

For Sanctification

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Date: 11 September 2016

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[0 : 00] Now let's bow our heads in prayer briefly before we look at this passage. Lord God, we ask in prayer, as we come to this very remarkable passage that we've been looking at and are reminded of again tonight, that your presence would be with us, that we would remember in many ways that we stand on holy ground when we glimpse into the mind of Jesus through his prayer.

And we ask that you bless us and encourage us and that we would know the power and presence of the Holy Spirit with us both through the word, the preaching and the sacrament that we enjoy together following this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now I'd just like to go back to that passage from John, Corey and Tom have preached the earlier section of this prayer. Just tonight I want to keep the sermon very simple and what I want to do above all else today is to encourage you.

I want to encourage you in your Christian life and I think this passage is a great passage to do that. I want you to sense the joy that Jesus asks the Father to give to his disciples and by extension to us as well.

Delight. That is what Jesus wants for his people in this passage. He speaks about joy. And it is, as the guys have been saying previously, in the weeks previously, it's an incredible passage. It's an incredible prayer because we're brought into the company of the triune God. So we're brought into, remember we're speaking about how big God was this morning.

[1 : 57] You know, when we talk about the size of the universe and the fact that God's over that, he's created that and yet not only is he over it in the whole universe but he knows intimately our own lives as well.

But this great complex being, okay, the one that in many ways is far too mysterious for us to understand, although he reveals himself simply in Jesus and in his word.

So we've got this God and we can eavesdrop on what this God is saying about us, about his followers, about his disciples.

This private conversation, and that's what prayer, you know what prayer is, isn't it? When you pray privately, you know it's the most intimate kind of conversation you have because you'll say things in prayer.

None of your mates and friends know about you. It's intensely intimate and private and there's things that I say in prayer that nobody would ever know in this world.

[2 : 58] Private things between me and God. And here we have this infinite God, this complex triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In conversation, in prayer, Jesus is in prayer to his Father and he's saying things about us. It's a kind of soliloquy of plural majesty.

Okay, I didn't get that from a book. It's my own. Okay? But to understand that, it's kind of, he is speaking in prayer but he's speaking to his Father and there's this remarkable reality because it's going to be, isn't it? It's going to be the purest prayer that ever was. You know our prayers, we ask for forgiveness because they're full of motives that are a bit questionable, something.

But here, we're reminded that everything that Jesus asks is going to be in line with what his Father wants. So it's a really pure prayer. It's not like he's battling with God, the Father, and God, the Father and him have different opinions. They're completely and utterly in harmony.

And so he prays here, he prays out loud as we saw previously for the disciples' benefit and for our benefit, he's praying out loud so this dishevelled, disheartened, confused bunch of leaders under him will hear what he has to say, that this is what he's praying and it's going to be a perfectly answered prayer, isn't it?

Because the Son knows the will of the Father and they're going to pray in harmony. It's great. And of course, if you want the answer to this prayer, specifically, you'll find it from Pentecost onwards,

where the disciples, from being a rag tag of frightened, dishevelled, defeated believers, turn the world upside down.

[4 : 53] Ordinary unscrup men turn the world upside down because God, the Father, has answered this prayer of his Son on their behalf. So, just want to say a few things about it before we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Firstly, Jesus here is praying to his Father, the Father who gives gifts. And he wants them to know that and to share that. In verse 13 he says, I'm coming to you and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy in themselves. He wants them to have his joy. He wants them to share something that he has.

In Hebrews 12 verse 2 we're told that Jesus bore what lay ahead because he knew the joy that was set before him with the Father. If I can speak reverently, as Jesus is here with the disciples in the upper room, his divine stomach is churning at the prospect of the darkness ahead.

And yet, he could pray for the divine joy to be shared with the disciples. The joy that he knows, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have together, there's great delight in one another.

He wants us to have that great joy ourselves. And that's a heart change, isn't it? Because in a lot of the time we're miserable in our Christian lives.

[6 : 22] You know what it's like when you meet with your friends that you really love, your family or people that you're really close to. You know the delight and the joy you have in their company.

That's exactly but intensified what he's speaking about here, that we would know the same joy that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have in their relationship with one another.

You know, we know the opposite too, don't we? We know the misery we have in certain company as well. People are awkward and difficult. We have nothing. We don't get on with them in any sense.

We know both ends of the spectrum. But sometimes I think our Christian lives a bit more like the latter. We're bored with God. We don't delight in Him. It's a bit miserable. It's all a bit dragging our feet.

I suppose I better pray. I suppose I better read the Bible. His company is really a bit of a drag for us. And Jesus is saying, I don't want that for my disciples just now. I want them to delight in God, to have their hearts realigned.

[7 : 25] It's a bit like what David prays for. After he committed adultery and broken his marriage bonds and everything was up in there, he said, put it restored to me the joy that I had. Because he'd lost that joy.

