

Jesus Prayed For You. Yes, You!

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[0 : 00] And that's page 1085 in your Bibles. Jesus prays for all believers. My prayer is not for them alone.

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

I have given them the glory that you gave me. That they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. So that we may be brought to complete unity.

Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory.

The glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you.

[1 : 07] And they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Good morning and let me add my welcome to you as well.

It's good to see you all. Well, John Knox, the man who brought the Protestant Reformation to Scotland, apparently asked for this passage to be read to him when he was on his deathbed.

It's an amazing prayer that Jesus prayed. And it's not difficult to see why he might ask for it on his deathbed because it helps us to really focus and reorder our priorities in our lives and helps us also to face death with our confidence of a sure hope beyond.

So before we begin, let's join together and pray. Let's ask for the Lord's help. Father, what a joy it is to gather together as your people this morning under your word, under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 35] You know each of us here this morning. You know the circumstances of each of our lives. You know the baggage that we bring. You know what's on our hearts.

You know our concerns. And we ask that you would speak into each of our lives and move in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and enable us to respond rightly by submitting to the authority of your word and the lordship of our Savior.

For we ask it in his blessed name. Amen. Well, on the night before Jesus died, Jesus prayed for you.

He prayed for each of you here if you're a Christian. That's what it says here in verse 20. Jesus prayed for you. My prayer is not for them alone.

It's not just for the 11 disciples there in the room with them, but for all who will believe in me, future tense, through the apostolic witness of those first disciples.

[3 : 49] So Jesus is praying down through the centuries, down through the generations for all believers from all over the world. And if you're here this morning, you're a Christian, and you should know that Jesus prayed for you as he went to die for you.

And isn't that amazing? Isn't that an astonishing act of love? He should be not so concerned with his own death and suffering, but concerned to pray for believers down through the centuries, and even here in this room today.

It's a special thing to know that you've been prayed for. And that's what I guess Martin was saying about the archbishop being prayed for by 100 people through the night before he spoke.

And I'm sure that there'll be many folk in this room here today who would gladly attest to that and acknowledge a debt of gratitude to loved ones for the faithful prayers that you've received through your lives.

I wouldn't be standing here today in front of you if it hadn't been for the faithful prayers of my family, some of whom prayed for me long before I was even born.

[5 : 10] It's an amazing thing to know that you've been prayed for. Very often it's in our knowing the specifics of what's been prayed for us that can be so important in terms of how we are shaped by these prayers.

When my gran was just a young girl, a teenager, a girl of 13 years old, I think, she'd written to express her birthday greetings to her aging grandpa.

I suppose that makes him my great-great-grandpa. But she'd written a birthday card to him, and he'd sent her a letter in reply, and a letter that she treasured all through her life, and the only letter she kept through her life.

And he started off like this. And so this old man, fast approaching death, finished the letter by sharing with her his prayer for her life and his hope for her life, that she would place her trust always wholeheartedly in the Lord Jesus.

And then, like some Old Testament prophet of old, intent upon securing the blessing of the Almighty Lord on this growing girl, the blessing of God, he closed the letter simply by saying this, I love you very much, and I'm anxious that you live a rich and beautiful life.

[7 : 05] That was his desire for her. That was his prayer for her. And that is indeed the kind of life she lived as a Christian for Christ, a rich and beautiful life.

So much so that when it came to the eulogy at the end of her life, nothing expressed so well the life that she'd lived than just that phrase he'd used, a rich and beautiful life, just as he had prayed for her.

The prayer of a righteous man, we're told in the book of James in the New Testament, the prayer of a righteous man is effective and powerful.

Well, if that's true of my great-great-grandfather, then how much more so of Jesus. This is the effective and powerful prayer of the righteous man, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is speaking with his father in the night before he was crucified, and in this prayer, we're catching a glimpse of what his priorities are and all that matters to Jesus on the eve of his death.

[8 : 13] Now, his prayer would be effective even if it hadn't been written down. But there's something about the fact that we have it recorded for us in John's Gospel, something about our knowing what Jesus prayed for us that shapes us and inspires us.

And so if we're followers of Jesus, then we want to be paying attention, don't we? Our priorities should be shaped by Jesus' priorities. And this should transform us and recalibrate us in all sorts of ways, how we think about each other, how we think about ourselves, how we pray for each other, how we spend our time and our money.

And if that's not how you would describe yourself this morning, if you're looking in on the Christian faith from the outside in, as it were, then you might find it helpful to use this time this morning to reflect on what your own priorities in life are.

What is it that makes life meaningful for you? Are you confident that these loves will live up to their expectations and meet your deepest longings?

It's worth reflecting on these things, I suppose, whoever we may be. But right at the heart of these verses, Jesus prays for us in verse 24.

[9 : 41] Father, I want those you have given me. In fact, it's stronger than that. I desire those that you have given me to be with me where I am, to see the glory given me by you.

