

# Three Prayers of Jesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 22 April 2018

Preacher: Nick Louw

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, as John said earlier, we're coming to the end of our journey through the Gospel of John, and quite a journey it's been. If you've been with us for the past few months, we started last year, and it's a journey on which we've learned some profound truths. I certainly have. I hope you have.

Some profound, life-changing truths about Jesus, who he was, what he came to do on this earth. We've learned profound truths about eternity, what we're doing here, and our role in all of this.

And it's been incredible. And there are truths, like with all truths we discover in the Bible, that we mustn't forget these truths that the Apostle John has helped us to see through recording these events for us.

And because we mustn't forget them, I thought, as we're coming near the end of the Gospel, before we finish next week, that'll be our last sermon in John, it would be helpful to have a little flashback this morning.

Now, you know, in a movie, when you have a flashback, like when a director puts in, towards the end of the movie, he'll put in maybe a scene from earlier on in the movie, to remind you of something that happened there, to make the end scene kind of make sense.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] Well, I thought we could do that with John this morning, by going back to chapter 17, which records the prayer Jesus prayed the night before he died.

Now, we haven't looked at that chapter yet. For the more observant of you, last term, you would have noticed that we skipped right from chapter 16 to chapter 18.

And that wasn't because, you know, two pages in my Bible were stuck together and I forgot to do it. It's because it's useful to go back to this prayer after going through Jesus' arrest and his trial and his death.

Because in this prayer, we find out just what it is that drove Jesus to do all that, to go through with all of these things. You know, you really get to know someone's deepest desires when you hear what they pray, don't you?

You really get to know what's on someone's heart when you hear what they pray for. Well, Jesus lets us hear what he prays on this occasion.

[ 2 : 1 0 ] Of course, he prays much more than this. He had the closest relationship with his father and he prayed that there was a mark of his life. It was this uninterrupted flow of relationship between him and his father expressed in prayer.

But it's in this prayer that he actually lets it be recorded by John for us. So that we can discover his deepest desires and hopefully learn to make them our own.

And so let's dive in to this prayer and see what we learn. The prayer is quite neatly divided into three parts. So Jesus starts by praying for himself in verse 1 to 5. Then from verse 6 to 19, he prays for his disciples.

And then from verse 20 to 26, he prays for all the people who will come to believe in him through the disciples' message. And that's you and me. Jesus actually prays specifically for you and me in this prayer as well.

So it's very exciting for us to go through and see what he says. So let's look at each of these sections in turn. His first prayer, his first request as he's praying for himself in verse 1 is, Father, the hour has come.

[ 3 : 25 ]     Glorify your son. Okay, so let's pause there. The first thing Jesus prays is, Father, give me glory. Now that might seem a little bit self-absorbed, a little bit selfish.

Until we read on and we see his reason for praying that. He says, glorify your son that the son may glorify you. You see, Jesus knows that the way that God, the creator, his father, is glorified in this world is when the son is glorified.

Because the son is the full revelation of the father. He came down in flesh into a material form so that we could connect with God. That was why he came to earth.

And that, of course, takes us right back to chapter 1 of John. Chapter 1 verse 18 says, No one has ever seen God, but the one and only son, who is himself God, and is in closest relationship with the father, has made him known.

That was Jesus' job. If you want God to be glorified in this world, you point people to Jesus. Because it was his job to make God known to this world.

[ 4 : 38 ]     To make the creator known to his creation. So that he can be glorified. If you want creatures, fellow human beings, to know their creator. To glorify their creator.

To be in relationship with their creator. You point them to Jesus, the revelation of that creator. So that he might be glorified through the glory of Jesus. But what do we mean by that?

Glorified. It's a word we often, you know, throw about in Christian circles. What do we mean here by God being glorified? Well, to glorify God in the Bible means for creatures to see and celebrate God.

For who he truly is. To enjoy God in the fullness of his being. To know him so much that we enjoy him to the fullest.

That is what it means to glorify God. And so we see here in this prayer, that is what Jesus prays for first and foremost. That was his highest priority.

[ 5 : 41 ]     That was his goal in everything he did. For his father to be glorified. And that is still his goal in everything he does.

It's still the highest priority of Jesus. For you, the creature, to glorify God. To enjoy God in his fullness more than anything else. That is what Jesus is working towards in everything he does.

That's what Jesus wants for you. More than a comfortable life. Or health. Or a stable job. He wants you to glorify God and enjoy God in all his fullness.

