

January 18, 2026 (Lesson 7)

JESUS INTERCEDES FOR HIS OWN

1. **To Believe the Father Sent Jesus** (John 17:1-10)
2. **To Remain Protected and Sanctified** (John 17:11-19)
3. **To Live in Unity With Christ** (John 17:20-26)

Central Truth: Jesus prayed that we would be one with Him as He is one with the Father.

Focus: Reflect on the community of the Trinity and participate in the love of the Father and the Son.

Evangelism Emphasis: Christians must pray for the salvation of unbelievers.

Golden Text: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” (John 17:11).

John 17 is a record of the Lord’s prayer for His disciples just before He was taken from them, given a rigged and largely mock trial, and murdered on a cross just outside Jerusalem. The chapter also contains an abundance of additional information that the young church needed to know about God, the Messiah, the church, unity, love, divine protection, and eternal life.

The first six verses establish who the prayer concerns: the Father who, because of love, sent His Son into the world to make atonement for sinners; the Son who was about to leave the earth and return to the Father; and a small band of disciples (learners) who, as “apostles” (Greek, *apostello*, “to send”), were being sent into the world to teach God’s love and tell the good news of eternal life.

There are those who propose Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. But each time Jesus spoke of intimacy with His Father or His mission from His Father, He made the claim. On one such occasion, He said, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27). In fact, Jesus was quite open about the subject of being God’s Son, beginning as a boy of twelve in the temple: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49).

In John 5, after healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus told a hostile crowd, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (v. 17), making them angrier. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him,

because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (v. 18).

But Jesus knew it wasn’t yet time for Him to “lay down His life” as an atonement for sin (see John 10:18). So He spoke plainly, telling the Jerusalem crowd that the Father showed Him everything He did (5:20), the Father had given Him power to raise the dead (v. 21), the Father had committed all judgment to Him (v. 22), and He will be the One to call the dead from their graves in the Resurrection (vv. 28-29).

1. TO BELIEVE THE FATHER SENT JESUS

A. Glorifying the Father (John 17:1-5)

¹ These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ² As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. ³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. ⁴ I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

After relating to His sad disciples the fact of His leaving them, Jesus began to speak to His heavenly Father. It appears Jesus began this prayer immediately after His discourse on the Spirit, revealing to us that He knew the time of His departure was at hand. There was a timetable He had to follow in carrying out the drama of redemption; and the time—the time for Calvary, the time for humiliation—had come. Jesus had already told His disciples in John 12:23 that the Son of Man had to be “glorified.” Now He prayed for that glorification to take place (17:1).

In the glorification of the Son, we also see the glorification of the Father; that is why Jesus, in this first request, prayed that He might be glorified. This was not a selfish prayer. The cross and crown would not only reveal the Son’s virtues, but the Father’s as well. All of the divine attributes come to full expression here. Notably we are made to see the Father’s righteousness. Only a

righteous God would have delivered up His only begotten Son. If the Father had not been righteous, He would not have so wonderfully rewarded His Son for His suffering.

In verse 3, Jesus expressed His desire that all people would “know” Him. This does not refer to abstract knowledge but to the joyful acknowledgment of His sovereignty, the glad acceptance of His love, and intimate fellowship with Him. To know Him in this manner is “life eternal.”

Verse 4 shows us “the deepest passion of [Jesus’] heart was the glory of God. The deepest passion of the heart of Jesus was not the saving of men, but the glory of God; and then the saving of men, because that is for the glory of God” (G. Campbell Morgan).

In verse 5 we see the second desire of the Son: the restoration of Himself to His preincarnate state. Jesus had emptied Himself of divine prerogatives when He became the God-man (Phil. 2:5-11). He had been tempted in all points as we are tempted (Heb. 4:15). He had known loneliness, hunger, hatred, thirst, and sorrow. Now He desired the Father once more to clothe Him with that power of which He had divested Himself. This desire would be fulfilled through His sacrifice.

Finished!

In John 17:4 Jesus told the Father, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” The word *finished* is the same word used by Jesus in His proclamation from the cross: “It is finished.” It could also be translated “It is paid in full,” “The contract is completed,” or “It is done.”

