

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS AND HIS UNJUST TRIALS

What is Jesus' High Priestly Prayer? John 17 contains the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in any of the Gospels. Jesus prays this beautiful prayer after He finishes His final instructions to the disciples and just before his betrayal, arrest and crucifixion. One purpose of this prayer was to bring comfort and hope to the troubled hearts of the disciples. First, Jesus prays for Himself, then He prays for His disciples, and He closes the prayer by praying for all believers. This intercessory prayer is commonly called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer.

The office of high priest was instituted at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses. Aaron and, subsequently, his descendants were chosen to be priests who were responsible for interceding for Israel before God (Exodus 28 - 29). One priest was selected as the high priest who would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to offer the sacrifice that would temporarily cover the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7). When Jesus came, He offered His life as the ultimate sacrifice that would not only cover the sins of the people but completely cleanse His people and save them. Jesus is the ultimate High Priest, and His intercession for us in John 17 is a wonderful, multilayered example of His love.

Exegesis of John 17

I. The Prayer of Jesus for Himself (17:1-5) There is one word that dominates Jesus' prayer for Himself in verses 1-5—Glory. Why does he need glory? Looking at his prayer more closely, we find there are several observations concerning his request for glory.

Jesus requested that He be glorified in order to bring further glory to the Father. "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you" (John 17:1 b). "Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began " (John 17:5). Jesus prayed for glorification in order to exalt the Father.

Jesus requested the glory which rightfully belonged to Him. "And now glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). When the second person of the Godhead left heaven to become God incarnate, He temporarily set aside His glory (Philippians 2:5-8).

Christ's glory was earned at the price of the cross. In addition to the restoration of the glory which our Lord possessed prior to His incarnation, there is additional glory which was earned by His earthly life and ministry. He had glorified the Father by His earthly life of obedience and submission (John 17:4). "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus prayed to be glorified so that the Father would receive glory (Philippians 2:11). Jesus received the glory that was already His (Philippians 2:6), but because of His work on the cross (Philippians 2:7-8) was given an even greater glory (Philippians 2:9-11).

II. The Prayer of Jesus for His Disciples (17:6-19). From prayer for himself, Jesus turned to the needs of His disciples, for it is in them that He had been glorified (verse 10). The request of the Lord Jesus was founded upon several factors. He accomplished His earthly task of revealing the Father to the disciples (verse 6-8). He prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are" (John 17:11b). "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom you have given Me; for they are yours (John 17:9). The disciples were believers because they belonged to the Father and were given to the Son (17:6,9-10). They were believers also because they came to faith in the person of Jesus Christ as the One sent from God (17:8).

The joy of the disciples: Jesus wants them to be joyful. The key to immeasurable joy is living in intimate contact with Christ, the source of all joy. Why the world hates them? The world hates Christians because Christian values differ from the world's. Because Christ's followers don't cooperate with the world by joining in their sin, they are hated by the world. Just as Jesus was not of the world, the disciples were not of the world. Jesus prays to the Father to protect the disciples from the evil one.

III. The Prayer of Jesus for All Believers (17:20-26) The petition of the Lord Jesus for all believers primarily concerns Christian unity: "... that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that you did send Me. And the glory which you have given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and you in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me" (John 17:21-23).

It is vital that we recognize the vast difference between unity and uniformity. Unity is best demonstrated in diversity; Diversity is threatened by uniformity. Our Lord chose men as disciples who were radically different in temperament, personality and political philosophy. It was because of their glaring differences that their unity was so evident. Jesus' great desire for his disciples was that they would become one. He wanted them unified as a powerful witness to the reality of God's love. In the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul teaches that diversity is not opposed to unity; it is essential to it. How could the body function rightly if every member were an eye, or an ear, or a mouth? True unity demands diversity, and diversity displays true unity. The unity of the trinity is unity of being, of essence and of purpose. We are the children of God by faith if we dwell in God and He dwells in us (verse 23); there is then essential unity, between the believer and God, and also between one believer and every other.

