

Jesus is Praying for You

- I. That he be glorified
- II. That you be protected

*(John 17:1-11) After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. {2} For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. {3} Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. {4} I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. {5} And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. {6} "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.*

I've been thinking a lot about my nephew Caleb lately. Two weeks ago Caleb Raasch finished his first year at Martin Luther College, studying to be a pastor. He tells me he loves Latin. Loves Greek. Well, last Monday, Caleb left for boot camp, because in addition to studying for the ministry, he also joined the National Guard. Now, if you're thinking that sounds like kind of odd combination, Greek Freak and military guy, you're not the only one. I think his parents are wondering how Caleb is going to survive 10 weeks of boot camp. (Maybe we have some parents who know that feeling, "Is my kid going to make it?")

Well, with that in mind, this week I sent an email to my brother, and said, "I just want you to know that I'm praying for you and Caleb." My brother wrote back and said, "Thanks. I really appreciate that." Now, if you think about it, I wouldn't have needed to tell my brother that I was praying for his family, right? I mean, ultimately, prayer is between a Christian and God. And yet, isn't there something to be said for knowing that someone is praying for you? Isn't it encouraging to hear someone say to you, "I'll be praying for you"? Haven't you maybe offered that encouragement to someone else, maybe when you felt like there was nothing else you could do for them? "I'll keep you in my prayers." When it comes right down to it, there is real comfort in knowing that there are other people flooding God's throne of grace on our behalf. Especially when we are going through difficult times, when we feel like things are out of our control, it's good to know that someone is praying for us.

Well, if that's true, if you and I can find real encouragement in the fact that a fellow Christian is offering a prayer to our Heavenly Father on our behalf, what if the person praying for us is in fact God himself? How would you feel if you learned that the very Son of God was offering up prayers on your behalf? You realize, that's not just pipe dream. It's in fact, the truth.

And it's that truth which God's Word reveals to us today, namely, dear Christians,

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He's praying            I. That he be glorified  
And he's praying        II. That you be protected.

The portion of God's word that we want to consider today is a portion of what is sometimes called Jesus' High Priestly prayer. You maybe remember that in the Old Testament, the high priest carried out two main functions. 1. Offer up sacrifices for the people. 2. Make intercessions for the people, that is, offer up prayers on their behalf. Well, in the New Testament, Scripture says that Jesus, our great high priest, perfectly fulfilled both of these functions. How does the writer to the Hebrews put it? *Unlike the other priests, Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins (yes for our sins) once for all when he offered himself (Hebrews 7:27). And again, Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:25).*

In other words, even though Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross of Calvary was a one-time event, his intercession for us is an ongoing action. Jesus continues to plead our case before the throne of God. In fact, to make that fact all the more vivid for his disciples, Jesus took time, on the eve of his own crucifixion, to pray out loud for his disciples, while they were gathered all around him. Jesus wanted his disciples then and now to know, even at this critical moment in his life, that he was praying for them. Yes, praying for you.

And exactly what is Jesus praying for? Well, by inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, we get to, in a sense, eavesdrop on Jesus' prayer. St. John records the event with these words. *After Jesus said this, (Jesus had been doing a lot of teaching of his disciples there in the upper room), he looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. (John 17:1)* In other words, the first thing that Jesus prays for is:

I. That he be glorified

Now, what does that mean? When you first hear those words, you may think that Jesus is looking ahead to the time of his exaltation, when he would take back full use of the power and glory that had been his since the beginning of time. And yes, we know that Jesus is thinking about that glorification because he says in verse 5, *Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.* But that is not the only glory that Jesus is praying for. No, Jesus' thoughts are focused on a much nearer term event. Something which is not going to look very glorious, but which is ultimately going to bring the greatest glory to God. That event is Jesus' crucifixion. Think about it. Was there ever an event in the history of the world that has led more people to give glory to God than God offering up his son to rescue fallen man? Jesus knew that his death would bring glory to God. And Jesus knew that his death was now less than 24 hours away. That's why he prays, *"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."*

But now, maybe someone might say, "Wait a minute. I thought you said that Jesus is praying for us in this prayer. It doesn't sound like he's praying for me. Sounds like he's praying for himself. 'Father, glorify your Son.' How can you say that Jesus is praying for us?" Well, let me put it this way. If the doctor who is about to perform open heart surgery on you, prays, "Father in heaven, please give me the ability to successfully perform this surgery, to bring you glory and for the benefit of this patient," who is he really praying for? Well, actually, that doctor is praying for you. His prayer, if God answers it, will benefit you. Well, isn't the same thing true regarding Jesus' prayers? When Jesus prays, "Father, let me bring glory to your name by

rescuing a world full of sinners from the fires of hell,” who benefits from that prayer being answered? You do! I do. In effect, Jesus is praying, “Father, please let me die, so that everyone else can live. That’s what Jesus’ prayer means for you.

