

“JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU AND ME”

Rev. Becky Stephens

Text: John 17:6-19 NLT

God’s Word: Jeremiah 1:4-10 NLT

In our Gospel Lesson for this morning, we find Jesus praying. And in this prayer Jesus prays for Himself, He prays for His disciples, and He prays for all believers. After this prayer Jesus was going straight out to be betrayed. Then would come the trial and the Cross. Jesus wasn’t going to speak to His disciples again until after He was Resurrected.

Early on in this prayer Jesus gives us a short bio on what He has done. He says to God: *“I have revealed you.”* Which means that through Jesus we can see what God is like. Remember in John 14:9 where Jesus proclaims: *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”?* In Jesus Christ we see the mind, the character and the heart of God!

And what a tremendous difference this makes in the lives of those who believe. Because this world can be extremely scary, angry and mean. Life can appear to be so terribly meaningless, and so terribly cruel and non-comforting! What is the point of it all?

Well, in Jesus Christ this life does have a point. In Jesus Christ this life does have meaning...supreme and glorious meaning...because in Jesus Christ it has been revealed to us that the God who is in control of all things...the God Who is living and active...the God Who created us is Love and Loves us more than we can even begin to imagine!!!!

The more we come to know what Jesus is like, the more we come to know what God is like...for Jesus and God are One! Jesus is our Bridge over these troubled waters...He brings life meaning, happiness and joy!!!

People in primitive societies have in the past and in some places still do believe in a whole horde of many gods. Every tree, brook, hill, mountain, river and stone have its gods and its spirit; and all these spirits are hostile to people. People in these primitive societies have been and still are haunted by their many gods. They live in perpetual fear of making one of them mad at them.

Missionaries have reported that it’s almost impossible to understand or to convey the sheer wave of relief that washes over these folks when they discover that there is only One God and that this One God is not some stern and cruel deity Who is looking to do them in...No. It’s just the opposite really...this One God is Love!!!

Now, to those of us who have a relationship with God...we already know these things, but we could never have known what God is like if it hadn’t been for Jesus coming and telling us and showing us!!!

In Psalm 20:7, the psalmist declares: *“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”* And the name of the Lord our God is Jesus Christ!

In this world, where we are surrounded by materialism it can become so easy to blindly trust only in what our money can buy. But money runs out, doesn't it? And the things we can buy with money—these things are not eternal.

If we live only for material wealth...if we live only for fleeting pleasures...if we work only for those things which perish with use...we will one day wake up with a terrible hang-over and a truly sick feeling that this life is very hollow...devoid of true meaning, real love and security. If we live our lives trying to keep up with the Jones'...not only will we never feel that we have truly succeeded...but we will also live lives which are filled with bitterness, envy, anxiety and desolation.

But, if we trust in Jesus, we will find the Way, the Truth and the Life. We will know more joy than we could have ever imagined!

In this passage of Scripture for this morning Jesus is praying for His disciples, and disciples are essentially people who have realized that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that in Jesus' Words we can hear God's voice, in Jesus' deeds we can see God in action...and in Jesus we have placed our trust and our obedience!

Disciples are those who accept Jesus Christ as the Master of their lives, and this is something that has been destined for all of us!

In His prayer Jesus prays to God the Father: *"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world."* In God's plan the disciples were destined for discipleship, but that doesn't mean that God destined some people to be disciples and some to refuse to be disciples. God has His plan, His dream, His destiny for each and every one of us; and it is our tremendous responsibility to either accept it or reject it. Destiny is what we are meant to do; it is not necessarily what we end up doing. Remember, we do have free-will. God has great plans for each and every one of us. *"For I know the plans I have for you,"* declares the Lord in Jeremiah 29:11, *"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."*

Are you living into the plans that God has for you? Are you living into the good and loving plans that God has for you...the plans that include a hope and a future?

In our Gospel Lesson for this morning from John Chapter 17 we see Jesus praying for His disciples and for all those *"who will believe in"* Jesus through the disciples' *"message."* That is us my friends! Jesus prayed for you and for me!

And we must notice that Jesus didn't pray for us to be taken out of this world...He prayed that we might find victory in this world...not escape from it. As Christian disciples we are not to withdraw from this world and hide out...we are to allow Christ to fill us with the power, the strength, the hope, the motivation to face this life head-on and to make a positive difference!!! And in doing so we will be living into God's good and glorious plan for our lives.

As J.B. Philips writes:

"Happy are those who bear their share of the world's pain: in the long run they will know more happiness than those who avoid it. Happy are those who accept life and their own limitations: they will find more in life than anybody. Happy are those who help others to live together: they will be known to be doing God's work."

