

Sermon Draft

Text: John 17:11b–19

Sermon: “Jesus Is Praying”

What will you do if you are expecting to be gone from your home and loved ones? Many of us will have someone watch over our place with detailed instructions. Some of us know this very well. We tell the babysitter what to do; we do not want our children to starve or be deprived of sleep. Leaving copious instructions is a sign that we care about our property and family. The Gospel for today shows us how much Jesus cares for us. Right before his betrayal and death, Jesus prays to his heavenly Father. He was praying for the dear children entrusted to him—for you and me. And this prayer, often called Jesus’ high priestly prayer, is actually a demonstration of what Jesus is up to all the time since. Jesus praying for us the night before his crucifixion teaches us that our Savior is praying for us, yes, every moment right now.

This is actually quite amazing! When Christ was praying to his Father in our text, it was the last days of what we call his state of humiliation, the years Jesus did his saving work on earth, when he voluntarily chose not always and fully to use his divine attributes, his powers as God. But he did use those attributes when they contributed to saving us. Omniscience is one of Jesus' divine attributes; he knows everything. On this night, in our sermon text, Jesus is using his omniscience to know that this very night he was going to be betrayed and the next day die the excruciating death of the cross. Knowing that, what was Jesus' concern? Not himself, but us.

Anticipating his physical absence from his children, Christ wanted his Father in heaven to be with them and to protect them. Our Savior knew very well that the world will hate God's children, because they belong to Christ and they do not belong to the world. The world is controlled by the prince of this world. The goal of the evil one is to lead children of God away from the Lord.

Knowing the impending attacks, Christ fervently prayed for his followers.

The interesting fact is that God the Father entrusted these followers to Christ in the first place. Jesus did everything in his power to keep them safe. And another of Jesus' divine attributes is omnipotence, being almighty. The almighty Christ could have protected his children simply by taking them out of this evil world. But he didn't. Instead, he prayed for them: ***"I do not ask," Father, "that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one"*** (v 15). Isn't that interesting? Prayer is the *better* protection!

This prayer of Christ is known as his high priestly prayer because it reflects Jesus' role as our priest. The job of a priest in the Old Testament was to be the intercessor for the people, since people were sinful and needed someone to represent them to God. The earthly high priests were sinful as well, but God anointed them for his purposes.

The human high priests experienced the wages of their own sin, which is physical death. Our ultimate high priest, Jesus, is perfect and sinless. He did not deserve to die, but for our sake he chose to die the death of a criminal that we truly deserved.

That was the sacrifice our great high priest offered with his prayer to the Father. Because of that sacrifice, offered by God's own beloved Son, the heavenly Father listens to Jesus' prayer. So, did God the Father respond to our Savior's prayer to protect his children? Yes, Christ became the answer to his own prayer. First, God's wrath toward sinners was satisfied by our Savior on the cross. They were forgiven.

Second, his resurrection defeated the ultimate enemy, death. Death can no longer bully God's children. They might die physically, but they are protected by God.

What about Satan and his minions? Christ's victory vanquished them. They know they have lost the war against God. Yet, the prince of this world will do his best to harass God's elect.

God the Father dispatched the Holy Spirit to be with the children of God as they struggle in this world. The Third Person of the Trinity is strengthening the faith of Christians and preserving their lives.

The children of God not only have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, but they have fellow believers for mutual consolation. That is why our praying Savior asked his Father for unity among his children. The devil will try to destroy the Church by schisms and factions among Christians.

The fact is, even hell cannot overcome the Church. But true unity in the Christian Church can only be created by God himself. True unity is the divine act. You see, we are not talking about artificial and superficial unity, but true concord. We all know about the name *Concordia*. What does that mean? It means “from or with heart.” The hearts of believers are truly united in faith in Christ Jesus.

Our Savior not only prayed for us, but he continues to pray for us. Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God, imploring his Father to protect and unify us. The apostle John, who recorded this prayer of Jesus, also wrote in his first epistle, ***“We have [present tense] an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”*** (1 John 2:1). Jesus’ prayer in our text is ongoing; Jesus is still praying for us.

And Christ’s prayer is being answered even now. In not just the disciples’ lives, but ours. Christ not only forgave us, but he continues to forgive us and love us. Christ not only protected the disciples, but he is protecting us. Jesus not only bound the first Christians together in unity of faith; he still unites us as brothers and sisters in Christ—albeit sinful ones—with all who trust in Christ Jesus.

Our praying Savior will never ever abandon us. He is with us. When we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, his body and blood are there so we can taste him and be strengthened.

And when we face difficulty on this side of eternity, we remember that our home is in heaven and our praying Savior is also our coming Savior, who will keep his promise by coming back to take us to be with him in eternal peace.

Amen