And, even if Jesus prayer to be glorified includes his state of exaltation, even if his prayer is, “Father, give me full use of my glory again,” you realize, that prayer is still for your benefit. Why do I say that? Well, think about it. What does God intend to be the impact of each step of Christ's state of exaltation? Each step is just further proof that what Jesus accomplished on the cross was in fact, a success. Jesus’ resurrection is God's way of saying, “Job well done.” Jesus’ ascension into heaven, which we celebrate today, is God's way of saying, “Mission accomplished.” Jesus's return to glory at the right hand of God just gives you and me further assurance that our redemption is for real. Or to put it another way, when Jesus prayed, “Father, give me my glory back,” he was thinking of you and me. He wanted us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that what he accomplished with his perfect life and innocent death was a success. It’s what won for us eternal salvation!

You might say that’s the first part of Jesus’ prayer for you. He prays I. That he be glorified. And the second half of his prayer? Jesus prays:

## II. That you be protected

Now again, as you read through this prayer, you may think Jesus is not praying for you, but rather is praying for his disciples. Jesus is praying for the 11 men who were gathered around him for that Passover meal. And certainly there’s truth to that statement. But if you look carefully, everything that Jesus says about his disciples also applies to you as a Christian. Isn't that right? Jesus prays to his father, about his disciples, “*They know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me.*” Isn't that true for each one of you? By the power of the Holy Spirit, working through word and sacrament, you believe that Jesus has come from God and speaks for God. And therefore when Jesus says in verse 9, “*I pray for them,*” he's also praying for you.

The question is, what is Jesus asking his Father to do for you? Here's the heart of his prayer for you. Jesus prays, “*Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.*” What does that mean? First of all, what does Jesus want the Father to protect us from? Protect us from UV radiation? Protect us from higher taxes? Protect us from a losing season? No, Jesus fleshes out his prayer when he prays a little later for his disciples, (Father), “*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.*” There's Jesus' number one concern for you and me. He's praying that we don't fall away from him. He's praying that Satan would not get his hooks in us. He's praying that we not allow the precious gift of salvation to slip through our hands. And what's the only thing that will be able to protect us from the traps and snares of the Evil One? Jesus says, “*Father, protect them by the power of your name.*”

What is Jesus talking about? Is he talking about the name Jesus, or God, or Christ, or Lord? No, if you remember from confirmation class, God's name is everything God has revealed about himself in his word. That means your number one weapon against the attacks of Satan is God's word. How does St. Paul put it in Ephesians 6? *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)*

In other words, when Satan tempts you to sin, do what Jesus did when he was tempted. He went to the Word: “For it is written,” Jesus said. If Satan is assaulting you with all kinds of doubts and fears, (e.g. “Does God really love me? Does God accept me? Does he have a plan for my life?”) then feed your faith on his words and promises (e.g. Never will I leave you, never will

I forsake you; In all things I'll work for your good; I know the plans I have...to give you hope and a future.)

The bottom line is this. When you're in a tough spot in life, when you're wondering whether God is really on your side or not, when you're not sure you're going to survive, then remember who it is who's praying for you. It's Jesus who is praying for you. Jesus, who was tempted in every way just as we are; Jesus, who knows our every weakness; Jesus, who has God's ear as he sits at his right hand; Jesus, in whom all God's promises are yes—Jesus is praying for you.

And what is he praying for? He's praying that you not fall away from him. He's praying that you will faithfully hear his Word to feed your faith (even during the summer months). He's praying that you will grow in your relationship to him, so that you can overcome the big and the little attacks of the Evil One. He's praying that you, dear Christian, will always belong to him.

My friends, if that's what Jesus is praying for, isn't that what you and I should be praying for as well? Pray that God will protect you, pray that God will protect your loved ones from the Evil One. And then trust that through his Word, God will answer your prayers, and the prayers of his Son, to the Father's glory and for our good, in Jesus' name. Amen.