

John 85 – Jesus Prays for Us

04/26/2026

Scripture 1: (Jn. 17:20-26 ESV)

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Sermon:

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer is commonly divided into three distinct sections or focus points. Jesus praying for Himself. Jesus praying for His disciples (especially those who were present). And, Jesus particularly praying for everyone who would ever believe and trust in Him in the future.

Just as Jesus prayed for these three different groups of people, He also prayed three different requests. He prayed for His own glory. He prayed for the holiness of His chosen people. And in this third section, He prayed for our collective unity. He prayed for unity in the distinction of belonging to the Church as opposed to belonging to the world and, He prayed for unity between the Church and Himself. To describe it another way, Jesus prayed for unity between the people of God and the three Persons of the Godhead; that together, we would all be one. Yet despite being the last request prayed, this unity is His most important request because through it, we are united into both Jesus's glory and His holiness. Again, that is part of why Jesus prayed, "*And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*" (Jn. 17:19 ESV), so that we also would be consecrated and "*be holy*" (Leviticus 19:2) as He is holy. However, Jesus did not pray for our unity for its own sake or as an end in itself, just like He did not pray for our personal holiness as the end. Unity, like holiness, is a purposed means to fulfill God's sovereign will, purpose, and plan.

Jesus prayed, "*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all **be one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*"

While Jesus prayed for the Eleven, specifically and distinctly, He did not separate them from everyone else. They were not distinguished, set apart from, or elevated above His other disciples in time. The Eleven, Jesus' Apostles were also merely Jesus' disciples, just like the rest of us; just disciples who had a unique and different role to play in the establishment of the Church and the recording of inspired Scripture. This humble "sameness" is further evidenced through Peter's own self admission in 1 Peter 5:1, when he calls himself a "fellow elder", and John's self description in Second and Third John and simply "the elder" (2 John 1:1; 2 John 1:1). Similarly, Paul's favorite self-descriptor is *doulos*, slave or servant; likewise, both James and Jude, Jesus' brothers also each describe themselves as a servant of Christ (James 1:1; Jude 1:1). Part of what this means is that, within our unity in Christ, we are all equally in Christ; there is no hierarchy or distinguishing priority between us, much less one based upon our temporal proximity to Jesus.

In this prayer, Jesus did not pray for some kind of physical union between us, nor even for the union of our natures, but instead, He prayed for a relational union of mutual identification and representation. The core,

original exemplary type of relationship that Jesus bases this union on is the relationship of Persons within the Godhead and there are three ways (or senses) that this relational union directly effects us.

In one sense, the effect of this union is that:

- As the Father is in the Son: meaning as the Son is identified with the Father, not as the same Person but as representing the Father; therefore, whatever the Son does reflects upon the Father and, whatever the Son agrees to the Father is also agreed to.
- As the Son is in the Father: meaning as the Father is also identified with the Son; therefore, whatever the Father commands, the Son also commands and, whatever the Father has promised, the Son is also obligated to see fulfilled.

So, when Jesus prayed that we would be in them, this is the kind of mutuality He intended. Thus:

- If we who believe in Jesus Christ (God's chosen; His Elect people; His adopted children), are similarly in the Father and in the Son then, their decreed will should be our will and desire. We should not desire to act in a manner contrary.
- If we are in them, then our good works of agapic love for our neighbor actually become Jesus's agapic love for them; with Him loving them through us.
- If we are in them, then the world's hatred of us: all of its abuse and acts of persecution against Christians; are works of abuse and persecution against the actual Person of Jesus Christ, Himself (2 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Peter 4:13). Just as He suffered on our behalf, such that His suffering atonement counts as our suffering our deserved punishment, so too, whatever they do to us is likewise counted as being done to Him.

That thought and idea then leads us to the purpose for why Jesus prayed for this unity, “...*so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*”. The weighty consequence of this union is that, if we are in Christ (and thus also, in all three Persons of the Trinity), then everything we do reflects on them, because of how we are so closely identified with them. Everything good **and** everything bad that we do is associated with Jesus. This is why so many people complain about the Christian faith (and negatively generalize about Christians) because they may have had a bad experience with someone who called themselves a Christian. Sadly, such experiences are failures by those previously encountered Christians to rightly fulfill their purpose for still living in the world as Christians. Having worldly people encounter Christians and experience Christ through us is the purposeful reason why Jesus prayed for us to not be removed from the world: leaving us to live in the world, but no longer being of the world.

- So that we may demonstrate our faith and trust in Him (Matthew 10:33) before the world;
- So that we may continue to show the world Jesus's love for it (Ephesians 2:4-10);
- So that we may call the world to repent of its sinfulness, to turn and trust in Jesus Christ for pardon and forgiveness (Mark 1:15);
- So that the world may believe that Jesus came from God, and that He was sent by the Father, in love, to save His people from the just consequence their sins through their faith in Him (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15).

