

There Is a Light That Never Goes Out

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[0:00] The evening leading up to Jesus' betrayal and his arrest and his coming crucifixion, this night continues to be filled with significance.

! Now let's remember what's happened so far earlier this same evening was when Jesus washed his disciples feet and he had promised the coming Holy Spirit.

He told his disciples that he is the vine and they are the branches and that they are to remain in him. He also instituted the Lord's Supper this same night.

And this is when he also said, in this world, disciples, you are going to have trouble. But take heart because I have overcome the world.

And it's at that moment that Jesus turns his attention away from speaking to his disciples and begins praying to the Father. This is John 17.

[0:58] And this is the longest recorded prayer we have of Jesus in Scripture. First he prays for himself and then he prays for his followers.

And as you would expect, the prayer of Jesus, every word is good, every word is meaningful, and each verse could be its own sermon.

Today we're going to be introduced to this special prayer and we're going to take note of some of the themes and some of the requests and petitions of Jesus. We're going to start by having Alice read the first 11 verses, John 17, the first 11 verses of Jesus' prayer.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

[2:15] And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them, and have come to know in truth that I came from you.

And they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Thanks, Alice. Let's pray. Father, as we are introduced to John 17, we are humbled.

[3:18] We get to listen in to a prayer between the Father and the Son. Father, we thank you that this prayer is recorded for us so that we can learn from it and be encouraged by it, and that the Spirit continues to bring to remembrance all that has been said, so that we can glorify you while we are on earth and in heaven.

Father, please bless this time. Help us to, in humility, learn at your feet so that we can draw closer to you and that you can draw closer to us.

It's in Jesus' name that we pray this. Amen. The hour has come. The hour has come.

Having finished the work that the Father sent Jesus to do, he is ready to return to his Father in heavenly glory.

But after his return to his heavenly throne, Jesus' followers who remain in the world will still have a lot of work to do. Jesus is saying, Father, my work is complete, but their work is just beginning. [4:45] Now, if you've been with us for a little while, you have grown fond of a couple idioms that we have learned.

What were some of those that we've learned so far? One of them was my favorite that was just recently said. In over your waiters. That's the one. That's the one.

I don't even care what other ones are said, as long as that one was in your remembrance. That is excellent. In over your waiters. There's another one I want to add to this particular sermon series. And it is the passing of the torch. You've heard this one. The passing of the torch. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, the passing of the torch?

Olympics. Olympics. Olympics. Good. Let's not give any other wrong guesses, because that's the one I was secretly hoping would be said this morning. Yes. Let's just stop while we're ahead.

[5:46] The Olympics. Now, it is interesting to find out a little bit about the torch ceremony with the Olympics. It's kind of fascinating. So, what happens with the Olympic ceremony, the torch bearing ceremony, is that the original torch is lit in Greece, in the ancient site of Olympia, and then it travels from there through thousands and thousands and thousands of torch bearers to the site of the current Olympic Games.

And when it's lit in the ancient site of Olympia, the torch is lit using the sun and a special mirror. And so, once that torch is lit by the sun, then it gets transferred between multiple torch bearers, who each have their own torch, but they are all carrying the exact same flame.

It's unbroken. Now, if you're anything like me, you might immediately have questions about this, and you might say, well, but hold on, what happens if one of the unfortunate torch bearers has to carry it, like in a rainstorm, or in like a really strong wind?

Because there are a lot of opportunities for this to happen. I looked it up, and this year's Olympics, which was in Italy, the torch bearing ceremony from Greece to Italy involved over 10,000 torch bearers.

[7:31] But one flame. And so, the way that they hedge against this danger of the light going out because of rain or wind or anything else, somebody dropping it, whatever it happens to be, is they have a backup original source that was also lit at the same time by the sun that's carried along the route in a lamp.

So, if one of the torch bearers' lights go out, fear not, the original flame has not gone out and relights the current torch so that that can remain alive.

So, the true light never actually goes out, the one that was set aflame by the sun. So, there are many torch bearers, but really only one light.

I want you to hold on to this passing of the torch imagery as we zoom in to several aspects of Jesus' prayer to the Father. Now, I'll say at the outset, this particular prayer of Jesus is not marked by a lot of petitions or requests.

In fact, near as I can figure, out of the 26 verses, only seven of them include some type of direct petition or request of the Father.

[9:10] That means that Jesus spends around a quarter of his prayer asking for something. For the most part, Jesus is simply communing with the Father declaring things that they both know to be true.

And I wonder if we ever pray like that. I wonder if we ever say things like Jesus says in verse 3, this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

We could actually pray exactly that. We know it, and the Father knows it, but we could pray exactly that prayer. This is eternal life. That I know you, and that everyone knows you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

We could pray like that. Or how about when Jesus says, I've completed the work that you sent me to do. Now, if this makes you uncomfortable, that's okay.

