

## The Prayer of Jesus

by Harrison Conley

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If you have your Bible, find me, please, John 17. John 17. And just a word of warning, what we are about to read is a really unique chapter. Dare I say it is a chapter unparalleled in all of Scripture. The reason I say that is because here we find a singular prayer offered by Jesus up to the Father. Outside of just a few short statements and short prayers, this is actually the only in-depth, extended prayer of Jesus that we have recorded for us in all of the New Testament. Someone goes, "Well, hold on, what about the Lord's prayer? That's a prayer of Jesus." It's a prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, but it's not a prayer of Jesus. Someone goes, "Well, how do you know it's not a prayer that He prayed?" I know that because there's a very famous line within that prayer that goes like this, "And forgive us this day our trespasses." Last time I checked, our Savior was and is perfect, spotless, and without sin. So, this is not a prayer that He prayed. The Lord's prayer is a prayer He taught to His disciples. However, here in John 17, we actually have recorded for us the full transcript of God the Son praying to God the Father.

That's amazing. We get to listen in on this prayer. Think about the weight of that and the significance of that for a moment. I mean, even today in polite society, it's a bit uncouth to kind of eavesdrop and listen in on other people's conversations, whether you're at a restaurant or a coffee shop. It kind of feels wrong to do that. It feels uncomfortable. But here in John 17, we're actually given unfettered access to the words spoken by one member of the Trinity to another member of the Trinity. We have Jesus the Son addressing God the Father. Is that not a mystery in and of itself? God speaking to God. So, needless to say, what we're about to read this morning is holy ground. We need to approach God's Word as such. Because the truths of the statements that we're going to read are so far-reaching, so high, so deep, so much so, it would be impossible for us to distill them down into a single sermon or even distill them into a series of sermons.

You've probably heard me say this before in other parts of the Scripture, but it certainly rings true here. We could spend a year in John 17, and we wouldn't even be scratching the surface as to the divine mystery and the significant truth that we find here. The words that we are going to read are both simple enough and direct enough to feel the weight of their importance. Yet the closer you look, you realize they are far too heavy to comprehend the depths of their truth. It's almost as if we are being let in on an eternal mystery, a divine secret. We get this momentary glance at how God the Son and God the Father communicate with each other. We get to hear the Son's heart and the intimate language that He shares with the Father. When we consider that, it leaves me with a problem. Here's the problem. As the preacher, how am I supposed to teach this? It's so deep. It's so mysterious. It's holy. How am I supposed to teach on this? Certainly, we can read it together, which we will. I can highlight a few things for us, but this is not something that you teach. Rather, this is something you approach with awe and wonder. You approach with fear, reverence, and trembling. Again, we realize we are stepping upon holy ground.

So, this morning, that is my prayer. That we would approach God's Word in that manner. As we get ready to read this prayer, let me just refresh for us the setting and the context. Jesus is in the upper room with His disciples. They have just eaten their Passover meal, and they're all

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sitting around the table. Jesus begins to have a very serious conversation with the disciples. We see this conversation recorded in John 13, 14, 15, and 16. So, it's a fairly long conversation, and through it, what we see is Jesus's heart. We see that He is explaining to His disciples how they're going to get along and what's going to be expected of them. Jesus understands that in a very short time, He is going to be leaving them. As a matter of fact, later that night, Jesus and His disciples would make their way from the upper room and go into the Garden of Gethsemane, where He would ultimately be betrayed. He would be turned over to hostile hands, and He'd be put through a mock trial. We know this. He'd be falsely accused and condemned to death.

Ultimately, He would end up on a cross, crucified, and thus fulfilling the plan of God. Jesus would lay down His life as a substitute for man's sin. He would die. He would be buried according to the Scriptures, but then on the third day, He would be raised back to life. Then, ultimately and very publicly, Jesus would ascend back into heaven. Jesus knows all of this is coming. He knows it's about to happen. He knows He is going to be leaving His disciples, and He wanted to make sure that they were ready for what was about to come. I love how Jesus wraps up this really important conversation. It's actually recorded for us in John 16:33. I had you find chapter 17. Back up one verse. John 16:33. This is how Jesus wraps up this conversation. He says this to His disciples. "These things I have spoken to you." What are these things? Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16. This whole conversation.