And sometimes he allows those other things to be taken away so that you learn to enjoy God more than any of them. Because that is his highest priority for you. And that is his highest priority in this prayer.

But now how does he ultimately achieve that? Well, look how he goes on. Verse 2. He's talking in the third person to God, his father. And he says about the son.

[ 6 : 43 ]     For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life. That they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Okay, so Jesus here explains pretty much the reason he's about to go to the cross the next day. And be arrested deliberately and suffer and die.

He explains why. And that is to give eternal life. To pay for the sins of his people. We can't have eternal life without our sins being dealt with. And Jesus went to the cross specifically to do that.

To pay for sins on behalf of other people. To remove the penalty of death. To give us eternal life. Now as Christians, you shouldn't need to be told that. You should know that if you're a Christian. But then what Jesus goes on to do, which is something we might not know, is he goes on to define just what eternal life is.

What is this eternal life that he died to give you? Verse 3. Now this is eternal life. That they know you.

[ 7 : 52 ] Okay, so that's actually the whole point of eternal life. To know God. To know him in his fullness so that we can enjoy him and glorify him forever.

That is what eternal life is about. Let's just stop for a second and think about that. What do you imagine when you think of eternal life?

If you're a Christian, what is your hope? What are you looking forward to in the life to come? Now typically when we think of heaven, we think about the amazing things that will be there. The new heaven and the new earth.

A world without sin and disease and death. In new perfect bodies that don't decay. And the beauty of the new creation. Imagine the sunsets in the new creation.

And the sunsets here are amazing. But imagine what there will be in an untarnished, remade, perfect creation. And we look forward to all those things.

[ 8 : 50 ] And we think, wow, heaven's going to be awesome. But according to Jesus, all of that is nothing compared to the fact that God will be there. In his fullness for you and me to know and enjoy.

For Jesus, that is what eternal life is all about. That's what it's defined by. But is that what it's all about for you? Let me ask you this.

If you could go to heaven and have everything that you wanted. You can be reunited with your departed loved ones. You can have amazing delights. The food and the pleasures of the new creation.

No disease or depression ever again. Imagine you could have all that, but God wasn't there. Would you still want that? Well, as another preacher said, you don't have to be born again to want that.

You just have to be born again to want God. But do you? Is God what you want more than anything else, actually? If you asked yourself in your heart of hearts.

[ 9 : 53 ] Is God what you're looking forward to more than anything else? Knowing God, seeing and enjoying the glory of your creator forever. Does that excite you? Well, if it doesn't, it might be because you haven't yet realized that the glory of God is the greatest thing you could ever experience.

More than any other experience in all of creation. In fact, the whole universe and all its pleasures and all of its beauty exists to point us towards the glory of God.

Everything you've ever enjoyed. Every pleasure that you've ever had. Even if you add all of those together and multiply them by a million. That's not even a drop in the ocean of delight that a creature is able to have in God himself who is the source of all those things.

And we need to realize that if we're to see eternal life properly. And be excited about the glory of God like Jesus wants us to be. Because enjoying God.

Enjoying God in his fullness is what we were made for. It's what we were designed for. And it's what Jesus came to earth to save people for. But also, strangely enough, that's the reason he hasn't taken us there yet.

[ 11 : 06 ] To heaven. Because more people need to discover God's glory through Jesus before we can leave this planet. He's left us here for a reason. And he left his first disciples on earth for a reason.

They were pretty bummed when he went back to heaven and he didn't take them with him. But he explained why. If you read at the beginning of Acts. Because they have a task to do.

They have a mission to fulfill. And so that's why he goes on to pray for them. In the next section. Jesus here prays for his disciples. From verse 6, he begins his prayer for his disciples like this.

He says, I have revealed to you those whom you gave me out of the world. And then down in verse 11, he says, I will remain in the world no longer. But they are still in the world. And I am coming to you.

Okay, so that's the situation. He's going to leave them. He's going to keep them in the world. And so what does he pray for them? As he's about to leave them. And they're about to be given this most important mission in the whole world.

[ 12 : 10 ] What do they need more than anything else? Food, clothing, places to stay. A missions budget to fulfill their tasks. Some rich sponsors to help them. What do they need to do their job more than anything else?

Well, Jesus prays in verse 11. And it's not any of those things. But he prays for this. I'm going to read a more literal translation. This is from the ESV, which I think is clearer in this case.

He says, Holy Father, keep them in your name. That's what he prays for them. That's what he actually said in the original. That's what it literally says. Keep them in your name.