But, let's think about this. Could we pray something like this as our head hits our pillow? Lord, I saw the opportunities that you had for me today to serve you.

[10:32] And I endeavor to imitate Jesus today. And I pray that you receive glory from my actions today. Or even when you miss it.

could you pray, Lord, I saw the opportunities that you had for me to serve you today. And I, I did not, I did not do all that you would have me do.

And I praise you that you do not treat me as my sins deserve. I praise you that my salvation is not dependent on my faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of Jesus.

Jesus. Our time in prayer might, might increase if we commune with God like Jesus does here.

Yes, requests, but also just, I guess I could call it holy visiting. Just visiting with our Father. But of course, we will continue to bring our petitions and the Father delights to invite us to do exactly that.

[11:34] And we've already heard a few of these from the Lord's lips. Now, to be fair, some of the things that Jesus prays, only he can pray.

For instance, the first request that we hear, glorify your Son, Father. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

Repeat it a couple verses later. Verse 5, And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

And he also requested that the Father keep the disciples. That's verse 11. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one.

Now, some of that language is a bit confusing. Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

[12:37] The backdrop of this petition is that Jesus is recalling the glory that he had with the Father from eternity past. Being sent to earth was Jesus' mission, but the earth was not his home.

he was sent into the world for a time. This is why Jesus says earlier in John, as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Now, having completed his work, Jesus is now telling the Father, bring me back into the glory that I had before the first words of Genesis 1.

This is where I ultimately belong. Let's read verse 5 again. You can put this on the screen. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

He is ready to take his rightful place in heavenly glory, having accomplished all that the Father had sent him to do. But we could ask, what did the Father send Jesus into the world to do?

[13:57] Well, we don't have to guess because Jesus says many of these things as he's declaring the things that he and the Father both know to be true. Verse 2, he was sent to give eternal life to all that the Father has given him.

And he says, I've accomplished what you sent me to do. So, how does he do that? Well, with his perfect sinless life and his soon coming death and his victorious resurrection, they will accomplish this goal.

And Jesus is speaking as if it's already done. I've accomplished this work. And Jesus was sent into the world, verse 6, to manifest God's name.

I have manifested your name. Interesting language there. In other words, I have revealed the Father's character. I have shown what God is like.

Isn't that incredible? The question, what is God actually like? That question, the age-old question, what is God like? That is answered perfectly in the life of the Son.

[15:11] that's what God is like. Earlier this same night, interestingly enough, Philip, one of the twelve, struggles with exactly the same question.

That's why he says to Jesus, Jesus, show us the Father and it'll be enough for us. Show us what God is like.

Show us the Father and that will be enough for us. And Jesus' reply is, Philip, don't you know me? If you've seen the Son, you've seen the Father.

This is what God is like. And it's interesting because the world today struggles with this same question, but seems to ask it in the opposite.

Show us Jesus apart from the Father. That will be enough for us. But we can't see the Son apart from the Father, just as Philip learned, we cannot see the Father apart from the Son.

[16:24] All the loveliness of the Son that brings us comfort is the very loveliness of the Father. The Father's heart is to seek and save the lost

and to have patience on his children who stumble.

And this heart is showcased perfectly in the person of Jesus Christ. He has manifested the Father's name. That's why Hebrews says that the Son is the exact imprint of the Father's nature.

And that's why verse 6, Jesus confidently says, I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were and you gave them to me and they kept your word. and they know that everything that you have given me is from you. And now listen into the torch passing type of language.

Verse 8, I have given them the words that you gave me and they have received them and they've come to know in truth that I came from you.

[17:33] They believe that you sent me. You gave me the life-giving word, Father, and I have given it to the disciples. They now have what was in my possession.

They now have in their possession to carry in this world. And from here all the way through verse 19, Jesus continues to pray for his eleven disciples, asking the Father to keep them, to sustain them for the gospel work that awaits them after Jesus leaves the world.

Because they will need God's constant presence. As God's word is transferred from the Son to his disciples, Jesus prays in verse 11, 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.

Now this was a genuine prayer. Jesus was actually praying this sincerely, but he also said it out loud for the disciples' encouragement. They're right there listening in, and he knows it.

[18:51] they needed to be reminded time and again that Jesus will not leave them as orphans, as he had already said. And in the previous chapter he said that he will be sending the spirit of truth to be with them always after he departs.

This is how they will remain united to Christ because they would not understand this. They would think that with his death they are separated from Christ, but they need this reminder, my spirit will be with you, you will continue to be united with me.