B. Given to the Son (John 17:6-10)

⁶ I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. ⁸ For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

Jesus’ disciples are those who are separate from the world. They have been given to Jesus by the Father. The distinguishing words in verse 6 are “thou gavest them me.” Morally and legally all

people belong to God, but those who accept Jesus become His inheritance. God gives to the Son those who believe in Him.

Jesus made three positive statements about His disciples in verses 7 and 8. They had willingly received and accepted the truths He brought them from the Father. They had realized and admitted Jesus came from God. They believed God had sent Jesus to be the Messiah. This is remarkable when the disciples are compared with the rest of the Jews.

Jesus' words "I pray not for the world" (v. 9) do not mean Jesus would never pray for the people of the world. (After all, He died for the sins of the world.) Rather, He was saying, "In *this* prayer I am praying for the constancy of the disciples."

Jesus wanted to reach the world, but He could do so only through His disciples. It was for these men, and the innumerable company that would follow them, that Jesus was praying.

\$ *List ways by which Jesus demonstrated His identity as God's Son to His disciples. How does He reveal Himself today?*

2. TO REMAIN PROTECTED AND SANCTIFIED

A. Prayer for Protection (John 17:11-16)

¹¹ And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. ¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Now that Jesus was about to depart, He had cause for concern. He knew of Judas' impending defection. While with the Twelve, He had led them as a good Shepherd; but He knew false

shepherds would appear, and already they were on the horizon. This prayer for His own was offered as if He were already seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. As their intercessor before the throne, He realized His disciples would be in a place of danger—indeed, “in the world” (v. 11). Therefore, He felt constrained to pray as He did, asking the Father to keep them safe from the world and the evil one. This was His third request.

Jesus also petitioned the Father to keep them in His name, that they might be “one,” as the Father and the Son are one. If the disciples of Christ—and such are we—ever expected to teach people about Jesus and to carry on the work He so gloriously initiated, then they too had to be as one.

Jesus acknowledged that Judas Iscariot, one of the original twelve disciples, had been lost “that the scripture might be fulfilled” (v. 12). While we do not understand fully the role Judas played in the eternal plan, we can be sure that no man is ever created simply to be damned, with no hope of salvation somewhere in his existence, and that the words “that the scripture might be fulfilled” refer to God’s foreknowledge, not foreordination.

From that sad aside, Jesus turned His thoughts back to His disciples and to their joy. He prayed “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (v. 13). Just before Jesus began His prayer for His disciples, He had explained what He meant here: “Ye shall weep and lament . . . but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (16:20, 22).

The Word of God is central to everything the church is and does. These twelve men were disciples because they had heard the Word (17:14) themselves and had believed on Jesus Christ as their Savior. Soon they would be commissioned, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). They were to go into a world they would be in but would no longer be a part of—a world that would hate them and seek to destroy them, as it had Jesus.

As the human body rejects the intrusion of foreign objects in order to protect itself, so the world hates whatever would challenge its way of life and attempts to destroy it. Because the world is evil, it hates the believer. At the center of that evil is Satan, whom Jesus called “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Jesus now asked His Father to “keep them from the evil” (17:15). “The evil” should be translated “the evil one,” referring to Satan, the enemy of our souls.

But how can believers be thrust into the world and rub shoulders with it every day and yet be kept separate from the world? Jesus answered that quandary with these words: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (v. 16). “Even as” means “in the same way.” We are to maintain our separation from the world in the same way Jesus did so we can be witnesses to the world.

Our Purpose on Earth

The taking of good people out of the world is a thing by no means to be desired. Though Christ loves His disciples, He does not presently send for them to Heaven, but leaves them for some time in this world that they may be ripened for Heaven. Many good people are spared to live because they can ill be spared to die.—Matthew Henry

B. Prayer for Sanctification (John 17:17-19)

¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. ¹⁸ As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

It is not enough for Christians to be kept from evil in the world. We must be sanctified or consecrated for our advance against evil and for the cause of Christ. Thus, Christ prayed that His own be set apart from the profane and the evil in the world so they might be effective witnesses to the world. This sanctification is by the “truth” (v. 17), which is the whole Christian revelation as

recorded in Holy Scripture. Just so far as we walk according to God's Word will we be separated from evil.

The *sanctification* of believers is related to two facts: first, with our work for Christ; second, with Christ's work for us. As Christ was sent by His Father as a missionary to this world, so Christ sends us as witnesses into the same world (v. 18). Christ had represented the Father to the world, and now we are commissioned to represent Christ to the world.