Prayer for Unity: *Jesus prayed for the unity among the believers. Our unity lies in being a true believer. Unity should not be hindered between two believers who hold differing views concerning the details of our Lord's return. Notice that unity is a vitally important matter. In the last moments of our Lord's earthly ministry, He prayed for it. It is the way Christians are identified in a world where everyone 'does his own thing' and values personal independence and liberties above all else (verse 23). Here is the mark of the Christian community—unity. In verse 24 the Lord prayed for reunion. He will shortly be led away to His trial and execution. After His ascension He will no longer physically walk among His people, until they are reunited with Him. It is for this reunion that our Lord prayed. "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may see Me; for you did love Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).*

Finally, in verses 25 and 26, Jesus prayed He might continue to minister to His own, even in His physical absence. "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent me and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith You did love me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:25-26). His work of revealing the Father was done, and the disciples had come to know God through His life and ministry. And yet He desired to continue to reveal Himself in them and to abide in them.

The power of this prayer: *It is a great prayer which our Lord allowed His disciples to overhear in their hour of anxiety and distress. let us focus our attention on it so far as we are instructed by this prayer about prayer. This prayer must have had a tremendous impact on the hearts of the disciples in giving peace and assurance to their troubled hearts. If we believe in the One Who prayed it and in the sufficiency of His work at*

Calvary, we will not worry. We need to realize the value of praying for others. prayer for Others brings assurance, protection and peace of heart and soul. This prayer provides us with an excellent model for prayer on behalf of another Christian. It seeks the glory of God, even at the price of personal suffering, assured that what is for God's glory is ultimately for our good. It confidently petitions for divine protection, not from suffering, but from Satan, spiritual collapse, and opposition. It seeks a greater unity among true believers, and looks ultimately for a reunion with our Lord. While we do not know the precise program of God for our lives, or others, we are assured of the fact that God's purposes will be achieved: His glory, our good (Romans 8:28ff.), our sanctification and union with our Lord and other Christians.

Conclusion: *The entire Chapter 17 is Jesus' prayer. From this chapter, we learn that the world is a tremendous battle ground where the forces under Satan's power and those under God's authority are at war. Satan and his forces are motivated by bitter hatred for Christ and his forces. Jesus prayed for his disciples including those who follow him today. He prayed that God would keep his chosen believers safe from Satan's power setting them apart and making them pure and holy, uniting them through his truth. Two prayers of Jesus are great model prayers for us believers. One is Our Lord's Prayer that he taught his disciples and the second one is the priestly prayer that he prayed for various reasons. This prayer now includes everyone for all time, and not just the apostles. In the "high priestly prayer" of John 17, we can see Jesus praying for us directly and intentionally.*

Anecdote: *A voyaging ship was wrecked during a storm at sea and only two of the men on it were able to swim to a small, desert like island. The two survivors who have been good friends, not knowing what else to do, agreed that they had no other recourse than to pray to God. However, to find out whose prayer was more powerful, they agreed to divide the territory between them and stay on opposite sides of the island. The first thing they prayed for was food. The next morning, the first man saw a fruit-bearing tree on his side of the land, and he was able to eat its fruit. The other man's parcel of land remained barren. After a week, the first man was lonely and he decided to pray for a wife. The next day, another ship was wrecked, and the only survivor was a woman who swam to his side of the land. On the other side of the island, there was nothing. Soon the first man prayed for a house, clothes, more food. The next day, like magic, all of these were given to him. However, the second man still had nothing. Finally, the first man prayed for a ship, so that he and his wife could leave the island. In the morning, he found a ship docked at his side of the island. The first man boarded the ship with his wife and decided to leave the second man on the island. He considered the other man unworthy to receive God's blessings since none of his prayers had been answered. As the ship was about to leave, the first man heard*

a voice from heaven booming, "Why are you leaving your companion on the island?" "My blessings are mine alone since I was the one who prayed for them," the first man answered. "His prayers were all unanswered and so he does not deserve anything." The voice rebuked "You are mistaken! He had only one prayer, which I answered. If not for that, you would not have received any of my blessings." The first man asked the voice, " Tell me What did he pray for that I should owe him anything?" The voice said "**He prayed that all your prayers be answered**" The moral of the story is that our blessings are not the fruits of our prayers and hard work alone. There are so many known and unknown people praying for us. We also need to pray for the known and unknown people. It is a great charity that we are doing remotely and it is our christian responsibility in the mystical body of Christ.

