

Jesus Prays for You

John 17:11b-19

¹¹And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

In the Name of Jesus, AMEN.

Our Gospel text today gives us Jesus' High Priestly prayer. Jesus prays out loud for His disciples to hear His Words. He prays that we might hear His Words of victory, salvation and comfort, and He prays for them, and for you. It is important for us to notice that our Lord doesn't pray silently, but He shares His actual words recorded here in John's Gospel for His people who are in desperate need. Jesus at this time is about to be betrayed, and it is here that His troubled and even frightened and confused friends needed to hear the words of Jesus more than ever, so Jesus prays to the Father audibly so that this prayer goes into the ears and the hearts of His friends, whom He loves. What a wonderful gift to hear how our Lord thinks about us, and how He wants His Word in our ears and hearts, for "Faith comes by hearing". In the most frightful, confusing and difficult hours, Jesus is praying both with us, and for us. The purpose of the disciples hearing, and even our hearing this morning is the comfort that Christ Alone can bring. It is no small thing to know that Jesus is praying for you, that He intercedes for you, and speaks His Word of comfort of all sins forgiven to you as He did to His disciples, for He is the Prince of Peace. He speaks peace, He prays peace and it is accomplished, for He accomplishes it Himself. Here in this prayer recorded, Luther has put into simple words the purpose Jesus wanted to attain in our text: "In order that through the Word, caught with the ears and held in the heart, they be comforted, joyfully rely upon it, and be able to say: See, this is what my Lord Christ said, so faithfully and fervently he prayed for me, this have I heard from his mouth, etc. What is needed here is that one hold to the Word with his whole heart and take comfort in that."^[1]

Our sinful flesh, on the other hand always looks anywhere and everywhere but to the One who can truly bring comfort and peace. Our Old man, as the false religions teach, looks within for strength and comfort, where there is none to be found. For we do not fear, love and trust God above all, but rather we trust our own ability again and again, as though our failed track record isn't enough to deter us. We tell ourselves that we must find our own way out, follow our own path and pull ourselves up. Our Old man MUST do it himself, but this is absolutely false, and the way of the flesh, which only leads to death. The world encourages this by feeding us clichés and slogans that are pure lies and in the end doesn't lead us to life, but, as the way of the Law always takes us, on account of our sinful flesh, all the way to destruction. The wages of sin is death.

Our hope and comfort never come from within, but always from outside of us. Thanks be to God that the Gospel itself comes to us, outside of us, for the true problem of sin is in all of our hearts, the Scriptures declare. Despite all the meditating, and mustering of strength we can muster, there is no answer inside you and me. Peter is about to learn this, despite his prideful boasting to Jesus about his own strength, ““Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” This is the way of the flesh and the deception of the Old Man who’s only end is death. Shortly following Peter’s boasting, we all know the account of his denial of Jesus, but our Lord is the one who comes to the sinner, doing what you and I are unable to do, create faith. He does so through His very words which He speaks to us. This is why Jesus prays out loud, to be heard be all.

It is Jesus who prays first that the disciples be kept in the Name. “, *keep them in your name, which you have given me*” vs. 11 says. This is the name which they had seen, free the demon possessed, heal the blind and the lame, and even raise the dead. The name into which you are baptized. The name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit as Matthew tells us in Matt. 28. “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” Acts 4:12 This is the name given to Jesus by the Father, the One to save His people from their sins, for the name Jesus literally means Yahweh is salvation or Yahweh saves. This is the name called upon by the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, and all of the Prophets in the Old Testament, the Name who delivers, forgives sins and cleanses His people. This is the name of all authority and power “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,” Phil. 2:10. So in Jesus’ prayer for His disciples and **for you**, He is the not only the Name, but the One who gathers you to His name, and remembers you while still helpless, dead in your sins.

Prov. 18:10 tells us that “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*”

Jesus also prays that His word, which He says “*is truth*”, would continue to be given to His disciples. Now they had heard Him teach, speak, heal and perform miracles with His word, and for this to be given to them and to us is no small thing. It is also the cause, Jesus says, for the world’s hatred of the church. “¹³*But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*” Vs. 13-15 The world, which teaches that we can do it on our own, and we can solve our own problems, hates the Word or Gospel. The Word of Gospel that Jesus gives is the cleansing of the sinner, it is “all sins forgiven”. It is completely one way, completely God’s work plus no one. He needs no help, and we have nothing to contribute except for our sin and resistance, and the world hates this. Surely, there is at least cooperation between man and God for his salvation and comfort, the Old Man of sin asserts, but Jesus doesn’t pray here about cooperation, but speaks of pure gift, pure Gospel. “. *I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction*” It is Jesus, through His Word which is truth and makes the sinner Holy, or sanctifies us, delivering forgiveness and creating faith, speaking “It is finished!” to the vilest of us all. Therefor our Lord tells us, to “Fear not”, no more death, no more striving or works that need be done, for Christ has done it all and He has risen and is the Victor over sin, death and the devil. Here, this Easter Sunday after our Lord’ ascension day, we know that Jesus is with the Father, exalted, risen and victorious, and yet He is With US truly and certainly. He is FOR US most definitely! As Paul says in Rom 8 “*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*”

Jesus prays, and then Himself answers His prayer by being your Savior, your defense against every enemy. Jesus is your peace and your righteousness. Rather than condemning a sinner like you, it is Jesus who comes to you, speaking His Word of absolution to you through the mouth of a pastor, remembering His promise and the name He gave you in Holy Baptism to be with you always. It is again Jesus who feeds you His body and blood at the Altar and is present to forgive, comfort and strengthen, keeping you and all Christians in the one true faith. To Him be the glory forever and ever. In the Name of Jesus, AMEN.

^[1] Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). [*The interpretation of St. John's gospel*](#) (p. 1142). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.