<sup>33</sup> "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

These are the last recorded words of teaching that we have from Jesus, sharing with His disciples, but what I love about Jesus is that He can't end it there. He can't walk out of the room without praying. Again, this is the only place we have in all of the New Testament where we have this extended, recorded prayer. Listen, do you want to get to know somebody? Pray with them. Listen to what they say, how they pray, and what they say. It reveals a lot about their heart, their humility, their posture, and their intimacy with the Father. As we read these words of Jesus, as we read His prayer, it's going to reveal a lot about who He is, how He prays, and what He prays. It gives us a glimpse into His heart, not just for His relationship with the Father, but as well, His relationship with the disciples and His heart for us, all who would come to believe. Without any further ado, let's read this prayer. It's quite a few verses, but I want to read it in its entirety. John 17:1–5 NKJV says,

<sup>1</sup> Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

Your Bible might say, "The glory I had when we were face to face." Oh, I love that. Verses 6–12 NKJV,

<sup>6</sup> "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. <sup>8</sup> For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have

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known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.  
<sup>9</sup> “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. <sup>10</sup> And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

He's referring to Judas there. Verses 13–19 NKJV,

<sup>13</sup> But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Then, we jump into this last section, verses 20–26 NKJV. Jesus says,

<sup>20</sup> “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup> “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. <sup>26</sup> And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God for it. Let's pray once more.

Father, we come before You now. We approach Your Word with fear and trembling. We ask that by the power of Your Holy Spirit, You would illuminate it before us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that we can comprehend the magnanimous love of God, the magnanimous love of Your Son. We pray He would be glorified today. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

You can probably tell, but as we've read this, like I said from the outset, there is no real way to fully comprehend, unpack, and unlock the depths of the mystery of the truth that we find in this prayer. However, we do see a pattern emerge before us. Jesus prays for three distinct things. First, He prays for Himself. We see this in the first five verses. Secondly, Jesus prays for His disciples. We see that in verses 6–19. Then, lastly, He transitions and prays for us. I love that. He prays for all those who would come. That's in verses 20–26. This morning, what I want to do is sort of go section by section. I want to highlight a couple of things for us. I want to talk about the major theme that we see in each section. I believe that each of these themes is going to

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teach us something unique about the Savior and His heart for Himself, His heart and desire for His disciples, and His heart and desire for His people. Here's the first section. Again, verses 1–5. We see Jesus praying for Himself. The major theme in these first few verses is Jesus' dependence upon the Father for the Father to fulfill His promises.

You'll notice in verse 1, Jesus begins by saying, “Father, the hour has come. The hour has come.” This, of course, is in reference to God's plan of redeeming humanity. It's a plan that had been put in place before the foundations of the world. The plan is this: that God the Son would put on flesh and step into His creation, that He would become a man, Jesus, in order to rescue men from their sin. Up until this point in the life and in the ministry of Jesus, we have heard Him say again and again, over and over, “Hey, My hour has not yet come. The time has not yet been fulfilled.” He says that in John 2. We see it in John 7. We also see it in John 8. Now, in John 17, we are at the precipice of God's atoning plan for salvation. Within about 12 hours' time, Jesus is going to be hanging on a cross as the substitute for sin. Jesus says to the Father, “Hey, Father, the hour has come. Now is the time for Me to finish the work that You gave Me. The hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You.” Jesus prays that the Father would glorify the Son. Now, this petition of Jesus is not a selfish one.

Jesus' concern is not for His own glory, but rather for the glory of the Father. Notice, He says “Glorify Your Son,” that's an important word, “That Your Son may glorify You.” Jesus is praying here that the Father would work in Him and enable Him to complete what was ahead, to be able to complete the mission for which He had come. The reason I use that expression that the Father would work in Him, is because we see later on in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 5:19, that the apostle Paul would write that while Jesus was up on the cross, God, the Father, was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. So, capture this. Jesus is there in the upper room with His disciples. Right before He goes to the cross, He prays. His main point of focus is that the Father would be glorified in Him and through Him. As a matter of fact, in those first six verses, you're going to see, or the first five verses, you're going to see that word glorify or glory six different times. Not once is it used in the term or in the context of Jesus achieving His own glory or making His own name famous.

