

28th February

A time for glory - John 17:1 – 26

Prayer our hotline to God! What is your prayer life like?

Let me tell you a story about 2 brothers.

2 brothers shared a room and a bunk bed. It was evening and they would normally pray in their beds just before going to sleep. The 1st brother prayed quietly and then the younger brother started praying but he prayed very loudly “Lord God I pray for a bike and a Play Station, you know just how much I would love to have these”. The older brother became annoyed and said “Calm down why are you shouting? God can easily hear you!” To which the younger brother replied “Yes I know but I wanted Mum & Dad to hear me too!

A funny story which shows how some children think. They know who provides!!! What about our prayers? Do we give God a shopping list? or do we take time to listen to what he has to say? Is our prayer life structured or do we pray whenever we have time?

Praying is an interesting thing. This Country seems to turn away from the Church and God and yet when tragedy strikes, the phrase I often see and hear across T.V and social media is “Our thoughts and prayers go out to you” or “thinking and praying for you”. Deep down people know that there’s someone out there. They would like someone to come and bring hope, comfort and intervention in troubled times. I wonder when people say that their ‘prayers and thoughts go out to someone’, who exactly are they praying to? Or Is it just a phrase that has become popular.

The good news is we can know God and we can talk to him. We don’t have to wonder if someone is out there as we believe God broke into our world and walked the earth and his name is Jesus and that’s why we celebrate Christmas. But very soon we are coming up to the biggest Christian celebration of the year - EASTER!

The story that was read today, John 17 took place on the night of Jesus’ arrest on Maundy Thursday the day before Good Friday. Jesus had entered Jerusalem in triumph on a donkey just a few days before with his friends – the disciples.

But in the space of less than a week the mood became sombre as Jesus was saying that he was going to die (John 12:20 -36). They ate this important meal

together, that we know as the last supper. Jesus washed their feet, he said to Peter that he would deny him and to Judas that he was going to betray him.

But from John chapters 14 through to 16 Jesus shares some amazing things with his disciples like the promise of the Holy Spirit and that he was going away to prepare a place for his friends in his Father's house. As the end is near Jesus tells his disciples to remain in him and to love one another. Before they leave the Upper room for Gethsemane John records the words that he heard Jesus pray. We listen in to Jesus's prayer. It is the longest recorded prayer we have from Jesus in Scripture and it was his last words and thoughts recorded before going to a place that would lead to his arrest and that would lead to his crucifixion.

There are 3 parts to his prayer and it's very different to the prayer of the young brother who wanted a bike and Play Station.

The First part (John 17: 1 – 5) Jesus prays for himself and calls God his Father (Father is used 122 times in John's gospel when referring to God). This shows the intimate relationship he had with God, they were family – The Trinity! We too call God our Father when we pray 'the Lord's Prayer', 'Our Father'. Jesus says the time had come 'Glorify your son'. Jesus was going to die but it was the plan and Jesus in full obedience went to the cross. The work of Jesus was about to be completed and this was to bring glory to God the Father on earth.

Philippians 2:8 – 11 Paul writes about Jesus being obedient and glorifying God

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The Second Part (John 17: 6 - 19): Jesus Prays for his disciples asking his Father to protect them (Jn 17:11) as he was about to leave the world. Protection as well from the evil one (Jn 17:15). It is clear that the disciples would be sent into the world as Jesus was sent into the world. The disciples were in for a rough ride but notice that Jesus doesn't want to whisk them

away. “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world” (Jn 17:15). Have you ever been in a situation where you ask God, Why am I here? Why am I going through this? We may not always get the answer but so often in my life and in hindsight I see that God is teaching me things through the hard times. We will face persecution for being followers of Christ (2 Tim 3: 12) everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Jesus goes on to pray that God would sanctify his disciples by the truth, to make holy and to set apart by God’s truth. Jesus says your word is truth. Remember earlier in John when right at the beginning Jesus was described as THE WORD and in John 14:6 Jesus says he is THE TRUTH. It would be through Jesus’ blood’, sacrifice that we would be forgiven and the curtain to the Holy of Holies being torn in two that we can have access to the father. In verse 19 for his disciples to be truly sanctified depends on Jesus sanctifying himself. This verb ‘to sanctify’ in Greek is used of consecrating priests and sacrifices. In Jesus we have that sacrifice – the lamb of God and a great high Priest

Hebrews 4: 14 – 16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The Third and last part (John 17: 20 – 26) Jesus Prays for Us which is amazing !
We were included 2000 years ago.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

One of Jesus’ last requests on earth is for Christian Unity and for us to be rooted in Christ this would be a massive witness to the world. It’s also important for us at Park Road Baptist to support CTiCP (Churches Together In Central Peterborough). Let Christ’s words about unity challenge us, and our personal commitment to one another. Is there someone you disagree with? You are still called to love them. Is there someone you look down on? You are still called to love them. Avoiding them over coffee & tea also is not the

answer. What about people that no one talks to? They're not going to feel united to a family that ignores them. Unity is important.

1 Corinthians 12 talks about the body of Christ – us!

There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it (verse 25 & 26).

This also means the wider Church

According to Open Doors, Nigeria sees more Christians die for their faith than anywhere else in the world. Did you know that? North Korea is the most dangerous country for Christians that are sent to prison and labour camps for their faith. Did you know that?

Every week an average of 86 churches or Christian buildings are attacked

Every month an average of 356 Christians are unjustly arrested, detained or imprisoned for their faith.

Everyday, an average of 13 Christians are killed for their faith – that's nearly 400 Christians every month.

All these stats are from Open Doors. They refer to our brothers & sisters in Christ that live around the world.

The question is, how much do we care? How much do I suffer for their suffering? It's a challenge for me and maybe it's a challenge for you.

Unity in Christ means the world wide Church.

To conclude: Jesus is praying for us

Romans 8:34 "Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us". That is how much he loves and cares for us. We too can pray and have that intimacy with him.

Maybe you are struggling with your prayer life and I would guess that all of us at some point struggle with prayer. Maybe today set aside time to boldly approach the throne of God and tell him what's on your heart. Take time to listen. Lastly let us be united in him and united as the family of God.

Amen