It's what sin takes away that joy. Because this propensity of our hearts to drift away from Jesus and from the delight of his company is what sin does. And the devil will get us to that place where we just are bored with him, that we have nothing in common with Jesus, that we hate his company. Because that's what he does. And Jesus prays here that the disciples' joy will be restored. And they will know what the joy that he has had.

And that's a miracle. And we need the Father to answer that prayer. And I think all of us are looking for joy in our lives. I don't doubt that for a moment. For a moment we're all looking for happiness.

I think sometimes we're just looking for it in the wrong places. And the deepest joy and the deepest happiness is in relation with our Lord, our Creator, our Saviour and our King and our Brother.

[8 : 32] So the Father gifts joy, but the Father also gifts his word. He says, not only that the joy will be fulfilled, but I have given them your word. And if the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

And this is the word that the Father gives and that Jesus gives to us. His message and his work. He speaks about God's word. And we know that that refers to the message of the Gospel, but also refers to the person of Jesus in the Gospel.

And there's a tension because the world didn't like his word and didn't like the light of his word.

You know, it says that I've given them the word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. And there's this reality that the world hates Jesus and there's a tension here.

That Jesus who's the light comes into the darkness and he's rejected. So his word and his person is an unwanted gift to this world that he came to.

[9 : 48] And he gifts us this word ourselves and there remains for us a tension with the word.

That the same tension of light and darkness, it's a living word that sometimes, like in the world, we want to reject.

Or we don't understand or we can't persevere with. I think we need to understand that the word is a living word and it's not mere assimilation of facts.

It's not mere theological acceptance or assent. It is a living word. It's not just merely intellectual understanding.

And so the gift of the word, the Bible and Jesus Christ, even for us as believers, is a tension. Jesus here recognizes this tension of himself in the world, the world rejects him.

[10:49] And I think sometimes even for us with our remaining sinful natures, there's a tension for us with Jesus and with his word. At different levels, I think sometimes because of sin, but also sometimes because of who he is.

We are just ordinary, finite people and we're wrestling with the revelation of God who's unseen, who's infinite, who's pure and who's holy other.

And we struggle with that. Well, I struggle with that. Maybe you don't struggle with that. I struggle with that. Because there's so much I look at and I don't understand this. I don't understand him. I don't understand his ways. I trust and I'm happy to trust, but I don't understand.

And there's this tension that we face with this revealed word. And sometimes we say, as from the front, we say, well, if you're a good Christian, you'll love the Bible and you'll read it all the time. And that's great. And you feel guilty because that's not how you feel.

And that's because there's a tension because of who we are and because of what the word is. We do need to wrestle with it. We do need to battle with it because it is speaking about someone who's not just Joe Bloggs around the corner.

[12:00] It's speaking about someone who's infinite, eternal and unchangeable. And we struggle to understand that naturally. And there's a tension with us because we still in our remaining natures want, remaining natures want, lordship of our own lives.

So we battle against all these things and yet his word is the gift to us. And we need to battle against that darkness and battle against casting aside his word and the revelation of himself in the word and recognize it as God's gift.

So we see the Father who gifts, but we also see the Father who protects in verse 15. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one, that you protect them from the evil one.

Previously, Cori and I think Tom as well spoke about God's protection because he mentions it in verse 11 and in verse 12. And we know we've seen and often are seen that when things are repeated in a short space of time in the Bible, it's usually for emphasis.

So three times here, Jesus is about to go to the cross and he's asking that the Father will protect the disciples in the hour of darkness. He wants them protected. Now we know the story, don't we? We know the story. We know that they drifted. We know that they doubted.

[13:14] But we also know that they were kept, that they were protected. Barring Judas, who was near to Christ, but was never Christ's despite appearances.

The Father protected all who were his own. That is the Father's work. And that is a hugely significant thing in all our doubts and in all our drifting. And it doesn't excuse that, but we will be and we are protected. That's the Father's work. You can't be a Christian on your own.

You simply can't do it. I can't do it. And not only are we to rely on the prayer of Jesus asking for our protection from the Father, but we also are to imitate him and ourselves pray for protection from the Father. The Holy Spirit teaches us in the Lord's prayer to pray that, deliver us from the evil one.

And we are to pray the same prayer because it's a recognition that we know the battle that we are in. Absolutely and entirely. We've spoken quite a lot. I've seen a bit of a burden for me the last number of months that we need to recognize and know as a growing church that we are the focus of the enemy's attack.

And even if we're not part of a growing church, but if you profess Jesus and are members of his body and participate in the Lord's Supper, you are a focus for the spiritual attack of the evil one.

[14:44] And we need to be alert and aware of that. Recognize that the Father's work is to protect us and we are to ask for that protection and live in the shadow of his protection.