Rather, every single time Jesus is using it, He is talking, looking to the cross, and saying, “God, I want Your glory to be manifest through this act.” As Jesus prays this, it's important for us to know and understand He is not in survival mode. He's not panicking. He's not afraid of what is about to come. On the contrary, His eyes are lifted up. He is seeing a bigger plan. He is seeing a bigger vision. He sees beyond the cross, and He is locked into glorifying God the Father through it. Now, the world looks at the cross, and they don't see glory. The world looks at the cross and sees shame, death, defeat, and pain. Jesus looks at the cross and sees it as the ultimate manifestation, the ultimate expression of the glory of God. You see, Jesus knew and understood that His life and purpose were in the hands of the Father. So, He aligned Himself fully with the Father's will and the Father's timing. Hence, that expression, “The hour has come.”

Now, I want you to consider that for a moment. As we consider that, I want to ask us a question. When it comes to our daily lives, have we aligned ourselves with God's timing and God's plan? Do we trust it even when it's challenging? Because Jesus did. Let me also ask this. When it comes to our everyday lives, when it comes to the decisions that we make, when it comes to the actions that we take, how concerned are we with God being glorified versus seeking our own glory? Whether that be in the area of our careers, could be in the area of relationships, or could be when it comes to our personal ambitions. The reason I ask that is because if Jesus, the Son of God, who controls all things, who rules over all things, who is sovereign, who knows

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all things, who is perfect, and has power over all things, if Jesus is dependent upon the Father, if Jesus is focused on the Father's glory, how much more should we be dependent upon God and focus on reflecting His glory in our lives? Listen, this is the greatest role that every believer can have. This is the greatest role of every child of God to live a life that magnifies and makes manifest the reflected glory of God. Not that we would live for our own purposes, not that we would live for our own comfort or our own wealth, or that we would grow in influence on social media, or that people would know our names, but rather that the name and the glory of God would be on display in our lives and through our lives. If Jesus prayed and desired that the Father would be glorified in Him, should that not also be our prayer and our great desire as well? He prayed, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You." Now, before we move into section two, there is one more phrase I want to draw your attention to. In John 17:3 NKJV, Jesus gives the clearest definition that we have of eternal life. He says this,

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

This is eternal life, knowing God and knowing His Son. Now, oftentimes, many of us, when it comes to this topic of eternal life, we think about it in terms of this is what happens to me, this is what I step into after I die. Now, that is certainly a part of it, but according to Jesus, eternal life starts now. Eternal life begins now. He says, "This is eternal life, knowing God." Now, that word know that we see there, it doesn't speak of a learned knowledge. It doesn't speak of a head knowledge. It's not like the ability to retain information after you read a book. It's a different kind of knowledge. This word know speaks of experiential knowledge. It's a tactile word that means "to grow in understanding through time spent and through shared experience." Let me maybe try to explain it like this. This word, know, here is a picture for it. How many know that if I need to change the oil in my truck, I could sit at home and watch 30 different videos on YouTube as to how to do it? I could memorize what the mechanics are telling me to do. You could come up to me and say, "Harrison, do you know how to change the oil in your truck?" I could say, "Yeah, in theory." But how many know that until I actually get my hands dirty, until I take out that old filter, drain the old oil, put in the new filter, and put in new oil, until I get my hands dirty, until I have tactile touch, I don't really know how to change the oil in my truck? This kind of knowing is experiential in nature.

Truly knowing God is experiential in nature. It's born out of walking with Him and obeying Him. Even when He leads you through the valley of the shadow of death, where you're able to come out of the other side and go, "Hey, I've tasted and seen that the Lord is good, that He is faithful, that His Word is true, and that His promises are forever settled." This is the kind of knowing that Jesus is speaking up. It's an experiential type of knowledge. It's the kind of knowing that is shared between best friends or between spouses. I was thinking about this the other day. My wife knows me better than I know myself. She knows what I'm thinking before I even think it. I don't have to tell her what I'm feeling. She can see the look on my face and she knows the exact emotions that are running through my body. She knows what I'm going to do before I do it. I was thinking, "How could she possibly know these things?" She's proven time and time again that she does. But I'm like, "How can she know these things?" It's because we have 21 years of shared experience together. Nineteen of those married and two of those dating. As a matter of fact, we were joking the other day. We've actually been together longer than we've been apart.

