

Growing Spiritually
Praying as Jesus Commands and Prays
John 15.7, 14:12-14, 17:1-26
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Jesus wants us to pray and encourages us to do so with extravagant promises. Despite the promises we still find prayer difficult. We will consider three reasons for praying and three things to pray for that arise from Jesus' prayer in John 17.

I) Three reasons for praying

A) Someone is there listening

v 5: And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

The cosmos is, and has always been, deeply 'personned'

B) Someone has been praying for us all along

v. 9: I am praying for them...for those you have given me

v.20: ...I ask also for those who believe in me through [the apostles'] words.

"We love (pray) because He first loved (prayed for) us"

C) God is "on the move" in a big way now that the cross is behind him.

Jn 17.1,5: ...the hour has come...And now, glorify me...

Jn 14.12: ...greater works than these you will do because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do

History has taken a turn for the better.

II) Three things to pray for

A) That we will love the apostles

Jn 17.20-21: I do not pray 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...

Sharing experientially in what the disciples discovered about God's love in Jesus

B) That we will love each other

Jn 17.22b: ...that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may become perfectly one, so the world may know that you sent me.

A socially inexplicable church.

When Christians fight, no one pays attention to Jesus.

C) That we and our friends may discover how deeply God loves us in Christ

Jn 17.1: Glorify your Son (Let them see me—see my love for them at the cross)

Jn 17.24: Father, I desire that they also...may be with me where I am

Jn 17.24: ...those whom you have given me:

Profound love: The fact of and the reason for the cross

Particular love:

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Read Jesus' promises in John 15:7 and John 14:12-14. Why do our prayer lives not show the energy that such promises ought to generate?
- 2) It is hard to pray when we think that no one is there listening—that the material cosmos is all that there is. Look at John 17.5. It introduces us to a wild idea: Not only is someone there listening to us, but persons were there listening to each other even before we arrived on the scene. Read slowly through John 17:1-5 and reflect on the fact that God's deep story is not primarily about us finding him but about the persons of the Trinity loving each other.
- 3) Read John 17.9 and 17.26, and reflect on the fact that the Son has been praying for you all along—even before you ever started praying to him.
- 4) In John 14:12-14 Jesus promises that we will do greater works than he did, and that we will have all our prayers answered; and he says that this is so "because I am going to the Father" (by which he refers to the cross, resurrection, ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit). Why does the fact of the cross (and what follows) change everything so much? How are the spread of the gospel after Pentecost and your conversion "greater works" than the works Jesus performed? How does knowing this motivate you to pray?
- 5) In John 17.6-19 Jesus prays at length for his disciples (not directly for us at all, but for them). List what he prays for them. Why is the Father's answer to Jesus' prayer for his disciples important for us?
- 6) In vv 20-21, after praying for his disciples, Jesus prays for us. He prays that we may be "one" with them. What sort of unity is he seeking (after all they are dead)? What would it look like, practically speaking, for you to be one with the apostles? For the church, now and through the ages, to be one with the apostles?
- 7) Jesus prays that our love for each other will be like his and the Father's love for each other. What in practical terms would such love look like? Why is it so important, according to Jesus (look at the end of v. 21 and the end of v. 23)?
- 8) Reflect on the following: "We must pray for good theology (oneness with the apostles). We must pray for vibrant love towards each other (oneness with each other). But we must not stop there—for Jesus does not. We must pray for the "glory of Jesus"—for the eyes to see how much God loves us through his Son. We must pray for "eternal life"—which is "to know God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent"—John 17.3. We must join Paul in his prayer to "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowing, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19)."