

We continue in our series this morning we're calling:



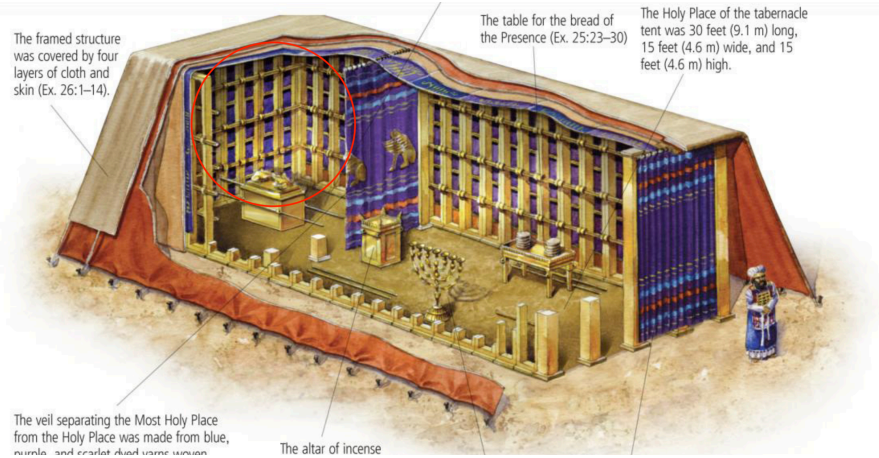
"Jesus' Magnificent Prayer." And indeed, it is a magnificent prayer. It was prayer offered by Jesus for us. Jesus' prayer of John 17 was really a prayer of intercession for us. You'll remember from last week we learned that the prayer of John 17 is often called the "High Priestly Prayer." And you may wonder: Why and what does that even mean?

Well, this is where we have to understand the role of the High Priest from the Old Testament, from the Old Covenant that God made with the nation of Israel, with Abraham and his brother, Aaron, who was the first High Priest of the nation of Israel. Take a look at the screens. This is a depiction of the High Priest...



He's all decked out in the garb prescribed by God in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. We're told he wore a long robe to the ground with a covering over that called the Ephod, having on it the 12

stones that represented the 12 tribes (sons of Jacob, known as Israel). Once a year, the High Priest would make a trip here...



see the red circle? That's the Holy of Holies and it's where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The gold box that held the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod (staff), and a bowl of mana. It was on top of that box, (which was called the "Mercy Seat"), that the presence of God, (Scriptures calls: the Shekinah Glory) would meet with the High Priest as he poured blood on top of that mercy seat, first for himself...and then for the nation...completing God's requirement...that without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. And that's how they did it for hundreds of years. That was the Old Covenant. But I want to show you something. Everything changed with Jesus.

I believe the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews to the Christians who were formerly Jews (hence the name of the book: Hebrews). In the book, Paul seeks to help the former Jews to understand who Jesus is and what Jesus did when He came and paid our sin debt. Watch verse 22. We're going to see now a better covenant...the New Covenant, made by God, to all who will trust and believe in His Son, Jesus.

Hebrews 7:22-28

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Church family, Jesus was perfect...and He became the final sacrifice. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...no, not the blood of an animal...but, the blood of the perfect Son of God...poured out, not on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies...but, on a Roman cross on Calvary...for your sin and mine.

You see, Jesus stepped in as our High Priest. He died for sins. He said, "It Is Finished," and when He did, that curtain...that veil that separated everyone from God's presence, was finally torn in to...giving each of us access to God through Jesus. That's why Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father, except through me."

At this very moment, Jesus is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father...having finished the work...the rescue mission to buy our pardon. At this very moment, He is our great High Priest in the heavenly Holy of Holies. And church, because He was in all ways tempted just like us, being fully human, just like us, but at the same time fully God, not like us...but in His humanity, being born, just like us, Jesus knows our weaknesses. He knows our temptations. He knows Satan's schemes and He intercedes on our behalf as our Good Shepherd, protector, defender, our faithful High Priest who will deliver us, one day, into glory.

And church, this role of Jesus acting as our High Priest is on full display in John 17. We're going to continue to see His ministry of intercession first hand in verses 6-12. Follow along with me.

John 17:6-12

⁶“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. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ 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. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And 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. 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.