Which, by the way, is—well, I turned 40 last week, that's another cool experience. I know, it's wild. "Oh, I was young, now I'm old. Yet I've never seen the righteous forsaken or as young

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men begging bread.” Listen, when Jesus says, “This is eternal life, knowing God, knowing His Son whom He has sent.” This is the kind of knowing that He is speaking of. He is speaking of close fellowship. He is speaking of a continuation of shared moments and experiences. In other words, you don't have to wait until heaven to experience the power of eternal life. No, according to Jesus, eternity starts right now. It's breaking in all around us. It's being able to know and experience the person, the nature, and the character of who God is right now, today, in our day, and in our context. Here is the beautiful thing. This knowing is a growing experience. Where tomorrow, if you lean into this, you're going to know Him better than you did today. Tomorrow, you're going to walk closer with Him than you did today. Tomorrow, you're going to hear Him clearer and recognize His voice a little bit better than you did today. You're going to trust Him deeper than you did. It's an experiential growing, knowing, and understanding.

Maybe I should just pause there for a second and ask you this. Do you truly know Him? Do you know the Father? Do you know His Son, Jesus, whom He has sent? Because hear me, there is no experiencing eternal life apart from Jesus. He declared, “I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one comes to the Father. No one experiences eternal life apart from Me.” Listen, if you don't know Him, my greatest prayer for you is that through the teaching of God's Word, the Holy Spirit will reveal to your heart your need for a Savior, and that you would surrender your life into the loving hands of our Savior, Jesus, and that you would truly come to know Him. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3 that God has placed eternity into every person's heart. Do you know what that means? It means that deep down, there is a cry that goes out from every single human to be known, to be known by their Creator. There is a deep cry that goes, “Hey, there has to be more to this life than what's right in front of me. There has to be more to this life than living 90 years on a planet, walking around sucking oxygen. There has to be more.” I'm telling you, the more is this, knowing Jesus. “This is eternal life. That they may know You, Father, the true God, and Jesus whom You have sent.” Let's jump into section two here of this amazing prayer. Here, we find Jesus turn His attention and focus onto His disciples. Again, we see this in verses 6–19, and the major theme that we have here is that the Father would keep the disciples, that He would keep the disciples. This is a petition that the disciples would experience the provision, the protection, and the strength of the Father. We see this personified in John 17:15 NKJV. If you have your Bible, you can look at it. Jesus prays and says, “Father,

<sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them (You'd keep them) from the evil one.”

Make no mistake, my friend. We have an enemy, the evil one, the enemy of our soul, the devil. Right now, the Bible tells us in 1 John 5, that the whole world lies under the sway, under the influence of the wicked one, of the evil one. Notice, when Jesus is praying here in John 17, He doesn't pray that the Father would take the disciples out of the world. He doesn't say, “Father, take them out so they don't have to experience the pressure and the pain.” He doesn't say, “Father, take them out so they can escape the persecution that's coming.” He says, “Father, keep them. Keep them.” The word, keep, in the original language speaks of someone having watchful care over. It means “someone has taken custody of.” It means “someone is responsible for somebody or something else.”

Here is a picture for you to consider when it comes to this term, keep. Recently, I was at a friend's house, and all the husbands and wives were there. All the husbands sat outside by the fire. The owner of the home had his guitar. He brought it out, and we were goofing around, playing, and singing songs together. Then, all the kids are kind of just running around in the backyard. You can just sort of see in your periphery these kids playing soccer and throwing the balls around. It was a really good time. At one point, as we're sitting around this fire, the owner

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of the house, who had the guitar, stood up and said, "Hey, H, I have to go inside for a minute. Can you just keep an eye on this guitar?" I said, "Sure." He set it down and leaned it against the fire pit. I'm keeping an eye on the guitar. Sometimes, and I don't know how this happens, it's just a phenomenon of life. Sometimes, dads are granted the superpower of being able to see into the future. As I was sitting there, talking with my friends, kind of looking at the guitar, I saw into the future. I saw this swarm of kids run towards the fire pit, and one of them bump into the guitar and knock it into the fire. I thought, "Just in case that happens, I'm going to scooch a little bit closer." So, I got within arm's reach of the guitar, and sure enough, within about 30 seconds, all those kids came running through. They were going to run in the house, and they had to run past us. One of them bumped the guitar, and it was headed for the flames, but because I had seen into the future, because I was keeping an eye on that guitar, I reached out, and I was able to save that guitar. Now, keep that picture in your head for a moment. When Jesus prays that the Father would keep the disciples, I think He has a pretty similar picture in His mind. He knows that the Father sees what happens before it ever happens, and He is asking that the Father would make safe provision for the disciples in those moments where the evil one would come after them.