That is our purpose as Christians in the world and, we are each better or worse at fulfilling it depending upon how sanctified we are. Again, as I previously said, if we do not intentionally work to increase and grow in our own personal holiness (if we do not become increasingly sanctified or work to increasingly live in a more holy

manner) then we risk proving our profession of faith in Christ a lie and we become hypocrites. The way we live in the world as Christians is as much a part of our witness of Jesus Christ as sharing and explaining the Gospel. So, if we are telling people what we believe about Jesus Christ: Who He is and What He has done for us personally; then we had also better act and live as if we actually do believe what we say.

Jesus also prayed that we, His future disciples, would believe in Him “...*through their word...*”, through the (spoken and written) testimony and active witness of His Apostles. But, to see this prayer fulfilled, the Eleven needed to share their word (their testimony about Jesus and what He has done) and have it preserved for all later generations “...*so that the world may believe...*”. Although they could not have known or understood it then, Jesus was (in this moment) granting them authority and commanding them to speak on His behalf. Jesus was granting them the right and the responsibility to speak truth in His Name; commanding them to share and proclaim the Word that He had given them (17:14); that their Holy Spirit inspired word would become recognized as Scripture.

- Their word would testify to God's glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Their word would serve as a testimony against sin and the world's sinfulness.
- Their word would testify to the grace, mercy, and love of God.
- Their word would be a testimony of encouragement and hope for later disciples and all the Elect.
- Their word would be a trusted testimony and used for the instruction of all later disciples and their growth in holiness.

The second sense in which this union relates to us practically, concerns what is shared among those thus united. Next, Jesus prayed, “*The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*”.

You will recall that the glory which the Father gave to the Son, was the Father's own glory that the Son had previously given to the Father (17:4-5). This was just as the evangelist had told us during his initial prologue, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” (Jn. 1:14 ESV). So, both the Father's glory and the Son's glory is the same glory; a glory that is shared by both and likewise, the same glory of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, believers in Jesus Christ (those who have been grafted into His “true vine”) have that same glory shared to and with them through Jesus's giving; through Him ascribing His glory (the Father's glory) to them, His younger, adopted brothers and sisters. Sharing in this glory means that whatever glory is given to us: on account of our righteous works, or because of our neighborly love, or any other glory that we receive in this present life for our faithful and obedient service to the LORD God; is rightly God's glory, rightly given to Him through us and, it is also glory that Christ shares back to us.

Sharing in this glory of God also means that Christ's victory over death, sin, and Satan truly is our victory as well, just as Paul tells us, “...*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom. 8:37-39 ESV). Likewise, by sharing in His glory now, we may be assured of God's love for us and of being persevered until we are raised into the fullness of that glory in the eternal Kingdom.

Meanwhile, sharing in this glory also proves the irrationality (the utter stupidity) of idolatry, in all of its forms. It especially serves to counter our own sinful “idolatry of self”, since self-idolatry is:

- concerned ultimately with seeking out and working towards one's own glorification;

- concerned with acquiring as much glory for one's self as possible; and,
- concerned with glorifying one's own self over and above glorifying Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Not only does our “idolatry of self” rob Christ of His rightfully deserved glory, it also robs us of our own (potential) shared glory in Christ, with God the Father.

- Therefore, working to fulfill our chief end (purpose), of glorifying God (WSC 1) actually is “self-serving”, just as loving our neighbors as ourselves is loving the LORD through His image within them.
- Therefore, by glorifying God, a spiritual “feedback loop” is created; a loop that is perpetually and eternally increasing.
- Therefore, glorifying God (giving God all the glory) increases our own glory, through this sharing.

Just as our holiness was purposed, so too the glory that Christ shares with us is divinely purposed through this union.

- It is purposed for the perfection of our unity through the Holy Spirit (“...*that they may become perfectly one...*”).
- It is purposed for the world to truly know that the Father sent His Son into the world to “save sinners” (Romans 5:8; 1 Tim 1:15): to redeem a people for Himself, to adopt them in sovereign love, and give them an inheritance of eternal life in His beneficent presence.
- It is purposed to the world to know that the Father loves all of His chosen people just as He loves His only begotten Son (Greek: *monogenes*; John 3:16).

But, how does our sharing in Christ's glory help the world to know or believe?

By His glory being manifested through us. Do you recall, in Scripture, what happens whenever God's glory was revealed or manifested within His creation?

