

## Jesus' Prayer

### Psalm 1

### John 17:6-19

One of the most heartening experiences a person can have is to be prayed for by someone else. And even more comforting is to have that person pray with you. When someone prays on your behalf something wondrous happens! A bond is established between you and that other person, but there's also a sense of intimacy between you and God. It's as though you are being ushered into the very presence of God!

Praying helps to ensure harmony and peace within the church.

When a congregation prays together, they tend to stick together.

But did it ever occur to you that Christ, as our Lord and Saviour, also is praying for you and for me? He goes before His Heavenly Father with intercessions on our behalf. And He does so especially in times when we are weak; when we are most vulnerable.

Someone once said: "If I could hear Christ praying for me, I would not fear a thousand demons gnawing at my heels!" Yes, when it comes to intercessory prayer, time and distance are not a factor. It is enough for us to know that Jesus is praying for us at all times and in every way!

So, today, I invite you to join the disciples as they walked alongside the Lord as He led them down to the Kidron Valley and up the sloping hillside to the Mount of Olives where Judas Iscariot would dare to betray Jesus with a kiss!

In this segment of Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" you and the other disciples discover that: CHRIST PRAYS FOR YOUR PROTECTION. Secondly, CHRIST PRAYS FOR YOUR SANCTIFICATION. And finally, CHRIST PRAYS FOR YOUR UNITY WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS.

First, CHRIST PRAYS FOR YOUR PROTECTION

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" [Romans 8:34].

Jesus goes on to say that the world hates His disciples because they are not of this world, just as He Himself is not of this world. And yet, Jesus does not ask His Father to take them out of the world. Instead, He prays that you, me and the others will be kept from the evil one.

There is an ancient ritual observed by many Native American Indian tribes. Before a young brave could achieve manhood in the eyes of the tribal council, he had to endure one final initiation. Since childhood the boy would have been taught by the elders of the tribe to hunt, to fish, and to track wild game. As the boy grew in stature, he would have become adept with the use of a knife and a bow and arrow.

On the night of his initiation the boy would be led away blindfolded to a remote dense forest where he would have to fend for himself alone in the woods. During his childhood the young brave would have experienced the relative safety of being among his fellow tribesmen. But now, perhaps for the first time in his life, he was alone with no one to protect him.

The sounds of the night echo an eerie feeling. The rustling of branches can frighten the stoutest of brave hearts especially when one begins imagining a wild animal on the prowl. Then, after a long and harrowing sleepless night, the dawn finally breaks through the glistening forest with rays of sunlight. And as he peers around the young brave discovers to his astonishment the towering figure of a man standing only a few feet away, armed with bow and arrow. It was the young warrior's father who had kept watch over his son all through the night!

Folks, we must always remember that although God is invisible, God is also invincible! God is strong and mighty to save even the most fragile and weakest of hearts. We do not need to see Him in order to know that He is with us always!

But Christ not only promises to protect you, **BUT CHRIST ALSO PRAYS FOR YOUR SANCTIFICATION.**

The word sanctification literally means "to be set apart." In 1 Peter 1: 16, we read, "For just as God is holy, those who worship Him must also be holy!"

This is not to suggest that we no longer sin. Yet, God's Word continually remind us that we are not powerless against sin. What it does mean is that as followers of Christ we come to loathe sin; for it is our desire to do nothing more than to be Christlike in all our ways.

Sanctification is such a critical process that every believer must go through. It's an ongoing process through which the Holy Spirit will empower and transform us to become more and more like Jesus Christ. It's a process of dying to self through complete submission and surrender to Christ's lordship and authority.

Someone once said that "Sanctification is not about avoiding or escaping the world around us; for none of us are impervious to the trappings of this world. Even monks who lock themselves away in solitude are not able to keep the world at bay.

When we experience a spiritual rebirth, and although we are set apart, we should not think of ourselves as being shelved like some Christmas ornament. But rather we should think of ourselves as being used of God in service to Him whatever and wherever He may lead us.

Sanctification is not so much an emotional, or behavioural pattern. Rather, it is a genuine act of contrition towards that which is unholy and displeasing to God. So, Sanctification is an outward expression of an inward condition.

God bestows His grace and mercy not because we are good, but because God is good! In a word, we are not to conform to the ways of this world.

If you remember from last week, we considered Jesus what meant when He said: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

[John 15:18]. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of this world, but I chose you out of this world, because of this the world hates you”.

Put simply, if the world loves you and you love the world, then you might have some figuring out to do!

But, if the world hates you because you are not of this world, then thank God for His saving grace!

The best way, and perhaps the only way, to be in this world but not of it, is to be anchored securely in God’s Word.

In verses 17 and 19 Jesus speaks of our having been sanctified by Your truth and that truth only comes by way of God’s Word for just as He says: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” [John 17:17].

But not only does Jesus’ promise to protect us and purify us, CHRIST PRAYS FOR YOUR UNITY WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS.

In verses 6-9 Jesus speaks of His disciples having been given the certain knowledge that He was sent from God and that God’s Word has been kept by them. Then, too, in verse 11 Jesus pleads with His Heavenly Father where He says:

“Holy Father keep them in Your Name, the Name which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as we are.”

And one of the results of our being united in Christ, and with each other, is when we experience “the fullness of joy” just as does Christ Himself.

Unity in this sense does not mean that we must always think alike. Christians are not robots; we are not mindless people!

But when it comes to the core beliefs enshrouded in the Christian faith, there must be absolute unanimity.

Next week, Commissioners will gather together for the General Assembly in Edinburgh. In times past, some of the reports have at times, been contentious. But, in worship, hearts and minds become harmonious.

In his book *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer poses this question: “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same tuning fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard ... a higher standard.”

And so, it is with those of us who call ourselves “Christians”. As followers of Christ we are preserved, protected, consecrated and made holy. Furthermore, we strive for unity amidst diversity while in a fallen world, as we endeavour to complete the work Jesus has called us to do. So, help us ... God! Amen.