In verse 19, Christ refers to His work for His apostles and to the mission entrusted to them. He does for Himself that which is done for His disciples. The meaning is that He dedicated Himself as a sacrifice in behalf of others. The final act of His mission on earth was at hand.

§ *Why must Christ's representatives be "sanctified" before they are "sent"?*

3. TO LIVE IN UNITY WITH CHRIST

A. The Community of Believers (John 17:20-23)

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: ²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The community of believers is the *church* (the *ecclesia*, "the called-out ones"), "them also which shall believe on me through their [the apostles'] word" (v. 20). It is the local church, whose congregation is the church in its locality; and it is the church universal, the "people of God" of every nation, every race, and every era of time (see 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Community is defined as "a unified body of individuals." The church may be composed of people from extremely diverse backgrounds and experiences; but wherever there are believers, they are unified in the body of Christ, the invisible church, through common bonds.

The Lord prayed for the community of believers—“that they all may be one” (John 17:21). The unity of the church should be of the same essential nature as that of Father and Son, because the unity of the church is a result of the union of individual believers with the Father and the Son. The church draws its life from God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit and through the Word. It is begotten by the Word (James 1:18), nourished by the Word (1 Peter 2:2), and sanctified and kept by the Word (Eph. 5:26).

Jesus prayed, “I have given them the glory You have given Me” (John 17:22 HCSB)—“them” being the church. This is the glory, Jesus said to the Father, “which I had with thee before the world was” (v. 5). Such is His desire for complete fellowship with those for whom He has provided an atonement and given eternal life that He wants to share the glory of the Father with them. This is what Paul was clarifying when he spoke of our being “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16-17).

The mode of that spiritual unity among believers for which Christ prayed is defined in John 17:23: God living in Christ, and Christ living in the believers, and this so perfect spiritual unity may be attained. The aim of this unity is that the world “may know” the mission of the Son is by the authority of the Father, and divine love is the motive behind this mission.

The Invisible Made Visible

The life function of [the local church] is to love the God who created it—to care for others out of obedience to Christ, to heal those who hurt, to take away fear, to restore community, to belong to one another, to proclaim the Good News while living it out. The church is the invisible made visible.—Charles Colson

B. The Fellowship Desired (John 17:24-26)

²⁴ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, the world hath

not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. ²⁶ And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Here, the prayer of Christ has become an expression of His will, or desire, for the blessing of His own. This will for His own is twofold in its blessing: (1) that they may be where He is to enjoy His fellowship and He theirs; (2) as dependent on the first, that they may behold His glory, the glory He acquired by His work of redemption. This glory of Christ is the result of the Father's eternal love for His Son.

Verses 25 and 26 comprise a summary of the whole high-priestly prayer of Christ. The term "righteous Father" may be considered as an appeal to the justice of God, knowing He will surely do what is absolutely right. Two facts are then stressed in the summary: knowledge and love. Although the world had not known the Father, Christ knew Him, and His disciples knew the Father had sent the Son. This knowledge Christ had revealed to His own as He declared God's name and the divine attributes represented in that name. In conclusion, Christ desires that the divine love exemplified by the Father may be evident in His followers through the mediation of the Son.

§ *Describe the connection between Jesus' prayer in John 17:24 with His promise in John 14:1-3.*

THE LORD'S MANY PRAYERS

Our great model for prayer is Jesus Christ. He has left us an example, and we should follow His footsteps. D. L. Moody once said, "Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, but He did teach them how to pray." We can also say He did not teach His followers how to run churches or raise money, but He did teach them how to pray.

Jesus placed great emphasis on prayer. Our Lord's prayers are alluded to or quoted eighteen times in the Bible. In His prayers we see thankfulness, intercession for others, obedience, and serene

resignation to the will of God, His heavenly Father. We should pray because Jesus placed such inestimable value on prayer in His life. Prayer was to Him as natural as breathing.

Daily Devotions

- M. Jacob Wrestles With God (Genesis 32:22-30)
- T. God Hears Our Prayers (Psalm 116:1-7)
- W. Divine Friendship and Commitment (Isaiah 41:8-10)
- T. Jesus Prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31-34)
- F. Have the Mind of Christ (Philippians 2:3-8)
- S. Jesus Christ, Our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16)