- **Exodus 14:** When Egypt pursued Israel into the Red Sea, the LORD said, “...*I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.*” (Exod. 14:4 ESV) and then, the LORD “...*looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."*” (Exod. 14:24-25 ESV). Thus, “*Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.*” (Exod. 14:31 ESV)
- **Leviticus 9:** When Aaron was consecrated as high priest, “...*the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.*” (Lev. 9:23-24 ESV)
- **1 Kings 8:** When Solomon dedicated the LORD's Temple, “...*when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*” (1 Ki. 8:10-11 ESV)
- **Luke 2:** When the angelic host appeared to shepherds out in the field on the night of Jesus' birth, “...*and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ... And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ... And the shepherds returned,*”

glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” (Lk. 2:9-20 ESV)

So, what happens when God's glory manifests in the world?

- Those who witness it worship and praise the LORD.
- Those who witness it recognize, know, and believe that the LORD is God.

Therefore, as God's divine glory is expressed through our Christian lives: through the holiness of our living; through our obedience in faith; people who do not (yet) believe may, and shall, come to know that God is, that Jesus is God, and that Jesus is their Savior. But also, receiving this glory is also not the ultimate end. Instead, it also is a means to fulfill the LORD's purpose, plan, and will for His children.

The third way our union with Christ is effected upon us through this prayer, is in how Jesus prayed that the promise He made earlier that evening, in John 14:2-3, would be fulfilled, praying “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*”. Jesus prayed, earnestly asking that all who come to faith would be brought to where He is presently. Jesus prayed that we, also would be brought into His Father's house as part of His beloved Bride; that we would be accepted and fully incorporated into the holy household of God. Jesus asked this, wanting us to see His glory; to see the glory that the Father had given Him, which is the Father's own glory; to see and experience the fullness of the glory that we now get to share and participate in. This now, on the other hand, is our ultimate end.

The fulfillment of this petition is not merely a means, but is the actual end. This is our looked for, and longed for, final reward, of being raised (spiritually and physically) to eternal life:

- Eternal life with Jesus Christ our King, our elder Brother, and our true spiritual Husband;
- Eternal life living in the renewed and restored New Heavens and New Earth;
- Eternal life living in a positive, loving relationship with the LORD as our Sovereign God and as our Father;
- Eternal life living for God's glory, in the midst of His Glory, where we shall worship Him and enjoy Him (and His glory), forever!

But wait, there's more! There remains an added bonus for our spiritual encouragement within this, the final petition of Jesus' prayer. Jesus asked for us to be brought where He is, to see His glory, because the Father has loved Him since “*...before the foundation of the world.*”. Obviously, we know that the Father loves the Son and, that the Father has always loved His Son, even before time began. So, why should this improve our sense and feeling of encouragement? Why should that fact give us an added confidence to trust our sense of eternal security?

- Since the Father eternally loves the Son, loving Him from before creation: from before time began; and,
- since we, the Elect: God's chosen and adopted people; are grafted into the “*true vine*” of Jesus Christ and are thus united with Him; and,
- since we were predestined to this in-grafting and adoption, from before the foundation of the world, as Paul explains {in Ephesians 1} “*...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...*” (Eph. 1:4-5 ESV);

- Therefore, because the Father eternally loves the Son and, we are eternally united into Him, God the Father also eternally loves us as His adopted children.
- Therefore, we have always belonged to Him, from eternity past and we belong to Him into the eternal future.
- Therefore, we are eternally His: eternally Jesus Christ's!
- Therefore, we believe and know truly that nothing is able to “...separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:39 ESV) because no one and no thing can “snatch” us from out of the hand of the God (John 10:28-29) who claims us for Himself (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 83:3; Malachi 3:17; 1 Peter 2:9).

So, even when and while we each were still lost: dead in our sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1); we still belonged to God and were still being guarded and protected against the absolute worst of the Evil One's excesses; even when we suffered the penalty for our willing sin. Throughout all our past, through the best and the worst of it, Jesus has always been with us; even when we did not know it and even when we did not want Him. Therefore, we may trust that through all of our future, through the best and the worst of it, Jesus will always be with us. He is our Emmanuel!

Finally, Jesus concludes His prayer, praying “*O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*”. Often times, when pastors focus on the three obvious divisions of Jesus's High Priestly Prayer, this final petition gets forgotten, ignored, or glossed over. However, I do not think that it is an “after thought”, because God's Word is never idle and it never returns empty (Isaiah 55:10-11). Instead, I suggest that this is a fourth division and that something important is being communicated which we dare not overlook.

Throughout this prayer, Jesus has prayed for glory, for holiness, and for unity between Himself and His chosen people; His Bride. Each of these elements have been a means towards the end of: “...so that the world may believe...” that the Father sent His Son into the world. But, what is the why for the ultimate purposed “end” that the Father sent His Son to achieve?

