

Bible study on John 17.6-19

Begin with an opening prayer

We come to you, Lord,
ready to worship,
ready to learn,
ready for prayer,
ready for action.
May your love that draws us here,
spill out into our every day.
Amen.

Read the passage

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

This passage is taken from the account of Jesus' last words to his disciples at the supper before his arrest. He prays for those he will shortly leave through his Passion. There are echoes of the Lord's Prayer in Jesus' address to God as 'Father' (v.5ff) and his prayer for protection from worldly powers of hatred and evil (vv.11,14,15; cf 16.1-2). It is as if Jesus looks for the coming of God's kingdom in the unity, joy and faithfulness of his disciples (vv.11,13,17).

Throughout his Gospel, John reframes the humiliation and tragedy of Jesus' brutal execution. He likens it to the liberating sacrifice of the Passover Lamb (1.29), or the healing serpent that Moses raised up in the desert (3.14), or the tender care of the shepherd (10.11ff), or the fruitful seed that falls into the ground and dies (12.24ff), or the slave's washing of feet (13.1ff). Here the death that takes Jesus away from his friends is his prayer for them, and for all who will believe through their testimony (17.20-26). Anxious as they are in the absence of Jesus, his Passion-as-prayer is the triumph of God's love for the world over the destructive powers of evil.

John's audience naturally hears these words as coming from the crucified and risen Christ. Not only does Jesus pray for them, he also prays with them as they are drawn into the offering of his whole life. Here, then, is a new perspective on what it means to 'ask in my name': it is to allow our life to be moulded by the vision that shapes his Passion.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

There is an annual 'litter pick' in the Yorkshire village of Wombledon. The children dress as Wombles and there is always a communal lunch. The problem is, the event coincides with the morning service at the parish church – which is in the next village. What should you do? Go to church and forget about the litter pick? Go to church, having given your apologies and offered to litter pick at another time? Go to the litter pick and see it as part of your 'worship and prayer' for the community? Get everyone from church to join in the litter pick? How do we square 'They do not belong to the world' with 'So I have sent them into the world'? How did Jesus, whose authority did not come from this world, live fully as part of it? Can an action such as communal litter picking be an act of Christian worship and prayer?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- What are your first impressions as you look at this image?
- How does prayer help you in uncertain times?
- How would you describe the potential of prayer?

Prayer

A prayer of adoration

God of yesterday, tomorrow and today,
we are children of the world you love and care for.

We praise you, heavenly Father,
for calling us into relationship with you.

We praise you, Lord Jesus,
for the power of your name and the protection of your prayers.

We praise you, Holy Spirit,
for your guidance and gifts that enable us to draw others to you.

For you are faithful in times of uncertainty,
strong when we are weak,
and the breath of all our being,
the energy of all our doing and the peace of all our resting.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

As we leave this place, Lord,
may our prayers be just beginning.

May our worship, our time here,
what we have learned and what we have discovered,
lead us into action and lives full of worship
every hour of every day.

We ask in the name of Jesus,
whose whole life was an offering of worship to you.

Amen.