And then the last thing I want to say here briefly is that not only does our Father protect, but our Father sanctifies and sends us in verse 17 to 19. He says they're not of the world, just not of the

world, but sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Now this is great because it's a sandwich. It's a sandwich where we have sanctification on either side and being sent as the meat in the middle.

And that's really important. That's the wisdom of God because you know what we tend to do? We tend to separate them out. We talk about sanctification and we talk about evangelism or being sent out and being in the world.

But God doesn't separate them. God has them together here. And the danger is sometimes that we separate them so that we think, oh, it's really important that we're in the world and that we go and, and Cori has talked about this last week, go into the world and be part of the world.

[15:59] But in so doing, not sensing any spiritual calling or any burden for holiness. So we're present in the world, but we're actually spiritually invisible, invisibly present in the world.

So nobody knows we're Christians. We're in the world. We think we're not of the world, but we're actually not recognizing any unique position that we have.

Or we go to the opposite extreme where we are sanctified and we're holy and we're separate, but we're separate in a Christian ghetto where we are visibly absent from the world.

As opposed to being invisibly present, we are visibly absent within a Christian ghetto and because we're afraid of the world and we're afraid that we'll fail in the world because we're not trusting in the power and in the protection that Jesus Christ through God offers us.

We need to be like Christ and be both. That's what we need to do. That's what this prayer is about. In other words, we need to be sanctified like Jesus who was gloriously, unconditionally in the world.

[17:18] Okay? He had great fellowship with his father. He had godly wisdom. He didn't follow the crowd. He brought spiritual light into dark places. He was radical.

So we saw this morning. And that's what we are to be. We're to be like Jesus in the world, but different. In the world, but in that position in the world among people loving God and loving others. That is the example that we are to show the world. We are to not be afraid that we love God, that we are sanctified, that we belong to him. And that doesn't look pious and it doesn't look judgmental. It looks beautiful and it looks truthful.

But there's a tension there. There was a tension all the way through Jesus' ministry, his public ministry. The most beautiful, perfect, clean, holy, pure, manly man that ever lived.

Attractive in so many different ways to the world, but there was a great tension there, even for him. And the world hated him and eventually crucified him. Sanctified, but also sanctified and sent. You know, we've got the order. We've got God sends the Son and the Son sends us. So we partner in this great work.

[18:44] The Son is set apart. He is dedicated, or it says verse 19, consecrated. And that's what we're to be. That is the command.

That's not the option for us as believers. It's the command that this prayer is for the Father to sanctify us and to send us.

It's not just for special Christians or different Christians or one-off Christians. Every Christian is sent and sanctified at the same time, sent into the world in a special way.

Dedicated, set apart to be friendly and part of the world, but to be different from those around us because we are Christ's. Jesus was different wherever he went, you know. And he wasn't pious and he wasn't judgmental. He was full of grace.

And that's what we are to be. Absolutely radical full of grace. We're bought with a price. So as we sit at the Lord's table this evening, as members, as we, and as we sit at the Lord's table, we do so professing our faith in Jesus Christ.

[19:54] We don't have a physical table. We're just together here. And if you're not a Christian this evening, don't be embarrassed by the fact that the bread and the wine will be passed round. If you're not a believer, don't feel awkward by that. Just pass it on. But use the time just to think a little bit about your own relationship with God and what God says about salvation and your need of a saviour.

But as Christians, as we profess His name this evening, all of us are sent people and sanctified people. We can't be passengers in the kingdom. We can't shuffle around the edges. And we definitely oughtn't to stick our head in the church's sandy beach and avoid the reality of being sent and sanctified in this world in which we live.

There's an incredible purpose that is mirroring what God sent Jesus to do. We are to share that good news and we are to under Him be those who parallel the work of Jesus.

Jesus is your sent light into the world, into a dark world to reflect Jesus. And in so doing, Jesus is praying for you. Jesus is praying for you in the perfect will of His Father.

And in so doing, you will be safe, you'll be protected. Redact again to see the great transforming power of this prayer in the lives of the disciples who were these ordinary, unschooled men who had been with Jesus and who turned the world upside down.

[21 : 39] And that's what we need today for people to say, this bunch of believers have been with Jesus. They know Jesus. Jesus is real. I hope that today the builders and the architects and the electricians and the visitors who were not Christians were able to somehow articulate this group of people.

They know Jesus and they have been with Jesus. We are to be pointers towards Jesus. And as we sit at the Lord's table, we sit as friends of Jesus.

And I hope that in the short time that we do so, in the quietness of the evening, that you will know joy and delight. And I hope it will be joy and delight restored if you have lost that. That you'll pray that prayer of Psalm 51, restore to me the joy I had.

That you'll pray for his protection as you go from here into the world of work and studies and community. And you'll know his holiness and his commissioning, his calling of your life that you are set apart for his service into the darkness of this world.