Well, that's the end goal of the gospel. This is a prayer then for our deepest spiritual need to be restored to God's presence and one day see Christ face to face.

So we've got two headings this morning. We're going to be thinking about how Jesus prays to that end for, firstly, gospel unity in verses 20 to 23.

Jesus prays for us to be united in the truth and to receive his glory. And then secondly, he is praying for our gospel destiny in verses 24 to 26.

Jesus prays for us to be with him and see his glory. We're basically covering the gospel means and the gospel end.

[10 : 52] First then, gospel unity. Jesus prays for unity, for oneness. Just look again with me at the text.

Verse 21, Jesus prays that all believers may be one. Verse 22, he's given us his glory that we may be one. Verse 23, so that they may be brought to perfect unity.

So Jesus prays for unity. But if you were here last week, you'll remember that Andy highlighted for us last week that we need to take great care not to misunderstand us.

This idea of unity has often been misused and abused. throughout the centuries by liberals within mainstream denominations where truth is sacrificed on the altar of a false conception of unity.

And so we've heard the great example that Martin shared of Gathcon, a righteous unity coming together under God's word and under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

[12:08] Well, there's a false kind of unity too. In 2021, the St. Andrew's Declaration was signed between the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church, a union of two of the most liberal denominations in the world, united in their disregard for the authority of scripture.

Well, it is not this kind of ecumenical unity that Jesus is here praying for. So let's first remind ourselves who is included in Jesus' prayer for unity.

And we're going to look, just take a step back and glance at the chapter as a whole. In his prayer for unity, Jesus prays for those, verse 3, who know God.

He prays for those, verse 6, given to him by the Father. We can see that also in verse 9 and 24.

Those, verse 8, who have accepted God's words, who in verse 15 to 16 are in the world, but not of the world.

Those who are sanctified, in verses 17 to 19, by the truth. And who, in verse 20 of our passage, are those who believe in Jesus through the gospel message that has been passed down through the centuries to every generation since those first apostles.

[13:36] So this is definitely not some vague prayer for a notion of unity that you can basically take to mean whatever you want. Jesus immediately specifies what kind of oneness he has in mind.

And it's a unity that is defined in verse 21 as being like the unity that the Father and the Son share, just as you are in me, Father, Jesus says, and I am in you.

So whatever else this may mean, it's a unity of reciprocal, shared purpose and undivided intent. that the Father and the Son enjoy as the Son accomplishes the will of the Father in bringing his purposes of salvation to completion.

And it's a unity that is further defined in verse 22 as coming from the glory that Jesus gives us, which in turn stems from the glory that the Father gave the Son.

So the source of our unity is the glory that issues from the very fountainhead of the essence of God.

Our unity with each other is controlled then by our unity with the Father and the Son.

[14:58] In other words, the horizontal oneness that we enjoy with each other as Christians in the church is a function of our vertical oneness with God through our union with Christ.

Now what does all that mean? Well, probably more than we can begin to get our heads wrapped around, but what we need to realize here is that these are not merely some abstract truths that sound amazing and mesmerizing that Jesus is praying here, but that this is about us.

this is the gospel for us. Because once we grasp this, that we're united to each other because we are first spiritually united to Christ.

That's what it says in verse 23. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. And once we grasp this, well, it changes how you look at yourself in the mirror.

It will change how you see the person sitting next to you here in church this morning. It will change the way we think about serving each other and signing up for rotas.

[16:16] It will change how we think about praying for each other. So to help us a little bit think more about what that means, I want us to imagine that we're there in the room with the disciples and Jesus, right there in the room with them.

Now at this point, in time, the disciples are not yet in Christ. And it's obvious when you think about it, it would be literally impossible for them to be in Christ when they're in the room.

Jesus stood bodily, external to them, physically by their sides. So it wouldn't be possible for them to be in him until after Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

So up until this time, the disciples kept together with Jesus as a closely knit group of individuals, but no more than that.

But soon, another completely different kind of oneness was going to be formed in answer to the very prayer that we've just heard read, that this righteous man, Jesus was now praying in the room.

[17:29] And the extraordinary result of Jesus' prayer is that these disciples and all subsequent believers, ourselves included, we are all in Christ by the Spirit.

And it's being in Christ which distinguishes us from non-believers. It's what distinguishes us as Christians from the world.

and it's as Christ dwells, it's as Christ dwells in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that we're brought, verse 23, to complete unity.

And it's as Christ dwells more fully than in our hearts that we find ourselves led ever more deeply to the enjoyment of our union with each other as we are perfected into one.

That's not all. Because there is purpose to this unity. That's what Jesus is praying at the end of verse 23. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved me as you, Father, have loved me.

[18 : 47] It's as we are united with each other and live lives that exhibit that oneness to the onlooking world, that our unity becomes a witness to those around us.

