

## SUNDAY MORNING 29 AUGUST 2021

### Jesus prayed for us.

#### **John 17:6-12**

*"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

As you know, we are listening to Jesus' farewell message before His death. It is found in John 13-16. Now after Jesus encouraged his disciples and said that they would not be left alone, for He was going to give them the Spirit of God to be with them and He would teach and guide them in the Word, then He prayed.

A few years back, we spent the whole year working through the Story. This is the Bible in story form. It really touched my life. There we learn from:

**The Upper Story – God's Story**

**The Lower Story – People in the Bible**

**Our Story**

The Upper Story tells the story of God. Who God is and how He deals with people. The Lower Story tells of God's interaction with man in the Bible. Adam and Eve, Moses, the disciples, etc. But because God's Word is alive and powerful and unchanging and incorruptible, it is also God's story about us. We read the Word and then we believe that God speaks to us through "the Story/Bible."

In this prayer, Jesus opens an amazing window on the "Upper Story" of God and how Jesus prays for the disciples in the "lower story," and how it takes meaning for us in our story with God.

## **The Upper Story**

Let's look at what we heard last week.

### **John 17:1**

*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*

The time has come. Jesus said that the time of His death has now come. This time was planned a long time ago in the Upper Story by the Triune God. Jesus calls this the time of glory for Him and for Father. The time has come for Jesus to say that "My glorious greatness" must be restored" so that through the victory on the cross He can display God's glorious greatness, so that the world will know who God is. Then Jesus goes on to refer to what is happening in the Upper Story.

### **John 17:2**

*For you granted him (Jesus) authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.*

It was decided in the Upper Story that Jesus has authority, all authority, over mankind and that He can give those whom God gives Him, those who believe in the salvation of Jesus, eternal life. This is unchanging over the centuries. God decided so in the Upper Story.

And now Jesus goes on and says what is decided in the Upper Story about eternal life.

### **John 17:3**

*And this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

This is the most wonderful news from the boardroom of heaven. That those who in the "lower story" know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, will experience eternal life with God. The moment, that second that you believe in the salvation of Jesus, so many things happen:

- Our sins of the present, past, and future are erased, and we are declared clean, pure before God.
- In that second, we are born again and are now children of God.
- In that second, we who are born again receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and He will be our Comforter is, and our teacher is. He teaches us all things about Jesus and God.
- In that second, we receive eternal life.
- And the second after, we receive free access to God and we can now call Him our Father.
- And more.

The most wonderful second in my life was made possible when God Triune in the "Upper Story" decided that in my story it would be so.

And then Jesus talks further about the "Upper Story" and His return to His heavenly position, where He especially plays the role of intermediary for God's people.

### **John 17:4-5**

*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

Please see who Jesus is and was and will be. From before the world's existence in the Upper Story, Jesus was and is glorified and that's where He is now.

Now Jesus' prayer goes and speaks from the "lower story," with Father in the Upper Story.

### **John 17:6a and 8a**

*"I have made your name known to the men whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me.*

*The words that you gave me I gave to them.*

It's as true whether Jesus reports back from the "lower story" to Father in the "Upper Story." We know this is not necessary because God knows everything, but Jesus prays this prayer aloud so that His disciples can hear it too. This summer, I'm going to pray. People often say that there is no need to pray, because God knows everything. Sometimes they talk again as if they think God doesn't know what's going on. But despite the fact that God knows everything, He often invites people in the "lower story" to pray and ask and tell.

This is a wonderful story. Jesus prays especially for the 11 men who stand or sit with Him. Jesus tells God that the men God gave Him in the "lower story," those who belong to Him, to them He gave the Words of God.

And what does it teach us in our story, that based on our faith in Jesus we belong to God, we are His, and because we are His, Jesus gives us the precious gift, God's Words. This book was not given to store dust. It's God's story with people, in the lower story. It tells of grace, love and goodness, and peace and faithfulness and so much more. It's a book that lives when you read it, because it's God's Word. Also, Father gave us God's Words through Jesus.

## **Lower Story**

Throughout prayer, God's story is intertwined with the lower story of the disciples on earth. Learn how the disciples react when God's story meets their lower story.

## **Obedience**

### **John 17:6 and 8**

*"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.*

*For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.*

It's as if Jesus were *saying*, "I did my work." He came to make known to men - God. He came to proclaim salvation for them in the name of God.

And now Jesus is saying, "*The people you gave me, these disciples, they believed it.*" And now we learn what faith really means, it means obedience. Faith in God is completely different from your faith or trust in something else. You trust the chair you're sitting on, but you're not obeying the chair. But when you confess that I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth and in His only begotten Son, who was born of the virgin Mary, crucified, and died and rose and ascended to heaven and will come again and in the Holy Spirit, then it just as well means I am obedient to Him.

Faith, love, and hope all end in obedience. And that's what Jesus is praying for. "*These people have taken your words to heart through Me.*"

You can also ask the question as I asked it. For real? Serious? Didn't they leave you completely just a few hours after that? Have we seen their "flaws," sins, mistakes, arrogance, etc. in the Bible?

