

## *Multitasking in Prayer*

A sermon by Pr. David Johnson

Several weeks back, we began our series on the topic of Prayer, the 5 W's and 1 H of Prayer. During those 6 messages, we discussed how important it is to spend time in the spiritual discipline of prayer; talking with the Lord, offering our praises, and sharing our requests. In fact, the Bible says that isn't a spiritual option, it's critical to the life of the believer.

But with that being said, there are some people who have also figured out how to multitask in their prayer-times; adding secondary purposes to their prayers. You have the:

*Gossip Prayers*

*Agenda or Vindictive Prayers*

*And the "I forgot an announcement so I'll pray it" Prayers*

Now, before I give the impression that any secondary benefit from a prayer is wrong, I must bring up the volume of prayers that are recorded for us in the Bible. Page after page of people's prayers have been documented in the Scriptures; bringing us comfort, instruction, conviction, and insight. Some of these prayers were whispered in the stillness of an inner chamber. Some were shouted at the top of the intercessor's voice in confusion and despair. Still others were spoken as declarations; expressions offered from the hearts of those suffering great pain, alienation, and even an approaching execution.

However, the multitasking prayer that intrigues me most, is the *Sermon Prayer*; those private prayers which double as critical messages for those who "happen" to be standing nearby. Two of these examples come to mind:

**1 Kin 8:22** (at the dedication of the newly completed temple)

**Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. 23 He said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and {showing} lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart,... (Quite a long public prayer, see also 2 Chron. 5-7)**

**Ezra 9:5** (at the return of the exiles to Jerusalem) **But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God; 6 and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.... 10:1 Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.**

I find it truly interesting how often people prayed in Scripture, with little or no concern to who may be listening. There was a boldness, a passion that drove them to intercede, regardless of the audience. Oh, how far we've drifted from that example.

Sadly, I'm afraid we've taken another Biblical command too far, to the point of becoming overly cautious.

**Matthew 6:6** "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

This is unfortunate, for it's driven our prayer lives underground, even losing the value of public intercession. In some cases, we're afraid to speak out in times of public prayer for fear our prayer won't be professional or polished enough. Oh, how that must break the heart of God.

So to try and bring a bit of that concern back into balance, I'd like to look at our gospel lesson for today, which is taken from one of the most familiar Sermon Prayers in Scripture, Jesus' High Priestly prayer. It's the prayer Jesus prayed, not long after His last meal with the Disciples, as He was headed to Gethsemane. But to give us a running start, here is a timeline of that evening:

John's Maundy Thursday Timeline:

John 13-14 – Jesus and the disciples celebrate Passover

*John 14:31b* "...let us go from here." -All leave the upper room

John 15-16 – Jesus teaches along the trail to Gethsemane

John 17 – Jesus stops for an impromptu (High Priestly) prayer

*John 17:1* "Jesus ... lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said..."

Jesus and His disciples are making their way from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane, with Jesus teaching as they walk. When all of a sudden, He stops and begins to pray. He doesn't excuse Himself, find a secluded spot, and then pray (as He did later in the Garden).

Apparently, He wanted the others to hear what He and the Father were discussing, or at least didn't mind if they heard. As one writer observed: "Jesus utters this prayer aloud for the simple reason that he wants his disciples to hear his communication with the Father. For his own person a silent prayer might have sufficed. To the last his interest includes the disciples." Earlier Jesus had taught them to pray (the Lord's Prayer). In John 17 Jesus allows the Disciples to enter into prayer *with* Him.

Another commentator wrote:

"Jesus does not pray with the disciples, does not ask them to lift up their hearts and to join him in prayer as we do at times when saying farewell. This prayer lies on a plane that is so exalted that no disciple can join in its utterance. Jesus prays before his disciples, they can only witness this prayer."

But what was the content of this private prayer for the masses (*including us*)? What did Jesus feel were the critical issues which needed to be addressed in prayer with the Father, during some of the last moments He would have with His Disciples?

You could categorize Jesus' High Priestly Prayer with these three words: Himself, the Disciples, and the World; a broad prayer, indeed. But this wasn't your standard, "God bless everyone," kind of prayer. Jesus addressed what He considered to be the priorities, the big stuff, that would impact the entire future direction of the Church. So let's see what those priorities were, in more detail.

## John 17 begins and ends with Unity

To begin our study, we must understand that the foundational theme we see throughout the entire chapter is that of Unity; Jesus' union with the Father, and the disciple's union with both Father and Son, and a Unity that would draw the world to faith in Christ. All other points of Jesus' prayer, branch off from that overarching principle.

### 1. Jesus prays for Himself

**John 17:1-5** Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. <sup>3</sup> This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup> Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

- Jesus' divine identity and purpose* – Jesus' purpose was redeeming mankind and glorifying the Father.
- Jesus has divine authority to impart Life* - eternal life to all whom the Father gives Him.
- Eternal Life Defined* – "To know," ginoko, the Father and His sent one, Jesus Christ.

### 2. Jesus prays for the Disciples

**John 17:6-19** "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; <sup>8</sup> for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. <sup>9</sup> I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; <sup>10</sup> and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

- V.6 A Disciple belongs to the Father - Not man  
V.7-8 A Disciple is taught, by God's Word & experience  
A Disciple absorbs & retains(receive, understand, believe)  
V.9-10 A Disciple replicates the Teacher(glorifies Son & Father)  
V.11 Unified Disciples reflect/imitate the Unified Trinity  
V.12-15 Divine protection of Disciples from worldly hatred  
V.16-19 A Disciple is Sanctified/transformed in Christ (truth)

### 3. Jesus prays for all future Believers

**John 17:20-26** "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup> I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; <sup>26</sup> and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

- Disciples are commissioned by Christ, for Christ
- Disciples-united in God, by God, for God/love
- Disciples await an eternal home with Jesus/Father

Jesus' final thought reflects the enduring love the Godhead has shared before time and eternity, Jesus shares His longing that all Disciples united in this powerful bond would come to understand it absolutely and completely in the revealed glory of heaven. And what an amazing reality that will be for all who are truly united with the Godhead in this mysterious but very real way.