You see, while Jesus was on the earth, He had kept the disciples, but now, He is preparing to fulfill His mission and go back to heaven. As soon as He leaves, He knows that the enemy of their souls is going to come after them. And knowing how the enemy is going to come after them, He preemptively prayed that the Father would keep His disciples and provide them with the tools to combat the enemy's attack. Jesus actually prays two things specifically, that the Father would keep them in two ways. Number one, verse 11, He says, "Father, keep them through Your name." In verse 17, He says, "Father, sanctify, or keep them through Your truth. Your Word is truth." Jesus prays that the disciples would be kept through His name, through the Word, and through truth. When Jesus prays, "Father, keep them through Your name," He is talking about the person. He's talking about the attributes and the character of God. All of these things get designated. They get revealed through God's name. Think back to the Old Testament. Think about the different names that God used and gave to His people to describe His strength, His power, His attributes, His nature, and His character. We sang some of them this morning. Jehovah-Jireh means "the Lord, our provider." Jehovah-Rapha, it's a reminder to us that "the Lord is our healer." Jehovah-Shalom, "God, our peace." Jehovah-Tsidkenu, "the Lord, our righteousness," and on and on and on. These names of God reveal His person, His attributes, His strength, and His character. So Jesus is praying, "Father, keep them in Your name. Keep them in who You are. Keep them in what You are. Keep them in Your character of heart. Keep them in Your love. Think about this expression name, like this. Football season has just started.

I made a comment earlier about how you could've been anywhere. You could've been at home watching football, but you're here today. Let me ask you, do you have a favorite football team to watch when you're at home to watch it? Yes, how many of you have a favorite football team? I have a favorite football team, the LA Chargers. They used to be the San Diego Chargers. Now, LA Chargers. The reason I have not left them for another team is because I realized if I leave, they will have no more fans. So, I have stuck around to support the LA Chargers. Now, whichever of the 32 NFL teams you support or root for, each of those teams have a name. Now, that name is written across the front of every player's jersey. Consider this. Each of those players come from different places. They all have different backgrounds and experiences. They all have different skill sets and roles that they play within the team, but what is the thing that unites them? It's the name on the front of their jersey. They may not even like each other. They may not hang out off the field, but when they're on the field, they're under one name. They put on that name, and it brings unity. They become one. Now, when it comes to the church of Jesus

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Christ, the enemy of our souls, the wicked one, the evil one, would love nothing more than to see the body of Christ divided. But, hear me. Jesus has prayed, "Father, keep them through Your name." Now, we may all come from different places. We may all have different experiences and backgrounds. We may have different levels of education. Some of us might even have different colors of skin. But hear me, we all share the same name, and it's the name of Christ, and it's the name that unifies us.

Now, the evil one would love nothing more than to bring division, right? Where, instead of it being about the one name Christ, it becomes about an individual's name, or it becomes about the organization's name. He seeks to separate believers into different groups. You go, "How do you know that?" Because look at the world around us. The enemy divides people based on group, be it race, be it gender, be it political affiliation, or even economic status. What the enemy tries to do is bring that into the church because he knows that if he can put the church into groups, if he can divide the body, he can wreak all kinds of havoc. Hear me, the number one thing that the evil one, the number one thing that the enemy of our souls fears is a unified church and unified disciples. Where we say, "Hey, more than anything else, the number one thing that defines me is the name of Christ. More than my nation of origin, more than my skin color, more than my political preference, before any of that, I am a Christian, and I belong to the name of Jesus." Unfortunately, we look across Christendom today, we look across the Church, capital C, and in some cases, it seems like those things have been put in reverse order, where some care more about nation of origin, skin color, or political preference than the name of Jesus. That's why when I look out over this congregation, when I look at this family, and I see unity amongst great diversity, it's a breath of fresh air. I look at our church, and I go, "Hey, this is a fulfillment of Jesus's prayer when He said, 'Father, keep them through Your name.'"