Why do we pray? "More things are wrought by prayer that this world dreams of" (Lord Tennyson). Prayer changes things. Prayer gives us hope. Prayer makes us happy. Prayer makes us less selfish. Prayer gives us victory. Prayer makes us spiritually strong. Prayer keeps us in the will of God. Prayer heals us from pain. Prayer draws closer to God. Prayer protects us. "Seven days with prayer make one **Week** and seven days without prayer make one **Weak**"

How do we pray? Various forms of prayer are presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2623-2649). These various forms include: a) Prayer of Blessing and Adoration, b) Prayer of Petition, c) Prayer of Intercession, d) Prayer of Thanksgiving, and e) Prayer of Praise.

- A. **Prayer of Blessing and Adoration:** A prayer of Blessing expresses our gratitude for God's gift and our acceptance. Adoration is our first attitude that we are God's creatures. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us.
- B. **Prayer of Petition:** It is the most usual form because it is spontaneous. We have many more things to ask for.
- C. **Prayer of Intercession:** Prayer of intercession is asking for God's grace on behalf of another person. It extends the Christian charity for others' wellbeing, including one's enemies. It promotes fellowship among the devotees. Saints pray for us.
- D. **Prayer of Thanksgiving:** Giving thanks to the Father for the favors received, the highest favor we have received is Jesus redeeming us on the cross. So, we give thanks to the Father by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become occasions of thanksgiving.
- E. **Prayer of Praise:** Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It gives him glory for who He is!

Richness and Wisdom of Lord' Prayer: Very many times we pray our Lord's Prayer. Do we really understand the richness and wisdom of this prayer? Let us reflect on each portion of this beautiful prayer.

Our: We start the prayer with the word 'our' which means we should be united in our mind and heart with the praying community. There should be no room for selfishness and division in our prayer.

Father: We pray 'Father' which means we should approach God as our dear Father and we as his beloved children.

Who art in heaven: We pray 'who art in heaven'. It means that we should be conscious of our heavenly life each and every moment of earthly life and accordingly live our daily life in holiness and godliness.

Hallowed be Thy name: We pray 'Hallowed be thy name'. We should revere his holy and powerful name because when we esteem and honor his name, we revere God himself.

Thy Kingdom Come: We pray 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. It is a reminder that we need to pray for God's plan for our lives, families, homes, communities, society, church and the world at large. We are to pray for His will to be done, not for our desires alone.

Give us this day our daily bread: We pray 'Give us this day our daily bread'. By this we humbly acknowledge Him as the provider of our daily needs. We should not be overanxious about tomorrow. We live day by day, one at a time.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us: It reminds us to confess our sins to God and turn away from sinful thoughts, words and actions and also wholeheartedly forgive others as we experience His forgiveness.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver from every evil: The last part of this prayer is very important because we are surrounded by evils everywhere. Power, position, luxury, money, consumerism, sex, internet and social media are so on. We need protection from the attacks of the devil.

The Character of St. Peter in John 18

Jesus loved Peter and He reciprocated the same during the public ministry. They spent more time together in comparison with the other disciples. Peter was emotionally attached to Jesus and that is the reason when Jesus was arrested, Peter showed his tough side to the enemies and He wanted to protect Jesus and so he pulled a sword and wounded the high priest's servant. But Jesus told Peter to put away his sword and allow GOD's plan to unfold. If Peter had had his way, Jesus would not

have gone to the cross and God's plan of redemption would have been thwarted. Jesus asked Peter, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? The cup means the suffering and death that Jesus would have to endure in order to atone for the sins of the world. Jesus had used the same metaphor in Matthew 20:22 when prophesying of the future suffering of James and John.