But what does that mean? Keep them in your name. It's a weird phrase. Some Bibles try to make sense of it by translating it as, protect them by the power of your name. But that's not the literal original language, which just says, keep them in your name.

And I think it's got an element of that. What Jesus is saying is got an element of protecting them by the power of your name. But I don't think that's entirely what he means. Especially given that he prays later for that very thing, to protect them from the evil one.

[ 13 : 14 ] No, what I think he means here is exactly what he says. Keep them in your name. Sometimes we don't have to try, use other words to translate something. We've just got to understand the words as they are there.

And so what does that mean? Keep them in your name. What is God's name? Let's think about that. In the Bible, God's name means everything that he has revealed about himself. That in Hebrew kind of understanding, a name was the encapsulation of a person's character.

Everything that they've made known about themselves is caught up in their name. And it's the same with God. God's name means everything that he has made known about himself.

What he's revealed about himself, which is what Jesus, of course, has revealed to the disciples about God. But now that Jesus is leaving, the danger is that they'll forget God's name.

They'll forget the truth about what God has revealed to them through Jesus. And they will fall back into the human tendency of making up their own ideas about who God is. Because that is what we do. If God doesn't reveal himself to us, we guess.

[ 14 : 19 ] We make up God's. We make up our idea of who we want God to be. And that's the danger that Jesus knows his disciples will have.

And so he prays, keep them in your name. Keep them in the knowledge of you that I've revealed to them. And just as well he did pray that for them because they went on to write the New Testament.

And so they better know what they're talking about when they write about God. You know, we don't want to read, when we open the Bible, we don't want to read some assumptions and made up ideas about God, which is what most other religions are.

We don't have time for that. We want to know what God has actually revealed about himself. We want to know his name. Imagine you're at a party, right, with some friends.

And you see a stranger across the room. You've never met before. And you and your group of friends are deciding what his name is, right? You're saying, well, he looks like a Steve.

[ 15 : 16 ] And then someone else says, no, I think he looks like a Mark. But then imagine you go up to him and he introduces himself. And he says, hello, my name is Horatio or whatever.

Okay? You don't at that moment go, well, no, it's not. No, you don't get to decide what his name is. He has just introduced himself. And instead, instead of telling him what his name is, he's told you what his name is.

You can stop now guessing. What his name is. He's revealed it to you. Well, the same happened for God when Jesus came into this world. When Jesus stepped onto this planet, humanity could stop guessing the name of God.

They could stop guessing who God is because Jesus came to reveal him to us. He came to introduce us to God by name. And so here he prays that his disciples don't forget what he's revealed, the things that he's revealed about God, the character of God, the works of God, the will of God.

All of these things that he's revealed for sure. So he knows the most important thing for his disciples more than anything else is that they know God's name, that they know who God is. To put it another way, Jesus is praying for their theology here.

[ 16 : 35 ] Their knowledge of who God is. That's what theology means. It comes from two Greek words, theos and logos, knowledge of God. That's all it is.

And everybody has a theology. You don't have to go to theological college to have a theology. You have a theology. You have some kind of understanding of who God is. And that, their theology, these disciples, their theology is what's going to undergird them as they carry on their mission on earth.

You know what I mean by undergird? It's probably an older word. Undergird is something that holds you up and supports you. I guess a good way of thinking of it is when you drive to town and you see those skyscrapers, those big tall buildings, and you see those crazy guys hanging off the edge of it cleaning windows.

Have you seen them? You know, they're basically abseiling down these ropes and they're busy cleaning the outside windows of those buildings. Someone's got to clean them. I mean, they don't clean themselves. And these guys, they're crazy.

They take a huge risk, but I suppose they know what they're doing. And the reason they can carry out their work to clean those windows is because they have all those ropes and straps undergirding them. That's what undergirding means.

[ 17 : 47 ] It supports them so they don't have to worry about that they can get on with the task. Well, what Jesus' disciples needed to undergird them to do their mission was good theology.

And that's what he prays for them. But just as much as they needed good theology, a good knowledge of who God is to do their work, so do we. If we're going to carry on that mission, we have to have good theology undergirding each of us.

And we can. Why? Because these original disciples did and they wrote down this good theology on the pages of the New Testament so that we can rely on it. And Jesus made sure that everything they wrote down was the revelation that he had given them.

That's what he's praying for them here. And so we can have good theology today because they had good theology given to them by Jesus. But what that means, and this is pretty obvious, but it needs to be said, what that means is we need to read their theology in order for each of us to have good theology.