More on this topic of unity in just a moment, but we have to recognize Jesus also prays, "Father, don't just keep them through Your name, but keep them through Your truth. Your Word is truth." Again, in context, Jesus is praying over His disciples. They are living in, and are going to be sent out into the mission field, into the midst of a time and a culture that has been uniquely influenced by the hedonism of Rome, that's been uniquely influenced by the worship of a multiplicity of gods. So, the need for the disciples to have an unshakable foundation of truth, that their message and their lives would be built upon, was of the utmost importance. So, this prayer that Jesus prays over His disciples is so important for what they are about to step into. But can I say this prayer of Jesus is so relevant for us even today? Look around. Truth is under attack. The evil one is still at work in the world today, and the number one tactic that the enemy employs is deception. It's deception.

So, hear me. If you're going to be an effective Christian, if you're going to be an effective disciple, if you're going to be effective in your calling, you better be able to determine what is truth and what is not truth. So, then this becomes the question: where do you or how do you determine and derive truth? Do you derive truth from other people's opinions? Do you derive truth from social media and the cultural views of our day? Do you get your truth from the talking media heads on TV? Do you get your truth from the echo chambers you visit on social media? Do you get truth from academia or the lofty words of worldly wisdom? Because it seems like today, in our world, a lot of people think that truth is defined by what they feel, by what they think is right, and by what they agree with.

Here's the thing about truth: it's not subjective, especially if you're a follower of Jesus. Truth is not derived from what we think, it's not derived from what we feel, or what we want truth to be. It's not based off of what offends people and doesn't offend people. Truth is truth, and truth doesn't change. Again, we have to address this question. Where then does truth come from?

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What Jesus tells us in verse 17, He says, “Father, Your Word, Your Word, Your Word is truth.” So, when we call Jesus Lord, that means that we, as believers, give up our right to independent living. We give up our right to say, “Oh, this is my truth.” We don't get that right anymore. It means truth is absolute and truth comes from one place. It comes from God's Word. His Word becomes the final authority for all things. All things pertaining to life and Godliness. In other words, truth is what He says that it is in every area, in every arena of my life. And guess what? His truth is truth all the time, not just when it feels good, not just when I agree with it or when it's convenient for me. That means His Word is truth when it comes to the topic of my finances. That means His Word is truth when it comes to the topic of sexuality. That means His Word is truth when it comes to the topic of marriage, gender, and abortion. That means His Word is truth when it comes to the topic of how we treat other people. His Word is truth when it comes to the topic of salvation and when it comes to morality. His Word is truth when it comes to how we go about raising our kids. As the Scripture says, “Let God be true and every man a liar.” His Word is truth. When we adopt that and when we live according to the truth of God's Word, what it does is sets us apart. It sanctifies us. That's the word Jesus uses. It sanctifies us. It means it sets us apart for a purpose. It makes us holy. Jesus said in John 17:17 NKJV, “Father,

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

This is how we can be in the world, yet not be of the world. Notice how Jesus prays. He says, “Father, I don't pray You should take them out of the world. Boy, it'd be great if You did.” But He says, “Don't take them out. Rather, would You keep them from the evil one?” Listen, we're kept by the Father, and we're kept through His name. We're kept through His Word. He didn't pray that we'd be taken out, but that we'd be kept. Then, we drop into the final section, section three of this amazing and sacred prayer, verses 20–26. Here we find Jesus looking down the corridor of time, and He's praying for us. That's amazing to me. He's praying for us. He's praying for all of those who would come to faith through the Word and through the testimony of the disciples. When you read this, you have to realize He is praying for you, and He is praying for me. I don't know about you, but I take great comfort in the fact that Jesus prayed for me. Here's the best part. That moment of Jesus praying for us there in the upper room was just a precursor to His ministry of prayer that He still continues to this very moment. Jesus is still fulfilling the function of prayer for His people. As a matter of fact, it's what He is doing right now. It's what He is doing in this very moment. He has you on His mind, and He is praying for you. He has this church in mind, and He is praying for us. Make no mistake, Jesus is not up in heaven, kicked back on his Barcalounger, with a lap full of nachos, and watching Sunday football. That's not what Jesus is doing.