Jesus is pouring out His heart to His Father. This prayer is the essence of why Jesus came to this earth. He came at the command of His Father and because of His love for us...to bring glory to His Father, and to bring us to the Father, those who would believe on the Lord Jesus and follow Him. And what Jesus did during His three-year ministry was to manifest/make known that He was from the Father and to make His Father's name known. Watch this in verse 6.

John 17:6

⁶“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.

Remember how we talked last week about how a father gives away his daughter at a wedding? They come down the aisle, arm-in-arm, and then the father gives the bride to the groom. When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, He paid the Bride's Price to the Father...the price that had been set to acquire the bride...His blood...His life...and when that condition was met...God gave the bride to Christ. As followers of Jesus, we're the bride, a gift from the Father to the Son...taken out of the world and saved...set free...redeemed...given that NEW NAME WRITTEN DOWN IN GLORY.

But, there's something else in verse 6 that we must not miss. Something about the name. Jesus said, “I have manifested your name.” You know a name gives a person identity and often a meaning that parents seek to convey through that name. People think long and hard about what to name their kids. Names establish identity and meaning.

I think of the name Isaac. It means laughter, because Sarah laughed when she heard God tell Abraham she would have a child in her old age. How about the name “Jesus?” It means: “Savior.” How about God's name, “Yahweh,” it means: “I AM.” We were singing about that too. **I am who I am because the I am tells me who I am.** I AM is who Jesus made known... That's John 1:18.

John 1:18

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side,^[a] he has made him known.

Jesus' earthly mission was to reveal the Father and all that was true about the Father, about God. So, I'll keep saying it...which should never doubt the existence of God... Jesus walked this earth for 33 years and said He was from God...from heaven, and He proved it when He got up from the dead and went back there. But, there's one other thing about verse 6 that should jump out at us. It's the last part of the verse See it again:

John 17:6c

6 and they have kept your word.

That phrase is so important. Yes, God gave His Son to die for us...Yes, God sends the Holy Spirit to draw us to Himself and yes, God provides the faith we need to be saved...that's all part of God's sovereignty...but, then there is the responsibility of man. We must believe and obey...AND that is keeping His Word. Do you understand that? **Obedience to the Word of God** is a mark of a believer. It's been said: "A person who is saved is a person who is obeying the Word."

Do you understand that responding to the Gospel, (being saved), is not merely a suggestion...it's NOT something you do if you feel like it... Listen, it's a command. It's believe; or else. When the Philippian jailer cried out: "What must I do to be saved," Paul and Silas gave the GOSPEL COMMAND:

Acts 16:31

31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

The Jailer believed and so did his household and they were saved. Have you believed? It's command...believe or else. Else what? Well, for those who reject the command...to NOT believe on Jesus is to face the punishment for that rejection of Him. The punishment for your sin. Jesus died to take your punishment...but, if you choose not to trust Him, you bear your sin alone. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:

John 3:36

36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Does this bother you? As believers, it shouldn't. Jesus showed His love toward you and me, by paying our sin debt so that we could escape Hell and go to heaven. TO HEAVEN, PEOPLE...not Carowinds, not Disney, not Sweet Frog...to heaven...are you kidding me...who rejects this kind of offer?

People who want to do it their way. People who refuse to surrender and submit because they're believing the lie that Satan has planted in their brain that has taken root and he waters it every day with more lies. Oh, it's dangerous to sit here, week after week and month after month and year after year...sit under the sound of the GOSPEL COMMAND and not be saved...Satan loves it...because you're actually thumbing your nose at God in the midst of the kingdom jewels of the Gospel being offered to you. Watch verses 7 and 8...we'll be able to expound on this thought more in a moment.

