

Sunday Morning Message

December 27, 2020

Jesus Prayer for His Disciples Who are Still In the World

Text – John 17

Congregational Reading – John 17:13 - 17

Introduction

The latter chapters in John's gospel all deal with Jesus' last week on the earth just prior to the crucifixion. At this time Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure from them, for life on earth without Him being there with them personally. He told them about the coming of the Holy Spirit whom He said would indwell them (John 14:17), fill them (Acts 2:4), comfort them (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7), teach them (John 14:26), and guide them into all truth (John 16:13).

In John seventeen, Jesus prays to His Father for the disciples. This chapter contains what I call "the real Lord's prayer." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us the "Our Father," or what I call the model prayer, but here in John 17, Jesus is not teaching us how to pray, He is praying for us.

Transition

My thought this morning is how appropriate this prayer is for us today who are headed for Heaven someday in the future, but are still in the world today. This "high priestly prayer" of Jesus references three specific issues:

I. Jesus Concluding Time "In the World" (vs. 1 – 5)

Jesus came here on a mission. He came to seek and to save those who were lost. He came to pay the sin debt by shedding his own blood and bearing the sins of the world upon His own shoulders on the Cross.

Though He loved and died for the world, the vast majority of people living in the world did not recognize or appreciate what He had come to do:

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11)

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." (John 1:10)

We can certainly identify with that. Most people today do not understand or appreciate our gospel message, either. But, as long as Jesus was here on the earth, He remained focused on the mission that brought Him here:

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5)

II. Jesus Care for Those of Us Who are Still "In the World" (vs. 6 – 20)

In verses 6 – 20, Jesus prays for His disciples and us who are still in the world, that we, too, will stay focused on the task that He has given us of reaching this world with the message of salvation.

III. Jesus Coming To Take Us Out of the World (vs. 21 – 23)

In these final verse of Jesus prayer, He expresses His will that someday we who are now in the world eventually be taken out of the world to be with Him:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

Here is the "gist" of this message. Jesus was in the world, but after he fulfilled His mission, He went home to Heaven. His disciples were "in the world" but they, too, finished their course and went home to Heaven as well. We are Jesus disciples today and we are still "in the world," but someday, perhaps very soon, He will be taking us up out of this world to "ever be with the Lord"(1 Thessalonian 4:17). We need to make sure of two things:

1. That we have done all that we were given by the Lord to do.
2. That we are prepared for what lies ahead of us in Heaven.

Illustration - Abraham is a Bible illustration of this principle. He lived in the world, but he was not "of the world."

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16)

When Abraham and his family left Egypt and returned to the Land of Canaan, his nephew Lot was still with him:

"And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." (Genesis 13:6-13)

Abraham was not interested at all in the worldly and sinful pleasures that were available in Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other Cities of the Plain. He told Lot that he could do what he wanted, but Abraham stayed far away from night lights of Sodom. However, later on, when Lot was in trouble, Uncle Abraham came to his rescue, and in the process of rescuing Lot, Abraham and his servants also rescued the cities where Lot lived.

"And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. ... And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the

possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." (Genesis 14:11-17, 21-24)

Abraham lived in the world along with these lost and wicked people, but he lived separately from them. He didn't want their stuff; he didn't need them to take care of His family. Yet, he was a blessing to them. He helped them when he could.

Conclusion

As we head into a new year, it is very important for us to remember that this world that we are currently living in is not our true home. The Bible says that: *"...our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"* (Philippians 3:20). Like Abraham, we look for a city *"whose builder and maker is God;"* a city that is *"a better country, that is an heavenly."*

I believe it is possible that at least one of the reasons that God allowed us to go through a year like 2020 with all of its challenges was because it reminded God's people this world is truly not our home. Perhaps we had become too content down here on the earth; happy with the pleasures that this world could offer us. God wants his people to continually look to eternity; to our heavenly home that awaits us. We were never supposed to get too comfortable down here.

Concluding Thoughts for 2021

1. Get excited about your new home.

Illustrate – when you are about to move, you research everything you can about where you are moving to. My daughter, Melissa and her husband Wes, recently moved to Alaska where they will be stationed for the next four years or so. As the time for their move drew near they cared less and less about where they were coming from, and more and more about where they were going to.

Find out as much as you can from the Word of God about the Person and place that you will soon be going to.

2. Separate more and more from this present world.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," (2 Corinthians 6:17)

In 2021, determine that you are going to not get so bogged down with what is going on down here. Pull away from all of the stuff on social media, and the news channels. Break away from – ween yourself off of - the entertainment that this world offers you.

Illustrate - Have you noticed that the vast majority of the producers and actors that are making a fortune by providing you with that entertainment actually hate everything you stand for. Their mindset or worldview is completely the opposite of a biblical, Christian perspective.

3. Cling to the people of God for strength.

In 2021, draw closer to your family, and also to your church family. Let's strengthen each other.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:12-13)

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

4. Invite as many people as you can to go with you.

As we enter into this new year, let's get back to soulwinning. The Bible says:

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

There are people out there who are becoming just as disenchanted with this world as we are. There are Philippian jailors out there who will say to you: "what must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:32). There are the Lydias out there whose hearts have been opened by God (Acts 16:14); and people like the Ethiopian eunuch who are searching for the truth and looking for somebody to guide them (Acts 8:31).

This year let's be looking for opportunities to share Christ with anyone who will listen. Bring gospel tracts with you wherever you go. Pass them out liberally. Don't be embarrassed about your Christian faith. Be bold as a lion. You are right. You have the truth. Paul said:

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
(Romans 1:16)*

I am praying that 2021 is a better year than 2020, but if it isn't then we know that Christ's return for us is even closer. Let's be ready for His return. Let's fulfil our commission here as His ambassadors to a fallen and dying world. Let's work diligently to get the gospel to all the world and every creature that lives here.

I don't know what is in store for this new year, but I bet it will be exciting. These last days are indeed perilous, but they are also exciting. Let's get fully on board to God's plan and purpose for our lives. Let's re-enlist; go all in; let's leave it all out on the field; let's give the Lord everything that we have got to give in these final days of the battle.

The good news is that we are already victorious.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31, 35, 37-39)

I believe that 2021 could be the year that Christ returns. We need to be faithful to doing the job that He gave us to do. It's time to get busy; it's time to get ready for eternity. We are still "in the world," but it may be very soon that we will be taken out of the world. Are you ready?