

255 John 17 – The Prayer of Jesus

Almighty God our Creator has made Himself known to us as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, “One God in Trinity”, a deep, precious relationship that is beyond our understanding and yet is revealed to us for our blessing. We have been seeing in John’s Gospel something of how the Trinity works in practice, with each member of the Godhead having a particular place and role.

We come now to John Chapter 17, a wonderful passage displaying the Father-Son relationship, into which believers in Christ – people like us! – are drawn. We find that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in this chapter, which is not a surprise as we learned last time how He points past Himself to the Son, who in turn points on to the Father; so we know that the Holy Spirit is very much involved behind the scenes in all that is going on in John 17.

A key theme throughout this chapter is that of giving, initially between the Father and the Son, and then between the Son and us. We read for a start that the Father has given to His Son “power over all flesh” (v 2), which is worth our remembering in these dangerous days.

The Father has also given to His Son many, many people (eg., vv 2, 6, 9, 12, 24), another highly significant gift which affects our own witnessing. These people are given to Jesus by the Father, and Jesus in turn is to give them eternal life (v 2). What an encouragement is this! - to know that among the people around us there are some, perhaps many, who have already been given by the Father to the Son, to receive eternal life from the Son - a receiving which has not yet happened. Now these “given ones” are only identified as such after they have received the gift of eternal life, so meanwhile we steadily hold forth the Lord Jesus, knowing that “our labour in the Lord is not in vain” (I Corinthians 15.57), and leaving any outcomes with the Holy Spirit.

Besides the giving of power and of people to the Son, there is also a mutual giving and receiving of both glory and love between the Father and the Son (eg., vv 1, 4, 5, 23, 24, 26), the Son’s love for His Father being demonstrated by His total obedience throughout His earthly ministry.

Then, spilling over as it were from this mutual giving and receiving between the Father and the Son, people like us are brought into the picture. First and foremost we have been given the gift of eternal life: by God’s grace we now “know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (v 3), meaning that we too were in the ranks of those given beforehand by the Father to the Son.

The Son then gives to His followers the words and the word given to Him by the Father (vv 8 and 14). He has spoken all these things that His joy might be fulfilled in us (v 13). Jesus has faithfully kept those given to Him in the Father’s name, with only “the son of perdition” being lost, that the Scripture might be fulfilled (v 12) – a profound point requiring further prayerful study.

Next, Jesus prays for His original disciples, and for those, like us, who have followed after them (vv 9-26). He prays that the Father will keep us through His name (v 11) and keep us “from the evil” (v 15); that we might be sanctified “through thy truth” (vv 17 and 19); that we will be with Jesus where He is and thus see His Father-given glory (v 24); and that the love given from the Father to the Son may be in us too (v 26). Within Jesus’ prayer is a further desire – “that they may be one”: a one-ness rooted in the Father and the Son, which is to show the vital truth in the world that the Father has sent the Son, and loves both Him and His followers (vv 11, 21-23).

So here is quite a prayer, lifted by the Lord Jesus, for us! What is more, He, along with the Holy Spirit, is still praying for us, right now (Romans 8.26-28, 34).

Within the divine Godhead that is Trinity we see love, glory and joy; we see giving and receiving, and honouring and serving. Into this relationship we are wonderfully caught up, by God’s grace and mercy and through His gift of faith in Christ, to participate within it ourselves, and to express something of it within our own lives with one another.

Next time God willing, we can consider the workings of our own prayers within the life of the Trinity with the help of a simple sketch, but for now we finish with a mighty cry of praise – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11.33a).