**JESUS’ HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER, Part 3**

**(JESUS PRAYS FOR US, HIS CHURCH)**

John 17:20-26

In our lesson this morning we’ll be continuing our study of what is known as the “High Priestly Prayer,” John Ch 17. So, Who is our great High Priest, according to Hebrews 4? “Jesus, the Son of God.” He is a High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. He is One who knows us and understands us. Yes, He is God, but He has been in our shoes. He, like us, has been tempted and faced life’s fiery trials – yet without sinning. Jesus right now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven constantly making intercession for us. He talks to Father on our behalf. In the O.T. that’s what the high priest did. He interceded before God on behalf of God’s people. And so it is that Jesus does that for you and for me. Praise the Lord!

 As we have seen, Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer is in 3 parts. In the first 5 verses Jesus prays with regard to Himself... for the salvation that He is about to accomplish through His death on the cross and for His return to glory when He goes back to the Father. From verse 6 thru 19 He prays for His disciples primarily. He prays for them and the key role they will play in preaching the gospel of salvation. Then, beginning in v 20 He prays for the church, for all of those who will hear the message of the gospel thru the disciples’ preaching and writings, who will then believe and then spread the message across the world. This is Jesus interceding for His own, for us, for His church.

READ John 17:20-26

20 “I do not ask for these only [speaking of His 11 disciples], 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. **I** 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, [all believers] may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, [definition of a lost world is that they don’t know God] I know you, and these know that you have sent me. [the disciples and us] 26 I made known to them your name, [I showed them Your character, who You are] and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

So, tell me, looking at this passage what is it primarily that Jesus is praying for in regard to His church? He mentions it 3 times in v 21, 22 and 23. Unity. Three times He prays that “they” (those who believe in Me), “may all be one.”

Jesus prays that we who believe in Him, we who have confessed with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, would be ONE. One in the same way that He and His Father are one. A perfect one-ness. Jesus states the reason why Christian unity is so vitally important, v 23 – so that the world may know what Jesus’ disciples knew and had confessed – that God the Father sent God the Son, Jesus, into this world. This is what the disciples had declared back in Ch 16. And why did the Father send His Son into this old world? Because He loved them. READ John 3:16. Yes, God loved the world enough to send His Son, Jesus, to die for their sins. To be the perfect sacrifice, to redeem fallen mankind, to reverse the curse.

So our Christian unity will lead us to be effective witnesses of the gospel message in the world. If we truly love our brothers and sisters and are united by our faith in Christ, then our witness will be credible, our message will be perceived as real, as truth. People in the world may not understand us, but they’ll admit, “You know, there’s something different about them. What is it they have that I don’t have?” And then they’ll be more receptive to what we have to tell them. They’ll want what we have.

So let’s talk about Christian unity. Remember that Jesus commanded us, as His followers, to love one another – John 13: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (34-35) So a key component of Christian unity is our love for each other. But it is not only our love for each other but also our love for our Lord Jesus Himself which unifies us. And how is it that we demonstrate that we truly love for Jesus? John 8:31: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.” Another key component of our unity as believers is that we abide, we remain in God’s word – read it regularly, study it, understand it, obey it, practice it, live it, as Ps 119 says, digest it. So one thing that unifies us is our basic core beliefs which come from knowing God’s word. Finally the Person who unifies us is the Holy Spirit. He indwells all believers and thus unifies us.

Briefly discuss why there are so many denominations and different churches.

Jesus closes His prayer, v 24-26, by expressing His desire for the church. He wants us to be with Him, to dwell with Him, to see His glory. Obviously we won’t see and experience His full glory until we get to heaven and we’re in His presence. That’s coming sometime in the future. But for now we get a glimpse of His glory which He alludes to in v 22 “The glory that you have given me I have given to them.” I believe this refers to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in us. For now we experience Jesus Christ spiritually. But one day, Philippians 3: “the Lord Jesus Christ… will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.” (20-21)

Sing “They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love”