We don't just absorb it by staring at the closed Bible. We have to open it up and read it and absorb the knowledge and the revelation of God, God's name, which is contained in those pages of Scripture.

[ 19 : 09 ] And we need to chew over it. We need to make sure we understand it. We need to work together to understand it. And the more solid our theology is, the better we can do what we're here to do.

Because knowing God, as he truly is, is vital for our effectiveness in mission as a church, as Christians. And let me tell you, the evil one, Satan, who Jesus prays for his disciples' protection later, he will do everything he can to take that away from us.

To take away good theology. That is what he's busy doing in this world. Now, that's how he divides churches. That's how he stops growth with bad theology.

And he's an expert in it. But that's also how he keeps you from growing. Individually, as a Christian, by keeping you from knowing God more.

Keeping you too busy to read the Bible or go to growth group. Keeping you too tired to read books to increase your knowledge of the Bible. Because his greatest threat is good theology. The thing that's going to stop him from carrying out his plans to disrupt your walk with God.

[ 20 : 21 ] And his plans to take you away from God. The thing that's going to stop that is good theology in your life. Really knowing God and remaining in that knowledge.

And living it out. Because that's what good theology does. It changes how we live. Good theology doesn't stay in our mind. It affects our heart and our actions and our will.

Because if we have good theology, if we understand the truth about who God truly is, then we see the world and our lives and our circumstances through that framework.

Through the framework of our theology. We can't help but. Whether you know it or not. You have a theology. Your theology might be, God doesn't exist. Okay? Which is an incorrect theology.

But it's a theology. It's a claimed knowledge of God. Or your theology could be, well God is like this. Or God is like that. Or God exists to make me happy. Or whatever it is. Or it could be based on the revealed theology of Jesus in the Bible.

[ 21 : 21 ] Which I highly recommend. But you see, whatever theology you have, you see life through that framework. You can't help but. When you look at the world, when you look at creation, you see it through the framework of who you understand you're created to be.

And why you are in this world. And you live your life and you make your decisions based on your theology. What you believe to be the truth about what God is doing in this world.

And so Jesus prays. First and foremost for his disciples who are going to carry out his mission. He prays for their theology to undergird them. Now there's a few other things he prays for his disciples. All in line with that.

We don't have time to look at them this morning. We will look at them in our growth groups this coming week. So please do come. But I want to move on to see, last of all, what he prays for you and me.

What Jesus prays for us. And do you want to know the first and primary thing he prays for us? That we are one. Verse 20.

[ 22 : 22 ] My prayer is not for them, the disciples, the original disciples alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. That's you and me. That all of them may be one.

Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. So, you know, we think of all the things Jesus could have prayed for us. Security, safety, peaceful governments, enough food on the table.

You know, a non-receding hairline. Whatever it is that you think that you would want Jesus to pray for you. The one thing he does choose to pray for you. Is that you would be one with other Christians.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me so that they may be one as we are one.

I in them and you in me so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

[ 23 : 25 ] That is what Jesus wants for us more than anything else is unity. That we be one. Now, of course, we've already seen Jesus' primary priority in everything he does is what?

The glory of God. Thank you. Someone's listening. Okay. And Jesus knows that God will be most glorified in this world through his people when they love each other.

And share such a like mind and a common cause that this world takes notice. That is when God will most be glorified through us. And so that's what Jesus prays for.

Because the glory of God is his highest priority. When Christians share a unity that stands out in this world of conflict and strife and gossip and backbiting. Then the gospel of Jesus will shine out of us.

And God will be glorified because his son will be glorified through us. If we are one. Now, if you think about it.

[ 24 : 25 ] The church on earth could be the most powerful institution this world has ever seen in all of history. Currently. I looked this up. Currently, its members are sitting at 2.3 billion people who claim to be Christians.

Who claim to be part of God's church. Now, do you know what a huge force of people that is? Even if it's just half of that number. It's still a huge force of people.

Do you know what we could achieve? If we all got together. And worked together. If we were truly one. Like Jesus is praying here. As the church around the world. That number of Christians is 1,800 times the size of the combined U.S. armed forces.

It's 37,000 times the number of employees in the Coca-Cola company internationally. Okay, but if that's so, why don't we see Jesus in our society as much as we see Coca-Cola?

If there are so many Christians. Well, because we're not one. We're not unified. We don't share a common cause. We're each trying to fulfill God's mission in our own way.

[ 25 : 36 ] Or, we're spending more time arguing with other Christians over non-essential things than actually talking to the last about Jesus. And even within the same church. Even within a church like this.