For love (*agape*), because God is love (*agape*) (1 John 4:8). Remember,

- when God the Son came into the world, becoming incarnate, the world did not know Him. “*He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*” (Jn. 1:10 ESV);
 - Love sent God's Son into the world.
- when Jesus called Himself the “Light of the World”, Jesus answered the Pharisees, “*You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.*” (Jn. 8:19 ESV);
 - Love illuminated Truth for His people in the world, although the world did not know Him.
- when Jesus declared Himself “the Good Shepherd”, He asserted “*I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*” (Jn. 10:14-15 ESV);
 - Love caused the Son to lay down His life for His sheep (for His people) to redeem them from the world.
- when Jesus had just declared that He had “manifested” the Father's name to God's chosen people (17:6), we saw and understood that Jesus meant His revelation of God existing and His own self-revelation as

God, yet there is another aspect of God's name that Jesus revealed: His love; Him manifesting that God is Love.

- Love is why the Son asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people to guard, guide, and defend them while we remain in the world.

This is the love of God for Christ. This is the love of God in Christ. This is the love of God for Christ's people. This is the divine sovereign love which we share and enjoy, through our union with Jesus Christ.

Love is the end that God has purposed, planned, and willed for us, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* (Jn. 3:16-17 ESV).

Love is the end **and** love is also the ultimate (core or root) means because sharing in the glory of Christ, sharing in the holiness of Christ, and being united and identified with Christ is the expression of God's love for us. They are the expression of God's love for the world through us. They are how Christ's love continues to be made known in and through us, so that the world may know that God sent His Son into the world for love and so, believe that through faith, hope, and trust in Him that they shall not be condemned but saved for the Father's love. Through God love for us, in and through Christ, the world is saved as His sovereign promise to Abraham is being fulfilled, *“...in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...”* (Gen. 22:18 ESV). Through God's love for us, the heavenly realms praise Christ, singing *“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”* (Rev. 5:9-10 ESV).

Therefore, as a fourth division, this final petition in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer is the most important part for us: the most comforting and the most encouraging part because in it, Jesus reminds us that, in that moment, He was praying for us today, and for the Eleven, and for the early Church, and for Himself because of God's love for all of us; and because of Jesus' own great love for us.

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn. 15:13 ESV).

- We who believe Jesus, trust Jesus.
- We who trust Jesus, obey Jesus and do as He commands us.
- We who obey Jesus, are His friends (John 15:14). We are His brothers and sisters. We are His Bride, the Church, for whom Christ gave Himself up, that He might sanctify us, cleansing us by the washing of water with the Word, *“...so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”* (Eph. 5:25-27 ESV)

So, as we apply Jesus's High Priestly Prayer to ourselves and our own lives I will to ask you, and I strongly encourage you to write these questions down so that you may think through them seriously:

- How do you feel knowing that Jesus prayed for you on the night He was betrayed?
- How do you feel knowing that, even now, Jesus is praying for you?
- How do you feel knowing that when Jesus was preparing to face the horror of the cross, you were in His thoughts and in His heart; that you were personally and specifically under His consideration?
- How do you feel knowing that, although Jesus knew what He was about to suffer and experience on your behalf, that He took time to love you (in His heart and mind), to pray for you to become perfectly

united with Him (and He with you), to pray that you would become sanctified and live a holy life, to pray that you would share in and enjoy His eternal glory with Him in your heavenly Father's presence?

- How do you feel knowing that Jesus was more concerned about you and your eternal well-being than He was with His own, or with His rightful status as the King of the Universe?

Then, after you begin to understand how these undeniable facts make you feel, I want you to answer three things:

- How do you want to respond to what Jesus has done, is doing, and shall do for you?
- How should you respond to what Jesus has done, is doing, and shall do for you?
- How will you respond to what Jesus has done, is doing, and shall do for you?

Remember, “*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Rom. 5:8 ESV). That's the Good News! That is the Gospel.

Since Jesus died for you, who can bring any charge against you? “*It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-- more than that, who was raised-- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*” (Rom. 8:33-34 ESV); because Christ prays for us.

This is the reason why John 17 has been such an encouragement for so many saints across these past centuries, because it is such a comfort for us to know that we have nothing to fear in this life or in death because we are held in Christ's hand and we dwell in the thoughts of His mind; knowing that He has, is, and shall continue to pray for us because, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*” (Rom. 8:35 ESV).

When you think on John 17, I want you to ask yourself, “What do I have to fear?” and, to also remember “Jesus loves me. Jesus has promised to preserve, protect, and defend me because He loves me; because He is in me and I am in Him.”.

Thank the LORD for choosing to adopt us, to claim us for Himself, to give us to His Son, and to love us for His glory.

AMEN