes very, very important. He says that there will be **“those also who believe in Me through their word”!**

The disciples will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, they will preach the gospel, and they will write the New Testament. The New Testament, in a real sense, is their word. It is the apostles' doctrine written down. It is inspired and written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. So this doubting group of fearful, scattering weaklings will become a force that literally will empower the gospel through all the rest of human history.

This began at Pentecost when the Spirit of God came upon them, and they began to preach. Through their preaching many believed even when their word was not written down. And now we believe because of what **was** written down for us.

So the prayers of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Father on behalf of the apostles were answered with astonishing divine clarity, so that God gave them a clear understanding of the gospel which they preached. And while they were preaching, they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of the New Testament so that when they disappeared from the earth and the age of the apostles was over, the theology that God had given to them would be in Scripture for every generation in every country and every language throughout human history.

## **CONCLUSION:**

We can read the scriptures and see how God answered Christ's requests. We can experience the promises and gifts of love in our lives. As John 3:16 tells us, this was an act of extreme LOVE.

### **John 3:16 (NASB)**

**16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

Although the names have already been written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you must choose for yourself if you want to believe and obey. We have the choice to receive or reject all of the blessings, promises, and gifts from God's love. God has known that decision since the beginning of time. So believe, love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and keep His commandments knowing that He will assist us in our work for Him just as He assisted the apostles.

### **Family of God.**