

Our reading from John 17 again is on the night before Jesus’ crucifixion. He knows it; His disciples don’t. But now after four chapters of talking with them, Jesus turns His attention to His heavenly Father. There in front of His disciples Jesus prays His longest recorded prayer. Since the time of the second generation of Lutheran reformers in the late 1500s this has been called His “High Priestly Prayer.”

I. Jesus Prays for Himself

Previously in John’s Gospel Jesus’ hour had not yet come. Now it has. It is the hour of His glory and His authority. But these are not won in the world’s way. Instead, they will be achieved His by suffering, death and resurrection. It is the hour of His earthly mission to rescue humanity from death by winning for us eternal life. In this way the eternal Son will glorify His Father by doing His will and fulfilling His purpose. Having accomplished that work of salvation, the Father will glorify His ascended Son. Jesus will return to His rightful place of heavenly glory where He continues to pray for us. All believers in Jesus know from this prayer that we have eternal life through Him.

II. Jesus Prays for His Disciples

By His divine power Jesus has protected His chosen followers from physical harm and defended them from spiritual defeat, with the exception of Judas whose betrayal and suicide were mentioned in John 13 during our first midweek service. Now that Jesus no longer would be with His followers in a physical way, He prays that His heavenly Father would grant His gracious protection to them.

Jesus no longer will be with His disciples because He has important work to do. Jesus is the one God had promised to be the Savior of the world who would pay the price of His life on account of our sins. Jesus is the one who gives us a way out of the fantasy land of our sinful existence and into the reality of true life as God’s people. Jesus has

sanctified Himself by His innocent death on the cross. Jesus has sanctified Himself by His resurrection from the dead. Jesus has sanctified Himself by ascending to His rightful place of honor and glory in heaven.

All Jesus does for Himself He really is doing for us. His death is for our forgiveness. His resurrection is for our life. His ascension is to prepare a home in eternal life for us. This work of Jesus gives us complete joy. Our joy is that the burden of our sins now is removed from us. Our joy is that sin's separation from our loving God now is over. Our joy is that the threat of eternal punishment now is gone. All of Jesus' complete joy is given to us in our holy baptism. There forgiveness of sins, new life and eternal salvation are God's gifts to us in water combined with His Word. For each of us our baptism is the daily reminder of God's love and Jesus' life for us.

As God's warriors living behind enemy lines, we are armed with the most powerful weapon of all, His Word of truth. Because of that we will face great opposition. The enemies of God do not want to hear His Word proclaimed to them. They will wear a mask over their souls and keep their spirits socially distanced from God's message of law and gospel as if it were the plague. In this post-modern world the only truth that people are willing to agree with is that there is no truth. But there is God's truth. He has revealed it to us.

III. Jesus Prays for Us

Our Triune God is on one side, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons perfectly united as one majestic, powerful, and glorious God On other side is this world united under devil in its opposition to and hatred of God and all that God is, gives and wants for us. We are in the middle; our natural attraction from the time of our birth is to go the way of the unbelieving and rebellious world around us.

The world wants us to believe, and is very good at convincing us, that the glory and excitement, the fun and freedom, of this life are all on its side. But once we get caught up, stuck and trapped in the ways of the world we see that what this life offers us is a fake and phony glory. Too late do we understand that to go the way of this world is to

end up on the losing and condemned side of eternity. We see that those who are on the side of this world are slaves to sin, death and the power of the devil and are under the righteous judgment of God.

Jesus now prays for us to be on His side, to believe in Him as our Savior through the witness His first disciples left us in the Holy Bible. For that to happen Jesus now must go to His death on the cross as the full and final sacrifice that takes away those sins which separate us from God. Jesus then rose from dead as champion over death for us so that living and ascended He now can attract us to Himself. This takes place as the Holy Spirit is at work in God's Word of the Holy Bible and the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these means of God's grace the Holy Spirit joins us and unites us with our loving God in a life of faith. At the same time the Holy Spirit unites us to one another in the Holy Christian Church on earth as fellow believers in Jesus as our Savior.

Jesus prays for us to have unity with one another on earth which reflects that unity of the Father & Son within the mystery of the Holy Trinity. This unity of faith in Jesus that we share with one another is the witness we give to the world so that those who do not yet know God will see His love revealed in us. They will want what we have and they will ask us what we know that they don't. In God's Word and Sacraments we have seen the love and glory of our righteous heavenly Father revealed in the person and work of His Son, Jesus. That will begin to take place next week as we move into John 18.