His prayer continues in verse 12, while 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.

I have kept all of them and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction. Well, Jesus is talking about Judas here, who wasn't kept united to Christ, but does that mean that the tempter prevailed?

We just sang this this morning, right? And the tempter would prevail, no, Christ will hold me fast. So what happens with Judas?

[20:31] Do we say that the tempter prevailed? Well, far from it. Jesus just said this was to fulfill scripture. This was foretold in the Old Testament. This was always the plan.

Now, Judas is responsible for his actions, but even his betrayal of Jesus is under the sovereign hand of God.

So it would be a terrible error for us to think, well, Jesus tried his best to keep his disciples, and he got 11 out of the 12. That's pretty good. No, every one of Jesus' disciples who belonged to Jesus were kept by him.

Judas was not an exception. It was that he was not one with Christ. That was to fulfill scripture.

Peter. But then we can also stop and think, well, what about Peter, though?

Didn't he also deny Jesus this same night? Later, this same night, right after Jesus prays, I have kept them, and Father, keep them.

[21:54] we stop and think, wait a minute, what do we do with Peter? Well, Jesus also tells Peter, you are going to deny me.

This is also not a surprise, but that's not the end of Peter's story. Not by a long shot. In fact, I said this night was filled with significance.

Earlier this same night, Jesus says this to Peter, calling him Simon. This is in Luke 22. Jesus says, go ahead, put that one up, Simon, Simon, he says, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat.

But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. and when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

So first of all, Peter's act of weakness is no surprise to Jesus. He told Peter it was going to happen before it did, but ahead of his denial, Peter also heard Jesus say, I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail.

[23:16] And then he says with confidence, when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Not if, not if you turn again, but when you have turned again, when you have repented and come back in faith, strengthen your brothers.

And Peter does repent, and he does have a stronger faith, and he does encourage his brothers. The father did answer both of Jesus' prayers that night to keep Peter.

Couldn't we find some encouragement in this? Not if, but when you stumble, does that mean that your faith has failed?

That's not how Jesus describes Peter. Like he did with Peter, Christ continues to hold you fast. The tempter does not prevail.

So when you fear that your faith will fail, turn to Jesus again and again. Confess your sins to God because as we are told, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[24:34] Abide in Jesus just like the disciples were told to do as the branches to the vine. The father will keep us there.

Jesus' prayer is answered. And Peter and Philip and the others all needed to hear Jesus praying for them out loud.

And so he does father keep them in your name. And of course we can't sit in judgment over Peter and Philip because we need to hear the truth over and over and over again.

it's possible that you might say every Sunday we hear the same gospel over and over and I know it very well.

Maybe that's true. But here's a hard question. Do we live in light of that? Or do we need this constant reminder about the truth of the gospel?

[25:41] Do we live every day as if the gospel is lighting our way? Because I would say that we need this reminder over and over again.

I will say that I don't always live as if I'm carrying that truth with me like a blazing torch constantly lighting my path. But the light of Christ do we do we hide it under a bushel?

Remember this song? Do we hide it under a bushel? No. What are we going to do? My goodness. This is the best. Thank you.

The dollar that I gave you earlier to do that. You've earned it in full. Continuing in prayer, verse 13, Jesus says, but now I am coming to you and these things I speak in the world that they, my disciples, may have joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I, Jesus, am not of the world.

[27:02] Now this is a profound statement. Jesus was in the world for a time but he was never of the world.

The world was not where Jesus called home. He says, my kingdom is not of this world. This is not where I have a home to lay my head. And he says the same of his disciples.

They are also not of the world. They are in it but they are not of it. And if you are a true Christian that is true for you as well.

Even though you are in the world you are not of the world. You are set apart sanctified for Christ. And the best illustration that I've heard about this distinction between being in the world but not of the world came from an author called Watchman Knee.

Have any of you heard of this author? So Watchman Knee was a Chinese pastor and author in the early 1900s.

[28:15] Did a lot of work and was arrested for his faith in the early 50s in China and that's where he remained in prison for the final 20 years of his life.

I really do enjoy reading his stuff mostly because he has written some very small books and I have been able to finish them which is an accomplishment for me.

But in one of his works Watchman Nee he wrote a book called Love Not the World and in it he likens a Christian to a deep sea diver.

To illustrate what it means to be in the world but not of the world. And so he describes the deep sea diver as one who belongs above the surface of the water.

That's where he was made for. But for a time he can descend into the deep water as long as he has the constant lifeline of air from his home environment.

[29:31] He has to have special equipment and a special lifeline of air and he can do a task for a while but it's never really his home.

