**JESUS’ HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER, Part 2**

**(JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES)**

John 17:6-19

I mentioned this passage last week. Hebrews 4:14-15 tells us, “Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” In John Chapter 17 Jesus, our great High Priest, One who knows us and sympathizes with us – He intercedes to the Father on our behalf. As we saw last week when we looked at the first 5 verses, the cross is heavy on Jesus’ mind. The events of the cross are now only a few hours away where Jesus will fulfill His whole purpose for coming to Earth. When Jesus finishes this prayer He’s going to go off by Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane and pray alone. After that He’ll be arrested. But in John 17 Jesus prays out loud in the presence of His disciples. He is praying so that they can hear Him because His prayer is for their benefit. This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible and it reveals the very heart of our Lord for His own. It is a prayer of intercession for all of us who follow Him. Today we’re going to focus on verses 6 thru 19 as Jesus prays specifically for His disciples, for the remaining faithful eleven who are physically present with Him at this time. Many of the things Jesus prays for are specific for them while others could apply to us – to all believers – also.

Let me begin by reading through this passage and then we’ll go back and look at it in detail. Jesus continues His prayer to His Father…

6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

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 ***[speaking of Judas the betrayer]***, that the Scripture might be fulfilled ***[Ps 41:9 and 109:8]***.

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.”

OK, so **who is Jesus praying for here**? In this passage that I just read. Explain how you know this.

Who He is NOT praying for: V 9 “I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me…” So we know this is not a general prayer for the whole world.

V 7-8 “Now they know that everything that You have given Me is from You. For I have given them the words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.” Fresh on Jesus’ mind is the declaration of faith by these eleven disciples in John 16:30: “Now we know that you [Jesus] know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you [Jesus] came from God.” And in the very next verse Jesus acknowledges their belief. So Jesus tells His Father here in His prayer that “they (these 11 disciples) have believed that You sent Me.”

V 12 “While I was with them, I kept them in your name…” Jesus speaks here about having been physically with these disciples.

So what I need you to see and to acknowledge is that in the verses I just read Jesus is praying specifically for His disciples. That’s the context. Can we all agree with that?

Whenever you study a passage there are several questions you as the reader need to ask yourself, “Who’s speaking/writing?” “Who are they speaking/writing to (audience)?” “What is the context or the issue being addressed?” “What’ the speaker/writers purpose?”

So, speaking about these 11 disciples what does Jesus mean when He says, v 6… “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word”? Jesus says here that God the Father gave these 11 disciples to Jesus, right? Same thing He said back in v 2, “whom You (the Father) have given Him (Jesus).

Well, hold on a minute!

Matthew 4:18-22 Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John

Matthew 2:43-51 Matthew

John 2:43-51 Philip and Nathaniel

All that to make this point: It appears that these 7 men followed Jesus of their own free will. Jesus was there when they followed Him. How then can Jesus say that the Father gave them to Jesus?

How can we reconcile on the one hand God saying to His Son Jesus, “I’m giving you this person” (Eph 1:4 divine election) and on the other hand that person saying, “Yes, I will choose to follow Jesus.” (free will, like these disciples did, like you did when you accepted Christ)?

They appear to be in conflict by they are actually in concert. How? I don’t know. It is one of those divine mysteries that I accept by faith because God’s word says it’s so.

The next question from this passage is **why does Jesus pray for His disciples?** Why specifically is He praying this prayer for them?

V 10-11 Because Jesus is going away and when He does He will no longer be there physically to teach them, to guide them, to help them and to protect them. That’s what Jesus has done for these men for 3 ½ years and now He’s going away. “I am coming to You,” He says to His Father. But they (the disciples) are going to remain behind in this evil world. They will be susceptible to the snares of the devil. They’re going to be hated and persecuted by the enemies of God (read the Book of Acts). They’re vulnerable. Jesus is concerned about these men whom He loves and cares for very deeply.

“These men whom You gave Me have done so well. They’ve exercised their faith. They believed My words. They followed Me. “I am glorified in them.” And so Jesus prays, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name.”

But Jesus’ prayer for His disciples is not a general prayer. He is specific in what He prays for. Look at V 12-16 **What does He ask His Father to do for these eleven?**

To protect them from the world and from Satan. After all they’re going to be persecuted. He’s already told His disciples that. He also prays that “they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves,” v 13. Joy is one of the things Jesus promised His disciples back in Ch 16 – “your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.” “Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” So here Jesus prays specifically that these men will have the joy of Jesus in themselves. Jesus is well aware of how difficult this life is – He’s experienced it personally – living in a fallen world surrounded by unbelievers, many who are hostile to Christ and Christianity. It’s not going to be easy for the disciples when Jesus is gone.

Why did Jesus leave His disciples behind? Why didn’t He take them with Him? Why is it that we are left in the world when we get saved rather than be taken home to be with the Lord?

Answer: we have a task to do, the Great Commission. Jesus final instructions to His followers before He ascended back to heaven: “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I [Jesus] have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to end of the age.” [He is with us through the indwelling Spirit]

John MacArthur commenting on this passage asked the question, what is the one thing that we believers can do better on earth than we will be able to do when we get to heaven? When we are with the Lord we will have greater knowledge of Him. When we are with Him we will be able to worship better. I’ll certainly be able to sing better. We will have better fellowship with each other. We’ll be completely happy and content and at peace with no pain and suffering, no worries.

The answer is telling lost people about Jesus, presenting the gospel message, the good news to those around us. So that’s why the disciples were left behind and why we are left behind. We are not of this world, v 16, but we are in the world. This is our mission field.

There is one last thing Jesus prays for His disciples, v 17-19. He prays for their sanctification. “Sanctify them in the truth.” And what truth is that? The truth that comes from God’s word. What is that? The Bible. It guides us in making the right decisions. It identifies our standard for holy living. It teaches us about God and His character. It points us to our need for a Savior. It leads us to Christ. It has all the answers we need for life. There are many wonderful books out there and some pretty good self-help books, but none of these is a substitute for God’s Word. We are sanctified in the truth which comes from the Bible. What does sanctification mean? It’s a big word. Simply put, it is the lifelong process in which we become more like Christ. As we continue on life’s journey – and everyone’s journey is a little different – we go through trials and temptations that God allows, that He uses to mature us in our faith, to strengthen our faith and over time to become more and more like Jesus. We saw this in our study of James.

Application: why are we here? (1) To tell others the good news that we know and have experienced personally, that Jesus saves us from our sins and thru Him we can have a personal relationship with God. (2) To grow spiritually, to become more like Jesus in our character. Both of these are accomplished in this life on this old earth. Paul says that we Christians are “ambassadors for Christ,” (2 Cor 5:20) So, what is an ambassador? He or she represents their country and the interests of its leaders in another country. And that’s exactly what we do. Jesus says, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” And so, just like those disciples, we represent our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the best interests of God’s kingdom here in our world, in Rockwall, Texas, where God has placed us. And He’s given us the tools we need to do that – specifically, His word and thru the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sing, “Saved, Saved, Saved!”