Now, He is seated, but He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Do you know what He is doing? He's praying. He's praying for you. He's praying for me. He's making intercession for His people. I know that because Hebrews 7:25 speaks of Jesus as our great heavenly and high priest. He says that He lives to make intercession for His people. He lives to make intercession for His people. He's praying for us. Now, maybe you have a praying mom or praying grandma, and you're grateful for that. Maybe some of you look at your life, and you're like, “I don't think I have anybody who is praying for me.” Know this: if you are a child of God, Jesus is praying for you. There is no one else I'd rather have praying for me. If you want to know what He is praying for you, if you want to know His heart towards you, then pay attention to what He has to say in these next couple of verses. They give us a great indication as to His great desire for His people. Here is the number one thing that He prays over us. This is the number one thing we see here at the end of this chapter. He prays for unity. The major theme is this: that you and I, that His Church, that His body, that we would be one. We see it over and over. It actually

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becomes almost hard to read because He repeats it so many times. "Father, I pray that they would be one."

Look at verse 20, if you would. Jesus says, "Father, I don't pray for these alone, the disciples, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they, that You, that Me, that the church, that they would all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." My time has evaporated, so let me give you a couple of sentences to consider this morning. As we look at this last section, we have to notice that Jesus prays for unity, not uniformity. Unity, not uniformity. Now, I feel like this trips up a lot of Christians because they look across the landscape of Christendom, they look at Christianity, they go, "Well, we kind of screwed this prayer up, didn't we? There is not a lot of unity in the body of Christ. We have so many different denominations. We have so many different practices. We sing so many different songs. We don't all ascribe to the exact same points of doctrine. We kind of screwed this one up." Listen, what you just described is not unity. That's uniformity, where everybody looks, talks, acts, and says the same thing. That's not what Jesus prayed for. Jesus prayed for unity.

Notice, He prays, "Father, I pray that they'd be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You." Father and Son, two unique persons, two unique expressions and functions, yet they are one and the same. Meaning that the foundation of unity that we have, that we've been called to have, is the same foundation of unity that is between the Father and the Son, where there are unique expressions and functions within the body of Christ, yet there is an equality of person. In other words, we all have this in common. What every believer, what every person that has called upon the name of the Lord has in common is that we all stand on the same ground at the foot of the cross. That you and me, regardless of where we've come from, regardless of what our experience has been, we were all dead in our sins and in our trespasses, but we've been made alive together in Christ Jesus. This is what every believer shares. It's a unity that's rooted in love. It's a unity that's shared in nature, bringing together the many different parts and expressions of Christ's one body. Unity, not uniformity.

Again, a picture for you to consider. I have three boys at home. You hear me talk about them all the time. Asher, Sawyer, and Clay. My oldest is 15, going to be 16 in just a few weeks, and get his driver's license. It's crazy, and you probably haven't seen him in a minute, but he's like 5'10". He works out five times a week. He has more muscles than you can count, and he walks around the house with his shirt off. I'm like, "Hey, hey, put your shirt on. Nobody needs to see that." As a matter of fact, at one point, I said to him, "Son, humility is hot." He goes, "Yeah, Dad, so are muscles." Crazy. Fifteen, almost 16, and my middle son, Sawyer, is 13. My youngest is Clay. He's 8. Now, they are all boys through and through, but when it comes to personality, when it comes to their interests, when it comes to their sense of style, when it comes to the subjects they like in school, and when it comes to the things they like to do in their free time, I'm telling you, these three boys could not be more different. My children are not uniform, yet they make up one family. Unity. Do you understand what I'm saying? So, it is with the body of Christ. Many different expressions and functions, yet one family.

There is a unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is what Paul would write about in Ephesians 4. Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is how you can walk into another church in a different country. They may not even speak English, but you walk in and you feel like you're at home. You feel like you know these people. You feel like you have shared experience with them. You feel like you're a part of the family. How does that happen? Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is what Jesus prayed for. It's been fulfilled. It's being fulfilled. "Father, I pray that they would be one." The last thing I want to draw

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your attention to is verse 24. I'd be remiss if I left this out. In verse 24, Jesus prays and says, "Father, I desire, I desire that they also, whom You gave Me, they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You've given Me."

Notice how Jesus starts this out. He says, "I desire." These words have to mean something. It means that Jesus longs for the consummation of all things. His great desire is that His people would be gathered together to Him and be with Him in heaven. Jesus longs for heaven's completion of all things. He longs for us to be with Him face to face. Then, notice how He says, "I desire that they may be with Me where I am." Why? "So that they may behold My glory. They may behold My glory, which You, Father, have given to Me." I get people asking me all the time, "Harrison, what is heaven going to be like?" I'm like, "I don't know. I've never been." They're like, "No, no, no, but like, what are we going to do? We're there forever and ever. What is going to occupy our attention?" Listen, I don't have all the answers, but I know this for sure. One thing we'll be doing is beholding the glory of Jesus. Now, this thought boggles my mind. It goes beyond my comprehension. It consumes me. The fact that we are going to see Jesus face to face. We're going to see the scars on His hands, His side, and His feet. We're going to see the scars on His forehead from that crown of thorns. He is going to be the only one in heaven with scars. Forever, it's going to be a reminder of what He has done for us, and we're going to see Him face to face.

