

Jesus' Prayer for You.

²⁰ **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ 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.**

²² **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they 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.**

²⁴ **"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.**

²⁵ **"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ 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."**

Tuesday night my wife noticed the garage door wouldn't open. I looked around a bit to try to figure it out. Then I saw why. The spring coil that counter balances the weight of the door was broken. It was late so the next morning I called the head of our property board, Harris. By the time I got back that morning from the school closing service, the door was fixed. I had no experience or the parts to fix the door, so I called and Harris who called someone who could fix it and problem solved.

I am so happy I live in a praying Christian church. It is wonderful to hear someone say, "I am praying for you." That is not some mere psychological boost. Like me calling someone to fix a door I can't fix, the prayers of a righteous person, that is Christians, is powerful and effective. They are because we call on God for whom nothing is impossible, and who loves us and knows us so well, he knows when to say "yes," when to say, "no," and when to say, "later."

Do you know that Jesus is praying for you? He is in our gospel reading. Does this mean his prayers are more effective because he has an "in" with God the Father? No. Your prayers are no less effective than his. But it is special that the Lord of the universe cares so much for us that he prays for us. We will see today that God is answering Jesus' prayer. His first prayer is that we know and believe in him.

I. He prays that we may know and believe in him.

²⁰ **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ..."** Jesus had just prayed for his disciples soon to become apostles. He prayed the Father would protect them. He prayed that the Holy Spirit would teach them everything. He prayed they would go out and tell the world what they have seen and heard. They did that. But these apostles eventually died. Was the message to die with them? Jesus prayed that it wouldn't, and it didn't. God the Holy Spirit inspired some of them to put Jesus' teachings into writing so the message of Christ is still preached today.

The age of the apostles didn't end. We are still in the age of the apostles. The church isn't built on third hand knowledge garbled and altered as it was passed down for generations. The Church is built on the exact things God wants us to hear and know, the foundation of the apostles with Christ as the cornerstone.

Do you see God the Father answering Jesus' prayer here? Jesus was praying for those not yet formed in the wombs of their mothers. He is praying for you and me. And what is he asking God to do? That we may read and hear the inspired message of the prophets and apostles and believe in him. You are an answer to Jesus' prayer.

II. He prays that we may be one with him and the Father.

So we believe. What does that mean to us? Jesus explains. ²⁰ **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ 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.**

Jesus prayed that we might be one with him. What does that mean? Maybe marriage can help us understand. Marriage is when the two become one flesh. There is one thing I noticed about marriage. The longer the husband and wife are married, the more they become one. In the first year of our marriage, my wife and I had two different methods for boiling water. She would turn it up to high. I left it at medium to medium high. We teased each other about that. I would purposely turn the temperature down when she boiled water and she would turn it back up. Well, what happened after all these years of marriage? We are now one when it comes to boiling water. I boil it at high like she does. As the years roll by, husbands and wives become more and more one.

See what happens when we hear and believe the apostles' teaching? We become as unified with Jesus as the Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, are one. That oneness means sharing his glory. ²² **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they 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.**

Jesus gives you his glory. Remember, Jesus' true glory isn't because he raised people from the dead or made the blind see again. His glory is seen in him becoming nothing as a baby, growing up, living a perfect life under God's commandments. His glory is seen as he became obedient to death on the cross. We see his glory as he announced, "It is finished," as his death pays for our sins. Look at me. I am not glowing with the glory of Christ, and trust me, neither are you. But in God's eyes, we are as glorious as Christ because he gives us that glory, Jesus' glory as the perfect, holy Son of God.

And now there is complete unity among all believers. Be careful here. Don't say something Jesus isn't saying. He is not saying that there will be one big, magnificent church on earth where every Christian is a member and it is completely unified and the same. He is not saying that. Remember Jesus' response to Pilate? "My kingdom is not of this world?" Remember where this kingdom is located? Not in Jerusalem, not in Samaria or any one place, but in hearts that believe.

Yes, Christians yearn for unity. Christians have a strong desire to meet fellow Christians and to gather together. You can even argue that we need to. Sadly, though, we see divisions among Christians. For one reason or another, some don't hold to all the teachings Jesus gives. Some ignore or downplay things like Baptism, for example. Yes, we want to join together into congregations and synods, but we also must draw lines. I mean, if that person insists that Baptism can't save children, what are we suppose to do? Ignore what the Scriptures say so we can form a bigger church and have a bigger choir? Watch out, God says. Avoid those who bring a different teaching that what we learned from the Bible. We must draw lines.

The world sees this. The world mocks us that there are thousands of different Christian denominations. The world thinks we are divided. The world is wrong. Again, Jesus is not talking about one big happy single church on earth. He is talking about what is called the Invisible Church. Christians are not one because they belong to the same congregation or synod. They are one because they believe in Jesus and are saved. This Church has no address, no GPS coordinates, no central location. It consists of only believers where visible churches also contain hypocrites. It is as if God knew that frail humans will cause many denominations on earth. So, he came up with a better idea, the one, true, invisible Christian Church. And here is the real comfort. Anywhere the Bible is used and the sacraments administered, there you will have believers. This means I point the errors of this church body or that based on the Bible, yet I go to bed at night knowing that there are believers there, too, because the Bible is used. The world sees hundreds and thousands of different Christian denominations. What does God see? He sees one Church, growing bigger and bigger each day.

III. He prays that we may see his glory.

Do you think God has answered Jesus' prayer? You bet. But he is not done yet. ²⁴ **"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.** Last Thursday we had church to celebrate Jesus ascending back to heaven and basking in his glory again as true God. Good. But Jesus is praying that we will see that glory soon. So Jesus is praying that God will protect us until we get there. Does this mean God will keep trouble and danger away from us? He has more than you realize, but it doesn't mean he will keep trouble completely away though he attaches a promise to use it for our good. But he does pray that God will lead us through this world to heaven. Then we will see this glory and not merely imagine it. There we will not struggle with sin and temptation, death or pain, argument or disunity.

But why leave us here a little while longer? ²⁵ **"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ 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."** God used the apostles to spread the message of Christ. They are gone now, but he is still using them as he shares that message through his Bible. And Jesus prays that the Father will use us to share that message so that the world may see the love of the Father in us and through us. He leaves us here so we take our turn in being the answer to Jesus' prayer, that more may hear and believe and be given his glory.

Martin Luther said of this very text before us today that it should be written in gold letters. You understand why. In it you learn that Jesus praying for you. In it you see him praying that you may believe and receive his glory through the forgiveness of sins. In it he is praying that the Father will protect you until you see that glory with your own eyes. Doesn't that make you feel better? Amen.