John 17:7-8

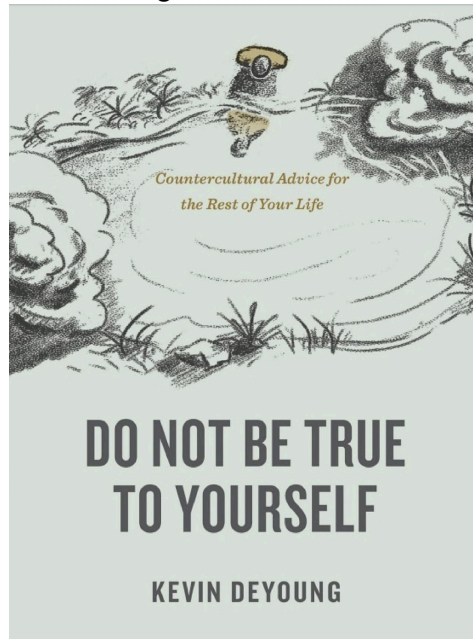
7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

Church, Jesus didn't give His disciples money or property, houses or possessions. He gave them words. Words to believe. And, finally, after three years, RIGHT HERE, Jesus proclaimed that they

had RECEIVED those words. You may ask: “Received what words?” The words in which Jesus brought from the Father...that He was the Messiah...the Savior of the world, sent from heaven...from God. They believed that Jesus worked by the power of God, because He came from God.

I love the fact that Jesus said that they RECEIVED the word...that’s more than just believing. In John 3, Nicodemus believed Jesus was from God, but He wasn’t saved. Belief is not enough, you must stand on the chair...you must go beyond just believing facts about Jesus, there must be action...you must put feet to your belief and that’s what it means to RECEIVE. That’s bearing fruit!

See the screens, I gave this book to all the graduates last week:



“Do Not Be True to Yourself,” by Kevin DeYoung. That’s a provocative title in our day and age, isn’t it? Everyone says, “Be true to yourself, follow your dreams, follow your heart, believe in yourself.” No, don’t do any of those things...that’s poison. Don’t be true to yourself or anything else...be true to Jesus, because He’s the way the TRUTH and the life. Watch this quote from DeYoung’s book:

“It’s not hard in most places to get people interested in Jesus. It’s not terribly difficult to get people to make some sort of decision for Jesus. What is hard—here and everywhere—is getting people to stick with Jesus. It is to these people that Joshua would say, ‘Choose this day whom you will serve.’ Joshua might go on to say, ‘You say you’re a Christian. You come to church. You own a lot of Bibles. You’ve been to summer camp. But do you serve the Lord alone? If your friends are god, serve them. If your phone is god, serve it. If sports saved you from your sins, serve sports. If grades are going to make your life worth living, serve them. If movies and television and parties are what give your life purpose, then serve them. But if Jesus is God, then stop trying to hedge your bets.’” *“Do Not Be True to Yourself,”* Kevin DeYoung

Are you trying to hedge your bets...have a little hell insurance, so you pray a prayer and get baptized and come to church occasionally, but you know, deep down in your soul that you’re not following Jesus. You’re not totally committed. You’re not ALL IN. **You’ve not received His words.** Oh, you believe in His words...but you haven’t truly received them, because if you had, you’d be living for Him. You can change that today...and be saved.

You say, "It's okay...I've got time...you said Jesus is praying for me." Well, you're not promised another tomorrow, and I'm sorry, but if you're lost, and in the world, (I don't mean to burst your bubble), but Jesus is NOT praying for you. He's not praying for the world...no, He's praying for His own. Watch verses 9 and 10.

John 17:9-10

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

Jesus knew who His were. Just like you know who your kids are. Your kids are part of your family. You say, "I don't understand. Why doesn't Jesus pray for the world?" Listen, Jesus died for the world...what more could He do? No, He sent the Holy Spirit to the world...to do what? Remember: to convict of the world sin, righteousness and judgment. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to convict now. Jesus has done His job for the world...now He sits at the right hand of the Father as our faithful High Priest, praying for His own.

Oh, and don't miss the end of verse 10... And it's in HIS OWN that He's glorified. Did you catch that? "I am glorified in them." That's in the perfect tense...meaning the action is already completed, as if it's already happened, meaning Jesus is speaking about the fact that He's already glorified by us. Us...the Bride...meaning, we're part of His family, and that brings Him glory.

You know, it's amazing, with all of the disciples' failures and faults, they're going to all desert Him in minutes...and yet, Jesus says, "I am glorified in them." That's astounding and that's how He feels about us. Oh, how He loves us. Oh, how God loves us...to send His Son to die for a wretch like me. That's why He's our "Good, Good Father." *"It's who you are and I'm loved by you...that's who I am."* Given a New Name... *"I am who I am because He tells me who I am."*

Brothers and sisters, our identity is to be found in Christ...we are His, so we're not saved by performance or good works; and yet, that doesn't excuse sloppy living. Our love for Jesus means we obey Him and our obedience is not a drudgery or a burden...it's a joy...because He's our Savior. How could we ever repay Him for all He's done! It's a phenomenal thought...He's glorified in us and He guarantees us that He'll get us to heaven. That's verse 11.