What is the meaning of Cup in Hebrew tradition? When a young man and woman were to be betrothed (engaged) for marriage, the groom poured wine into his cup and invited the woman to drink of it. The choice was hers: If she drank from it, she was considered betrothed to the young man. She was agreeing to experience all the things that his life entailed, the good as well as the bad. When the woman drank of the cup, she drank of the marriage covenant and accepted it. As Jesus sat at His last Passover with His disciples, He poured wine into His cup and blessed it, telling the disciples, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27-28). By literally drinking from His cup, they each accepted the terms of the New Covenant. It was a symbolic betrothal or engagement of the church to Christ. This is part of what we commemorate with each Eucharistic celebration—our spiritual engagement to Christ.

3 Denials of St. Peter: Jesus is being abused and seated inside and Peter is standing outside. Peter expressed his faith in Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. He further said, "Lord, where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". However tragic moments of Jesus made the disciples very much afraid and Peter was no exception to this fear. He started disowning Christ, which is a serious sin but Jesus forgave him (21:15-17). To Peter's credit, although all the others had fled (Mark 14:50), Peter still followed Jesus after His arrest, but he kept his distance so as not to be identified with Him (Mark 14:54). There's no question that fear gripped him. From the courtyard, he watched Jesus being falsely accused, beaten, and insulted (Mark 14:57-66). Peter was afraid Jesus would die, and he was fearful for his own life as well. The world hated Jesus, and Peter found that he was not prepared to face the ridicule and persecution that Jesus was suffering. Earlier, Jesus had warned His disciples as well as us today, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18; cf. Matthew 24:9). Peter quickly found he wasn't nearly as bold and courageous as he had proclaimed, and in fear he denied the One who had loved him.

We might well wonder why Jesus allowed Peter to fail so miserably and deny his Lord three times that night. Jesus revealed to Peter that Satan had asked for permission to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31). Jesus could have easily protected Peter and not allowed Satan to sift him, but Jesus had a higher goal. He was equipping Peter to strengthen his brothers (Luke 22:32). Not only did Peter strengthen the other disciples,

but he became the pillar of the early church in Jerusalem, exhorting and training others to follow the Lord Jesus (Acts 2). And he continues to this day to strengthen us through his epistles, 1 and 2 Peter. As with all our failures, God used Peter's many failures, including his three denials of Christ, to turn him from Simon, a common man with a common name, into Peter, the Rock. No sin is too great for Jesus to forgive if we truly repent. He forgives our worst sin if we turn from it and ask his pardon. We can easily get angry at the Sanhedrin for their injustice in condemning Jesus but we must remember that Peter and the rest of the disciples also contributed to Jesus' pain by deserting him and disowning him. While we are not like the religious leaders, we are all like the disciples because perhaps we may have been/ are guilty of denying that Christ is Lord in vital areas of our lives or of keeping secret our identity as believers in times of pressure.

Significance of Rooster Crowing: In biblical days, roosters were common within the towns and cities. The first crowing often occurred around midnight. The second crowing could be expected before daybreak. Jesus' prediction about Peter's denials meant that Peter would have opportunities all night long to repeat the validating claim he made when he told Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). However, despite three opportunities, the overconfident Peter denied His Lord every time. When daylight came, Jesus' mock trial was over, and Peter lost his opportunities to defend Jesus as he had claimed he would do (Mark 14:29).

Crowing times (3 times in Matthew, Luke and John and 2 times in Mark) Morning was not the only time roosters crowed. As anyone who has lived on a farm can attest, roosters crow whenever they feel like. A rooster can crow when he senses danger, when another rooster threatens his flock, or simply because he got his days and nights mixed up. So it is perfectly understandable that Jesus would have been precise in prophesying to Peter that a rooster would actually crow twice during the time Peter was denying Him thrice in Mark 14:66-72. Mark does not in any way contradict the other accounts, which only mention the second crowing. The second crowing was the most important one, since it marked the end of Peter's testing.