And so I want to put the quote up on the screen. This is what Watchman Nee says about the deep sea diver. He says he stays deep as long as there is a task to do and as long as he is supplied with the power to overcome the element around him.

But he does not belong to the element and it has no part in him. It doesn't matter how long he stays down there he doesn't end up growing gills or is any less dependent on the constant flow of air.

And this point is clear. This is true of the Christian. We may be in the world but this is not our home it has no part in us and for us to do the task that's ahead of us we need to be constantly dependent on the father above for our lifeline to do the work that we would do while we are in this world.

But never of it. This is never considered our home. The world may actually hate us because we are united with Christ.

[31:01] Jesus says the same about his disciples. But it shouldn't feel like a dilemma. Do we seek after the love of the world or do we seek after the love of our Savior?

God will do you have to make that decision. So Jesus prays for his disciples for that constant dependence on the father to keep them while they are ambassadors for Christ in a hostile world because this is where God has called them to be.

This is where the light of Christ must shine. verse 15 he prays I do not ask you to take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

There's his next petition of the father. Keep them from the evil one. But isn't it interesting that he says I don't ask you to take them out of the world. Father I'm not asking you to sweep them up into heaven right now.

And the first question I had when I read this is why not? Why not? Doesn't Paul say to die is gain?

[32:21] So that would be true actually. It would be preferable to be swept up into heaven rather than to remain in this dark world.

But we have to ask ourselves if all of the lit torches carrying the light of Christ and his gospel were removed from the world then where would the light be?

Remember God loves the world. That's why he sent his beloved son to save them. And now Jesus is sending his disciples into the world carrying his word to the nations.

Which is why right after Paul in Philippians wrote to die his gain he writes this verse if I Paul am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me yet which I shall choose I cannot tell I'm hard pressed between the two my desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better!

But verse 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account that's our answer it's true for the apostles!

[33:57] us yes it would be better for us to be in the full presence of Christ and apart from the hostile world but since we have air in our lungs we have work that the Father would have us do we are to carry the light of the Son of God in this dark world and we can trust and celebrate that he's using us to pass along the light of Christ to the next generation just as he used the disciples to carry the gospel to the generation after him listen to the transition in Jesus' prayer in John 17 starting in verse 20 Jesus says I do not ask for these only when he says these he's talking about the disciples the eleven he says I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word and he goes on to say that they may all be one just as you father are in me and

I in you that they also may be in us Jesus prays for those who will believe in him through the apostles witness guess who that is that is us I'm convinced of this and you can be convinced of this

too that Jesus had you and me in mind at this moment during his prayer and Jesus prayer is answered not only did God keep his word living and active throughout every generation before ours but if we look around at our brothers and sisters in this room and across our city and around the globe we see shining evidence of God's faithfulness continuing to unite all of his children to himself through faith in

Christ that they may be one with him after this prayer the apostles word handed to them by the Lord will ignite future generations to place their faith in Jesus let's not get used to this salvation belongs to the Lord and yet he delights in using us to carry his light in this world and that light has never gone out Jesus the true light has continued to shine from this dark night that we are talking about when he prayed and through the lives of his disciples and on into the future into the year 2026 and now we are ambassadors for Christ we are one with him and he continues to be the true light in the world and yet Jesus has no problems calling us the light of the world as long as it is

Christ that we are carrying with us I want to finish with this if you need some final encouragement this morning take note of what Jesus says in verse 23 as he is rejoicing in uniting all future children of God to himself verse 23 Jesus says I in them and you father in me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me the father loves you even as he loves Jesus let's not just pass that verse over Jesus loves you this you know but the father loves you and this you must also know verse 24 listen to

Jesus prayer father I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world now if you can Elam can you put the first half of that verse up verse 24 go ahead and go to the next one yes okay so he says father I desire that they also these are the future children of God future generations he says I desire that they also whom you have given me may be!

[38:58] with me where I am to see my glory and I want you to grasp the personal impact of Jesus praying for you and me in this time so in your head where it says they also this is future children of God those who will place their faith in Christ insert your name in there and think about this is Jesus praying for you were included in this I don't know about you, but I need that encouragement of knowing, yes, I love Jesus, and I know that he loves me as well, but to know that he prayed for you and me.

To be with him where he is, and to see his glory, and to celebrate who he is and what he has done for us. We can add that to our prayer arsenal as well.

Father, I desire to be with Jesus where he is, to see his glory. We are here for a time, and when we leave this world, his light will continue to shine for those who come after us.

So let's pray for the light of Christ to shine bright in us while we are in this world, and that we may seek opportunities to pass the light of Christ on to others.

That we would hold him high for the world to see, so that they may also join us in giving glory to our Father in heaven. Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.