Jesus insists that it is in the rough and tumble of life in this world that we disciples must live out our Christian lives. We are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth!!! What a reason to live!!! What a reason to have a hope and a future...we can, through Christ, make a difference in this often difficult

and confusing world!!! We can make a difference in the lives of others and in doing so—know that peace and joy and fullness of life that surpasses all understanding and all circumstances!!!

We do not have to allow our happiness to depend on how well the stock market is doing, or whether we are driving as fancy a car as Mr. or Mrs. Jones. We only need to trust in Jesus and live into His plans for our lives. As the old adage goes...one very important key to finding true happiness is letting go and letting God!!!

Did not Jesus tell us not to worry? Did not Jesus tell us that even the very hairs on our heads are all numbered? *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?”* Jesus asks us in Matthew Chapter 10, *“Yet none of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father...So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

What a reason to rejoice! When the going gets rough, remember that!!! You are so precious to God. He watches over you like a parent watch over a beloved child. You are not alone in this often-intimidating world! You are worth so much to God.

Did not God so love the world...and that's you and that's me and that's the person sitting in the pew next to you...and that's the lost teenager down the street...the person who feels all alone, and does not know the love God has for her...that's our neighbor, our family members, our friends, and even our enemies...that's all of us...*“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* That is love...that is God...Praise the Lord!!!

We are not to be taken out of this world, but nevertheless, Jesus' desire for us is that *“in him we will have peace”* despite the troubles of this world. *“Take heart!”* Jesus consoles us in John Chapter 16, *“I have overcome the world!”*

Through our relationship with Jesus Christ as His disciples we are to demonstrate through His Victory over this world and our peace amid trouble what others can experience through a personal relationship with Him!!!

Christianity was never meant to withdraw us from life, but to equip us better for it!!! It does not offer us a release from our problems, but a way to solve them.

It does not offer us a life in which troubles are escaped and evaded, but a life in which troubles are faced and conquered.

However much it may be true that, as Christians, we are not of the world, it remains ever so true that it is within this world that our Christianity must be lived out! We must never desire to abandon this world, but always desire to win it through and for Jesus Christ, our Savior, our God, our Friend!!! As followers of Jesus Christ, we are set apart for a special task as we remain in this world.

In verse 16 of our Gospel Lesson Jesus is praying for us and in reference to us: *“They are not of the world even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”*

To be sanctified is to be made holy or to be set apart. It means that we have been set apart for a special task. And this is the most important task imaginable...to let others know that they too are loved by God...that their lives are important and meaningful...because God loves them and has good plans for them.

When God called Jeremiah, He said to him: *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

My friends, nobody was created for a meaningless, depressive existence devoid of hope!!! We all have infinite worth! We are all loved with an equal and mighty unconditional love!!! God has set us apart for a special task, a special life.

And when we accept God’s call on our lives...when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives...when we decide to put our whole trust in Jesus...we can begin to live out that special call!!!

And we are not to ‘go it alone.’ No. Because to be set apart by God also means to be equipped with the qualities of mind and heart and character which are necessary for that task. If we are to serve God, we must have something of God’s goodness and God’s wisdom in us.

And this comes as we commit our lives to Jesus, deciding to follow Him...forsaking the deceiving fleeting desires of this life that hold us back and get us in trouble...and allow God to give birth to us...causing His Holy Spirit to live inside us...to be born in us...so that we are born again or born of God!

God doesn’t only choose every one of us for His special service in this world and set us apart for it...God also equips us with the qualities we need to carry out His will. And by allowing His Holy Spirit to make a home in our hearts and cause us to be born anew...we also begin the process of allowing the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out and, indeed, equip us to carry out God’s plan for our lives!!!

We must always remember that God has chosen us and dedicated us for His special service in this world. And that special service is that we should love and obey God and should bring others to do the same!!! And praise God that He has not left us alone to carry out this great task on our own strength...but out of God’s grace He makes us ready for our task if we are willing to place our lives in His hands!

Let us pray: Almighty God, we acknowledge that we often feel incomplete, afraid, and alone. We often feel as if our lives are without meaning. But this is not what we want to feel, for we know that You have great plans for our lives. We repent of those times when we have not trusted you. We repent of those times when we have tried to live life according to what we think is best.

And we fully and completely dedicate our lives to Your service. Lord Jesus enter into our hearts and be Master of our lives! Increase our faith, increase our hope, and give us that peace and joy which transcends all understanding.

Cause us to be born again Christians who are totally and completely living for You! And cause us to realize that this is the only way we will be able to live triumphant lives!

In Jesus’ name and for His sake we pray.

Amen.