We're going to look into those eyes of fire, those eyes of love and compassion that burn so deeply for us. Right now, we get glimpses of His glory, but it's like we're looking through a glass darkly. But I'm telling you, there is a day coming when the veil is going to be removed, and we're going to see Him like He is. We're going to see Him face to face. We're going to behold His glory, and that glory is going to be so deep, so beautiful, so vast, and so enthralling that it's going to hold our attention for all of eternity. As we end this morning, let me wrap up by reading just a few verses about heaven, about seeing our Savior. John, our author, wrote these words as well. Revelation 21, if you have your Bible. Verses 1–5 NKJV, he says this,

<sup>1</sup> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. (I love this promise.) <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

That word new is in the infinitive form. It means they are new and they stay new. Tomorrow is still new, and the day after that is still new. He said,

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Drop down to Revelation 21:22–23 NKJV. John said,

<sup>22</sup> But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

<sup>23</sup> The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

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We will behold His glory. Then, drop over to just the next page. Revelation 22:3–5 NKJV. John continues and says,

<sup>3</sup> And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. <sup>4</sup> They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Come on, let's pray together this morning.

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for giving us a snapshot of how You and the Lord Jesus speak with each other. We've approached Your Word with much fear and trembling this morning. We ask now that the Holy Spirit will take the parts needed for us and make them real in our lives. Lord, let Your Word be sort of like that rock in our shoe that, as we go about our day, we just can't get away from it. Lord, let Your Word agitate us. May it remind us in the best way possible that, Lord, You pray for us, and that You think about us. Lord, may we walk in the fulfillment of that prayer. May we be one as You are one. Help us to know, to see You, to grow deeper in our relationship with You. May we walk with You closer tomorrow than we did today. May we hear Your voice clearer tomorrow than even we did today. Grant this to us, we pray. Father, we look forward to spending eternity in the presence of Your Son, where we will see our Savior face to face. May heaven and eternal life consume us, consume our minds, consume our thoughts, and consume our words. May they instruct our actions so that Your Son, Jesus, would be glorified in us and through us, so that the world would know Your name.

Father, I pray for those in the room today who don't know Your name, who don't know the saving power of Jesus, who have not yet surrendered their life fully to Him, who have not had their sins forgiven. Father, I pray that right now, by the power of the Holy Spirit, You would go to work in their heart, revealing their need for a Savior. I can't do that. Even on my best day of writing and articulation, I can't reveal the human heart's need for a Savior, but Holy Spirit, You can do it in a moment, so would You do it now? Would You do it supernaturally? Reveal to their heart the sin that exists. Convict their heart. Again, I can't do that, but Holy Spirit, You can. You do it so gently, for it's Your kindness that leads us to repentance. As You reveal and convict hearts of sin, Holy Spirit, would You just convince hearts that although the sin is great, there is a great Savior whose name is Jesus, and that where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.

Holy Spirit, beyond just revealing their need for a Savior, I pray as well You would give them articulation. I pray You'd give them a level of faith to cry out for salvation. Give them words, words of dependence, words that declare the lordship of Jesus, words of faith that say, "Lord Jesus, I believe You died for me. I believe You were raised back to life. I believe that if I put my trust in You, You can rescue me and forgive my sins. I believe that You can give me eternal life." So, Holy Spirit, as they cry out for help and for saving, I pray You would apply salvation to their life. Would You pour out the love of God in their hearts as You promised to do in Romans 5? Thank You for taking them from death and moving them into life. Father, as we get ready to go today, as we get ready to baptize people and celebrate the decision they're making, I pray You'd bless Your people, and keep Your people. Would You cause Your face to shine on them? Lord, would You be gracious to them? Lift

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Your countenance upon them. Would You give them Your peace, and may they know the love of the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus, and may they experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It's in Your name, we pray. Amen, amen, amen, amen.

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