And so that should be a great encouragement and a great inspiration for us here at St. Silas, that Jesus deeply cares about our unity, our oneness in the gospel.

He cares about how we relate to one another. He cares how we spend time with each other over coffee after this service, how we serve one another, how we invite each other into one another's homes, how we invest in each other's lives.

And it's as the broken and fractured world around us seizes that it can be a most striking witness, this disparate assortment of people here at church of all different ages, of all different stages from all over the world, from all sorts of different backgrounds, who would, apart from the cross, perhaps not have very much in common with each other at all.

But in union with Christ Jesus, we experience the most profound unity even here. And now, God achieves his purpose in bringing together this fragmented world by uniting a people for himself in Christ.

[20 : 12] This then is a rich and beautiful life that we can enjoy together even now, but which will be perfected one day in glory. And it is to that end goal which we now turn.

So this is our gospel destiny in verses 24 to 26. Just follow along with me again in verse 24.

Remember, this is us catching a glimpse of what Jesus' absolute priorities are.

Jesus prays in verse 24. I want those you have given me to be with me where I am.

So this is Jesus' earnest desire that we should be in his presence, in the very presence of the living God.

By the way, when we think of heaven, what do we think of? Perhaps we think of harps, pavements paved in gold.

[21 : 24] It's an imagery we find elsewhere in the Bible. I've heard it remarked that a good city planning department could get that done now. You might need to raise the taxes, churches, and if it was Glasgow City Council, you'd probably be raising a few eyebrows as well if you didn't attend to the potholes first.

But this is an altogether different picture of heaven that Jesus is painting for us. One that stretches our Christian imaginations to the very limits.

In the words of the old hymn, face to face with Christ my Savior, face to face what will it be. The sight of that glory to us as yet unimaginable will bring home to us what now we see only dimly, to bask in the glory that he had with the Father before the world was created, the same glory that emanates from the very essence of the God then which will be made visible to us in the unshielded glory of Jesus Christ himself in the new heavens and the new earth.

It's there that we will join with all the saints from all over the world and down through the generations perfected in our union with Christ, perfected in our unity with each other. Brought to perfection then in consummative blessedness, experiencing in an eternal and glorified way the pure enjoyment of being in God's presence where we shall behold Christ face to face.

Now isn't that an amazing thought? For now we walk by faith, not sight, but there we shall finally see him.

[23 : 21] Now we can experience something of his presence and have a real relationship with God now, but there we shall finally be with him.

So what difference will that make? Well, all the difference in the world. And an imperfect illustration can be drawn from human relationships.

We've all experienced what it is to be geographically separated from the ones we love through work or study. for some of us because we've had to leave war zones or hostile governments or whatever

it might be.

But one way or another, we all know what it is to be apart from someone who's very close to us and dear to our hearts. Now there are many different ways that we can communicate with each other in this day and age and we'd had to get used to that, didn't we, in the pandemic.

We can communicate, encourage, even express our love to others long distance through social media, email or phone. And these things are all great up to a point.

[24 : 32] But they're not the same, are they, as being directly face to face with our loved ones, greeting and hugging them at the airport tournament or seeing them pull into the driveway and open the front door.

You can't send a hug down the phone. Emojis don't count. It's great to talk on the phone, but it's better by far to enjoy that face to face.

In God's new creation, his dwelling place will not be separated from his people. Rather, God will dwell directly with mankind.

This, then, is Christ's desire. This is our gospel hope if we make Christ's priorities our own. A yearning hope for a future with Christ, our Savior, that shapes our lives in the present.

So how can we be sure of that? Well, as we come to our close this morning, just consider the confidence in which Jesus prays in these last two verses.

[25 : 46] Jesus. This, remember, is the effective and powerful prayer of the righteous man, Jesus Christ, praying to his righteous Father as the only one who truly knows the Father, taking his prayer with him to heaven and pledging to make the Father known, applying the Father's love to the elect through the Spirit until the work is complete.

in this life, life and love can be painful and frustrating.

It doesn't last. In heaven, we will love each other perfectly. The best bit of all is that it's with God forever.

So whatever kind of life we lead now, it is a rich and a beautiful life we look forward to if we place our trust in Christ Jesus and believe in him.

So to that end, let us take inspiration from the way that Jesus prayed and let his prayed priorities shape our own priorities and our prayer lines.

[26 : 56] As we pray for our loved ones, we pray for our growth groups, our roots groups, as we pray for the next generations, let's pray on that we would be united in gospel truth and marvel at the hope we have looking forward to the day when we will be with Jesus, basking in his radiant glory forever more.

Amen. Now let's pray. We pray this for ourselves, we pray this for our children, our children's children, for the elect down through the centuries in words that have been prayed for generation upon generation from the book of common prayer.

O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your son Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light, grant that we who have been raised with him may abide in his presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory.

For Jesus Christ our Lord, to him with you and the Holy Spirit be dominion and praise forever and ever. Amen.