John 17:11

¹¹ And 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.

Church, we have eternal security in Jesus. We can't lose our salvation. I want to remind us of something Jesus said as He described Himself as the Good Shepherd.

John 10:27-30

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me,^[a] is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

We belong to God because we're kept in His name...we're part of His family and He guarantees us that we can never be taken out of the Father's hand. What a comforting thought! But I want to turn to back to a little phrase in verse 11: "That they may be one." First of all, the New Testament knows nothing about isolated believers. We need each other. In fact, in the NT, wherever you find

Christians, you find fellowship...you find them meeting together in person, you find community.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

And this is why Covid was so dangerous to the church. We need to meet and we're supposed to meet and we should never let the government tell us again that we can't meet. We, as individual Christians are to make that decision...not the government...not the elites...the government doesn't override the church...ever.

Every believer has to own their own "risk quotient" and make that decision. The government doesn't trump the church. When the government tells the church to stop meeting or what they can or can't believe or teach...the government has overstepped and it doesn't have the biblical authority to do so. Listen, during Covid, the bars stayed open...the strip clubs stayed open...the grocery stores stayed open...but, not the churches. That ought to tell you all need to know. They said we were not essential, but strip clubs were.

But there's more when it comes to this idea of unity. There's the idea out there that we should be unified for unity's sake. People say... "Let's be unified...let's unify around Jesus." Okay, that sounds good on the surface, but what does it mean? People have all kinds of ideas about Jesus and who He is. What if their idea about Jesus circumvents biblical doctrine...goes against His Word?

You see, I might like you and want to unify with you, because I want you to like me: but if you say marriage is between two men or two women...I'm sorry, I can't unify with you...that goes against Scripture. If you say that you can go to heaven because you pray to Mary...I can't unify around that, because that's not what Scripture teaches. If you say, a baby is a fetus and it's my body, my choice...I can't unify around that either, because Scriptures says God knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb.

Church, this is not the "unity" Jesus is speaking of in vs 11. He's saying that our unity as His followers should reflect the unity that is found in the Trinity, between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...a common mind and a common purpose centered around the Word of God...because it's the Word of God that guides us into knowing what to believe and how to think...epistemology.

Ken Ham, who runs *Answers in Genesis*, the *Ark Encounter* and the *Creation Museum* says this:

"We need unity on the truth of God's infallible Word, not unity on man's fallible word! There can never be total unity in this world. We must always judge people's beliefs against Scripture, and this by necessity will create division, but division for the right reasons. Think about it. Are we being loving if we allow our fellow brethren to remain in error and even deceive others? Of course not. Loving others requires that we graciously correct them when they fall into error (Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 1:11, Gal. 6:1). Those who err do not necessarily know they are in error; they are possibly deceived or ignorant. So, we gently and carefully correct the error in regard to teaching, no matter what the situation. After all, this is one of the responsibilities of the church: to teach sound doctrine and correct erroneous teaching (2 Timothy, 3:16, Titus 2:1)." Ken Ham, Founder, *Answers in Genesis*

Yes, I'm all for unity...yes, unity, when unity is unifying around the Word of God. The Word of God, which is the lamp to our feet and the light to our path, the plumb line! the Word...that is Jesus as revealed in Holy Writ. Jesus concludes this section with verse 12:

John 17:12

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.

Yes, Judas was lost. Please understand, Judas was not lost against his will but with his own consent...he's culpable for his actions. He made his choice...silver over Savior. And many people still do that today...silver over a Savior. Judas was lost, but not the rest...for those who are genuinely saved...Jesus reiterates what he said earlier regarding eternal security: we are kept, guarded, protected how? In God's name. So, we're back to the name again, and I love how the Proverb writer said it.

Proverbs 18:10

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Are you saved? You're not safe if you aren't. The Gospel is command. Believe or else. Jesus is our faithful High Priest. He's seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, in that heavenly Holy of Holies...and He's interceding on behalf of the saved. But, if you're here today and you've never made that decision, now's your time.