Rooster symbol: Because of the prominence of the story of Peter and the rooster, recorded in all four Gospels, the rooster, or cock, has at times been used as a Christian symbol. Some churches even place a rooster on the top of their tower. Used as a symbol, the rooster represents **the weakness of man** and the grace of Christ in forgiving sinners. Peter three times denied his Lord and Savior, but he was forgiven, restored, and sent out to live for the glory of God (John 21:15-19). The rooster reminds us that Christ extends hope to sinners everywhere.

The rooster, used as a Christian symbol, can also represent **watchfulness**. Before His arrest, Jesus prayed in the garden and asked His disciples to do the same. But He found them sleeping, and He said to Peter, "Are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Mark 14:37-38). Later that night, Peter did indeed fall into temptation, and the rooster's crow served as his spiritual wake-up call. The rooster can still be a reminder today that we must watch and pray and live as children of light: "You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

The rooster could also be seen as proclaiming **the start of a new day**. In Christ, all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). A new day of forgiveness and grace has dawned, and believers, saved by grace, proclaim the good news to a world in need of light. Jesus is never impressed with our words such as Peter expressed in Matthew 26:35. Jesus knows our hearts better than we do (Matthew 9:4; Luke 9:47). But, even though He knows the ways we will fail Him, He does not stop loving us or using us to further His message. Those rooster crowings must have haunted Peter for many years and may have helped him stay humble, watchful, and committed to his calling. Our past failures can be battle scars in our lives as well, propelling us toward greater devotion and stricter loyalty to Jesus when we recall how much we have been forgiven (Luke 7:47).

The Six stages of Jesus' Trial Before Jewish Authorities and Roman Authorities

Before Jewish Authorities:

1. **Preliminary Hearing before Annas** (John 18:12-24).
2. **Hearing before Caiaphas** (Matthew 26:57-68) It was done secretly at night with full of illegalities and a mockery of justice.
3. **Trial before the Sanhedrin** (Matthew 27:1-2). This Sanhedrin is a body of 70 members of the Jewish council

Before Roman Authorities:

1.First hearing before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5). The religious leaders had condemned Jesus to death on religious grounds but only the Roman government could grant the death penalty and thus they took Jesus to Pilate the Roman Emperor who saw at once the innocence of Jesus but he was afraid of the uproar caused by the religious leaders.

2. Hearing before Herod: Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, the ruler of the Galilee. Herod was eager to see Jesus to do a miracle but when Jesus was silent, he sent him back to Pilate.

3. Last Hearing before Pilate: (Luke 23:13-25) Pilate did not like the religious leaders. He was not interested in condemning Jesus because he knew that Jesus was innocent. He made four attempts to deal with Jesus (1) He tried to put the responsibility on someone else in 18:31 (2) He tried to find a way of escape so he could release Jesus in 18:39 (3) He tried to compromise by having Jesus flogged rather than handing him over to die in 19:1-3. (4) He tried a direct appeal to the sympathy of the accusers in 19:15. We share a common humanity with Pilate. At times we know the right and choose the wrong. He had his moment in history and we have our moments. Great evil can happen when truth is at the mercy of political pressures.

Character study of Pilate: As a Roman governor, he was in charge of Samaria and Judea from AD 26-36). He was unpopular with the Jews because he had raided the temple treasuries for money to build an a channel for conveying water. He did not like the Jews but when Jews, the King of the Jews, stood before him, Pilate found him innocent. Pilate knew what was going on and he knew that the religious leaders hated Jesus and he did not want to act as their executioner. They could not execute him to death themselves- permission had to come from Roman leader. Pilate asked Jesus a straightforward question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus answered clearly: He is a king but his kingdom is not of this world. Jesus spoke the truth and Pilate know that he was innocent of any crime. What is truth? Is another immortal question coming from Pilate to Jesus. Pilate was cynical. He thought that all truth was relative. Unfortunately to any people in our times, truth is relative due to the influences of moral relativism and false freedom and convenient philosophies. They go by the majority opinions and their own convictions. When there is no basis for truth, there is no basis for moral right and wrong. Justice becomes whatever works or whatever helps those in power. In Jesus and his Word, we have a standard for Truth and for our moral behavior.