That's the amazing truth about Jesus. He doesn't look at my and your sins and "flaws" and outbursts, He sees the potential. Just as the disciples' faith was often weak, mine and perhaps yours are sometimes weak. Sometimes we do not believe that God will help us, or sometimes we just wonder "is God real." But what is important to our story here on earth is obeying God's Word will make our weak faith grow.

It's as if Jesus is saying, "*I've seen their dedication and commitment.*" It's as if Jesus is praying for you and me, praying that we will take God's Words to heart. Jesus knows that you and I, sometimes struggle to believe and obey. What is he doing?

## **Pray for them/us**

### **John 17:9-10**

*I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.*

*10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.*

Listen to what is happening in the "Upper Story." Jesus speaks to Father, and then *says*, "Right now my focus is on these men you gave me." I wouldn't have chosen them. Uneducated men, deniers, and backstabbers. But God chose them and gave them to Jesus.

This is a wonderful conversation between Jesus and God. Why is he praying for them? Because they are God's. And because they are God's, they are incredibly important to Jesus. "All," Jesus says, "that belongs to God belongs to Me too." A close relationship between Jesus and The Father. Yours is mine and mine is yours. And why does He still pray for them? Because they glorify him. Through them, the world will see Jesus' glorious greatness.

Jesus talks to Father in the "Upper Story" about the disciples in their "lower story," but what about us?

### **John 17:20-21**

*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.*

Incredible thought. Centuries ago, hours before Jesus' death, He focused not on His needs, but on the needs of His disciples and of His followers through the centuries thereafter. Never has anyone prayed more powerfully for me and for you. Jesus cares about those who are His and God's.

What does He pray for them and for us? We know that He prays for one another that we must be one with God. It means to be in unity in spirit, soul, and body, in harmony, with God's Spirit. What is He still praying for?

### **John 17:11-12**

*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

I hear the compassion in His voice. He tells Father that because He is going back to His position, He will no longer be here, He will return to His position in the Upper Story. But

they, His disciples, and us His Followers, remain in the world, where the "lower story" happens, and here all sorts of things are going to happen to them and to us. Persecution, sickness, death, but Jesus prays "*keep them in Your name.*"

Your life might be in a mess. Sometimes you don't know where to take or leave. "*It never rains, it pours.*" Imagine what their lives were like at that moment. The most wonderful man who ever lived and will live on earth will be arrested within minutes after this and later killed Surely their emotions were up and down and their anxiety levels were "sky high." Then they hear Jesus pleading with Father for them.

Nothing has changed. Jesus prays for us and the things that make our lives miserable. Illness, death, loss, finances, jobs, etc. He prays for us who are one with Father and Him, for our protection and preservation.

The Greek word can be translated that way.

*to carefully take care of*

*to keep one in the state in which he is*

Jesus prays that Father protects us as a hen protects her chicks under her wings, keeping Father, Jesus' disciples, and His followers safe under His protection. And what He especially wants Father to protect us from is the evil one. He has a good plan for you and me.

### **John 17:15**

*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.*

I don't know what's going on in your lower story, I just know mine. And what I know Jesus is praying for me and you must believe He is praying for you too. And especially does He pray that we will not give in to evil, but that we will cling to Him.

### **Romans 8:33-35, 37-39**

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- In this prayer, we see the "Upper Story" of God and the "lower story" of Jesus' disciples and our story woven together.
- Jesus prays that Father will restore Him to His glorious greatness, so that He who have divine authority may give eternal life to those who believe in the salvation of Jesus.
- He prays that those who have come to faith in Him as Savior, the Son of God, would like to get to know God, the only true God better. And they want to know Him intimately.
- He prays that those who believe in Him will obey the Word and that those who know His name will be good bearers of His name.
- He prays and says that those who believe in Him, those whom God has given Him, are His and therefore God's. Amazing thought. You belong to the greatest King of all kings.
- And He looks out for you, so Jesus prays that Father will protect and preserve his disciples and us His followers, and then especially keep them from the evil one.

God's "Upper Story" and my and your story have not ended. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. Jesus prays for His, you and I, who believe. Obedience is not only an expression of our faith, but also an expression of our love for God. How do you show your love for God? Is it a feeling or is it an act? Love is an abstract thought? If an alien will show up here now and hear us talk about love, and it asks us what is love? How do you explain this? I will show it by doing something loving for someone or for it.

### **John 14:15**

*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

It is such a wonderful prayer that Jesus prayed for us, shouldn't our response to Jesus' prayer, who says "I am his" be, to listen to Him and obey and love Him and tell about Him.

Your faith, obedience and love are glorifying our Father and the Son and it is possible by the Holy Spirit. Your obedience and love for God displays His glorious greatness to a world hungry and thirsting for God.

This prayer touches my heart and I hope it touches your heart as well.