



High Priestly Prayer

John 17:11-13

In the Old Testament we get a picture of the high priest purifying himself in preparation for making a sacrifice on behalf of the people. Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. To do so he had to be purified for no sin could be in the presence of God. The priest wore special garments that had 12 stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel. So the priest “carried” all the people when he went into the Holy of Holies. He would offer a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people.

This symbolizes what Jesus did and does. He was perfect, making it possible for Him to enter the Holy of Holies, He was the sacrifice, dying on the cross for our sins, and He stands before the Father making intercession for His own. It is His intercession that assures that His own will not be lost.

This prayer in John 17 is an example of that intercession that He makes for His own. In verses 11 through 13 we will look at His request that His own would be kept and that they would have joy.

11 And I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. 13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

And I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world

Jesus was leaving, He would no longer be in the world. He had come to reveal God to the world – John 1:9 ***9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens everyone. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*** And verse 18 - ***The word dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory.***

Earlier that night Jesus had explained to His disciples that He would be leaving them. He had finished that work that the Father had sent Him to do. The disciples of course had wanted to follow Him, but they were being left behind to be His witnesses. One day they would be with Him again, but not yet. Jesus had also promised them the Holy Spirit who would equip and empower them to be His witnesses. Through the Holy Spirit He would be in them.

Earlier in this passage (verses 9 and 10) Jesus had given three reasons that He was praying for the disciples. Because they belonged to the Father, because they were Theirs (The Father and the Son share all things), and because He was glorified in them. Jesus was praying for His disciples as He left, and they remained behind in the world (the evil system led by Satan).

Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

As Jesus makes His first request of this prayer, He calls on His Holy Father. Normally Jesus just says Father, but here He adds Holy. He requests that the Father keep the disciples in His name but emphasizes the Holiness of the name. He is requesting that the disciples be kept by the Holy One. Name refers to all that God is. All His attributes are in view. The all knowing, all present, all powerful, perfect, just, loving, sovereign God of the Universe is the One who keeps the disciples. Proverbs 18:10 says “the name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.”

The second request, “that they may be one, even as We are,” is closely related to the first. The unity in view here is not the “everyone gets along” kind of unity but the unity they had with Him.

The Father and the Son as two of the persons of the trinity, are literally one. They have perfect unity. Jesus only did and said what the Father gave Him to do, and to say.

Jesus had used the vine and the branches

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(chapter 15) to illustrate to the disciples the unity they had with Him. As the branches get all their substance from the vine they would receive all things from Him. They would have life from Him and He would be in them.

They would be one, because they would be one with Him. They would have unity in mission and purpose because they would all be One with the Son. This unity is found in all true believers the world over because they have the same Savior and Lord.

¹² While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

While Jesus was in the world, He had kept all those the Father had given Him. Judas, the son of perdition, did not belong to the Father, He did not believe, as is evidenced by that fact that he betrayed Jesus. It was no surprise to Jesus that Judas had betrayed Him. He knew all along that Judas “was of the devil.” Scripture prophesied that one would betray Jesus and Judas was the fulfillment of that prophecy.

The word “keep” has the idea of preserving and watching over. The word “guard” has the idea of protecting from outside dangers. Taken together they give a picture of complete deliverance from perils and lasting security.

In John 10 Jesus refers to Himself as the good shepherd – *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”*

Earlier Jesus had prayed for Peter – Luke 22:31-32 *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat. ³² But I have prayed earnestly for you, that your faith may not fail.”* Peter would stumble but he would not fail. Jesus had interceded for him.

¹³ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

As Jesus interceded for the disciples they listened to Him praying to the Father. It was important that they hear Jesus’ prayer. They needed to know and understand that Jesus was interceding for them. The Father would grant all that Jesus asked. This would bring them Joy.

Just shortly before Jesus prayed, He had told them—*“Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will cry and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ²¹ Whenever a woman is in labor she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you too have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”*

Joy is not based on circumstances. Joy is based on trust in God. Knowing and trusting the character of God gives joy. Their joy, and our joy, is based in the finished work of Christ. Those who have put their faith in Christ alone for salvation have joy no matter the circumstance because they know that He has redeemed them. They belong to God and know that God will keep them and that He will complete His work in them and bring them to Glory. All suffering in this world is temporary and pales in comparison to the glory that will be revealed.

What a marvelous thought that Jesus intercedes for His own. Do you belong to Him? Have you confessed your sins and put your faith in Him and Him alone for your salvation? Do you believe that Jesus is God, lived a perfect life, and died and rose again? If so, you belong to Him and He intercedes for you.

If you are His, He will keep you, and guard you, and complete His work in you and bring you to glory. This truth will give you joy. No matter the struggles or pain in this life, you can have joy because you know Jesus and He has you in His hand and no one or thing, can take you from Him.

Bible Studies:

7:00 am Tuesdays: Bible Study – Governor’s Large Conference Room – Open to All: Legislators, Constitutional Officers, Lobbyists, Staff

8:00 pm Wednesday: Legislator Only Bible Study – Red Rosa