No, I can actually say. Even within this church. We're not of one mind. We bicker and moan and have disagreements about other people in the church.

And how they're doing things differently to how we would want them. And what we should be doing. We bicker about it. And how we should be doing it. We bicker about it. But come on. We'll never be effective if we carry on like that.

That's why Jesus prays. For us to be one. It's only then that we'll be effective. To glorify our creator as a church. But what is it that'll do that?

What is it that'll unify us? What will bring us together? To make common cause together. To share the same desires together. Well, we've already seen the importance of good theology.

[ 26 : 38 ] Right? That we all understand who God is. Good theology unifies us. Bad theology will split us apart. But, there's more than just good theology that we need.

To be one. To really unify us. More than just knowledge of God. Head knowledge of God. What we need to unify us. Is a real experience of the glory of God.

That we share. Because look again at verse 22. Read it carefully. I have given them. The glory. That you gave me.

So that. They may be one. One. Okay. So what is going to lead us to be one in purpose? As the son and the father are one in purpose?

Well, the glory of God. Which Jesus gives us. That's what he's saying here. He's linking. Him giving the glory of God to us being one. We can't be one. We can't be truly unified. Unless we have tasted and experienced that glory of God for ourselves.

[ 27 : 39 ] And so the real secret to Christian unity is an experience of God's glory. A delight in God that we share with each other that will overcome the differences we might have.

And make us effective and enthusiastic to share that glory with the world. It's when we've tasted the glory of God. That we will come together with that one common experience.

We can have everything else not in common. We can be from totally different walks of life. Different cultures. Different backgrounds. Different upbringings. Different interests. Different hobbies. And yet if we share an experience of the glory of God, we will be one.

If we have tasted that glory for ourselves and people can see that. I mean why is Coca-Cola such a popular drink?

Think about it. Even though the company has relatively few employees. Well because of the product itself. Isn't it? And what do you see in every Coca-Cola ad?

[ 28 : 40 ] Every single one? Why are they the most successful marketing campaign in the world? What do you see in every Coke ad? People drinking Coca-Cola. Yeah. Well what's going to make us effective in bringing the knowledge of God to this world?

When we show people we are experiencing the glory of God. That we have tasted it for ourselves. And we are tasting it every single day. When we are delighting in God. Ourselves.

In our own lives. That's what Jesus says. Will bring the world to see. Who he truly is. And God to be glorified.

When we are delighting in God. Which is what the knowledge of God should lead to anyway. A theology should lead to delight in God. And so of course that brings us full circle to how Jesus began this prayer.

By praying for the glory of God. This entire prayer. You understand it. When you realize that everything Jesus is praying for. Is for his father's glory. Glory. And that glory.

[ 29 : 41 ] Comes through our knowledge of God. Which leads us to Christian unity. To make God known to the world. And so in closing. Are we a group of Christians who seek really to know God?

Do we take theology seriously? Do we work hard? Not just as a group when we gather together. But when we're off in our own lives. Are we working hard to make our knowledge of God grow?



Through good theology. Through study. Through reading. And then. Does that knowledge of him translate to delight in him? Are we doing all of that?

So that we can delight in God more. That we can find our full satisfaction in God. More than anything else. Because that's what Jesus wants for us.

Here at St. Mark's. That's what he desires. That's what he prays for. That each of us will know God. And have such an experience of his glory. That we will be unified. To go out.

[ 30 : 40 ] And powerfully share that glory. With the lost and dying world. Let us pray that that will be the case. Yes Lord Jesus. We thank you. That you prayed.

For your church. We thank you that you prayed. For your disciples. Your original disciples. And that all of this was recorded for us by them. So that we can know God.

That we can know his name. We thank you Lord. That you prayed for us. And we thank you that everything you prayed for. Was actually for the glory of your father. Because that is the best thing for us.

Help us Lord to realize that. The best thing for our lives. Is the glory of God in our lives. And for us to experience that. To taste that. Help us all here. To know God through you. I pray for those who have not had their sins forgiven yet.

Who have not come into a relationship. With God. That you would cause them to trust in you. That you would cause them to trust in what you've done on the cross. And come into that wonderful relationship.

[ 31 : 41 ] And that each of us in that relationship. That you have given us. We would learn to delight in God. And that the light would overflow in our lives. To the people around us. So that the world will know.

That we are yours. And that you. Are truly. The son of God. And the savior of the world. We pray this in his name. Amen.