

Father, the Hour Has Come

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[0 : 00] Last year, I taught on Monday night on the inner sanctuary.

! And it is there that the Lord turns His attention on preparing His disciples for when He departs. And we covered chapters 13 through 16. We started a few lessons into 17. We ended early because of my knee replacement surgery.

And I was down. And so, I decided I'm going to go back to John 17. I mean, arguably that's the greatest chapter in the Bible.

And we'll get into the reasons why. So, that's what we're going to do. So, let's look tonight. This is kind of a brief deal as an introduction.

[1 : 21] On the night of His betrayal, the Lord revealed the deepest concerns of His heart to His disciples.

And the hours He spent that evening, mostly in the upper room, left quite an impression on them, including the Apostle John, who wrote these words, obviously by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I think for John, he centered on the fellowship they had. And he would later say, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Nor in Scripture is this privilege of fellowship more expanded on than chapters 13 through 17 of John's Gospel.

He does get into it a little bit in 1 John. And John's record of the words and actions takes us into the inner sanctuary of the Christian's relationship to God through Christ.

[2 : 36] And, for instance, we have heard or will hear of the mystery of the Trinity, the reality of union with Christ, the glory which belongs to the Son.

And here in the time of crisis, the grace of our Lord Jesus shines forth in all its glory. And the amazing things that occurred in the inner sanctuary are recorded in these chapters.

And we've already looked, like I say, 13 through 16. And now we're going to get into 17, having taken our sabbatical. And we're back at it here this evening.

As we come to these words, it is really important to keep in focus that the betrayal, the arrest of Christ, the torture of Christ, and the crucifixion are mere hours away.

You've got to really get a hold of that. And Jesus knows all that, doesn't He? Judas, the betrayer, has already gone out.

[3 : 55] And He is forever separated from the Lord's true disciples. And in these five chapters, our Lord has had the absolute freedom to speak openly and explicitly because these men are true followers of His.

Judas isn't there. He's gone out. And we wouldn't say that if Judas was still hanging around. But he's gone. And I find it interesting that while Jesus was in the inner sanctuary, praying to the Father in the presence of His disciples, Judas is, at that very moment, engaging with organized religion, plotting the Lord's death.

He's gone to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin. Now, for believers, this is a pivotal chapter.

It's pivotal. I'm sure a lot of you are like me. And if you're not, you will after I say this. You'll adopt this.

But sometimes when I wake up in the middle of the night, and I lay there, and I'm looking at a dark ceiling, and I can ask myself, I wonder what Jesus is doing right now.

[5 : 24] Because He's always up to something. And there is an answer to that question. There's an answer. And it's found in Hebrews 7, verse 25.

Therefore, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Vitally important to understand. Right now, at this very moment, the Lord Jesus is making intercession for every single one of His elect children. He's been doing that for 2,000 years. He will do it until He returns for His church. And that's what He's doing.

And you might be thinking, I don't need intercession right now. I may need it tomorrow, or I may need it the next day or next week.

[6 : 28] But right now, I'm doing pretty good. All of us in here know what the greatest commandment is, I'm sure. Love God with all.

We can stop there. No believer has ever achieved that. We haven't gotten to all in this life, and we won't.

We love Him partially. Some of you guys, I'm sure, at 90%. I'm at nine-tenths of 1%. But, you know, we're working at it. But no one can claim this total 100% love for the Lord.

So, as R.C. Sproul says, we violate the great commandment 24 hours a day our whole life. We need a God.

We need the Lord to make intercession for us. We're all in need of intercession. Now, you ask most people, when did the Lord's ministry of intercession begin?

[7 : 35] And they will tell you, well, after the cross, after the crucifixion, He was resurrected. He remained on earth for a little while.

And then He ascended, and He entered into His intercessory prayer ministry. And they would be wrong. He enters into this in John 17, verse 1.

He's already foretold His death to these guys. This is His heavenly ministry. The ministry of intercession.

It starts on John 17, verse 1. It started that night. And He's showing them what He's going to be doing until He returns for the church.

So this is the beginning of His intercessory ministry. And for a number of chapters, the Lord has been addressing the disciples and informing them of His approaching death.

[8 : 39] He has been preparing them for His crucifixion, for the days that will follow that monumental event. He has told them repeatedly, I'm going away.

He told them that He's not going to leave them as orphans. He's going to send another, the Spirit of God. He will lead them into all truth. He will instruct them.

But what about the Lord Jesus? Where will He be after He departs? He will be in heaven, making intercession for His church until He comes back for His church.

And that intercession starts tonight. For us, John 17. And this is just prior, a few hours prior to His arrest and murder. And there's so much that can be said on this chapter.

And first, it is a prayer. This is a prayer. 26 verses of praying. You know, Jesus prayed many times to the Father. Often, the Scriptures tell us He would go off to a solitary place.

[9 : 48] He'd go up on a mountain and pray. Sometimes He would pray all night. Other times He prayed early in the morning. But the Scriptures record very little of the actual prayers of our Lord.

We don't have a lot of the words. We do know of many of the events. He prayed at His baptism. He prayed during His preaching tour on earth.

He prayed before choosing the disciples. He prayed before feeding the 5,000. He prayed after feeding the 5,000. He prayed before feeding the 4,000.

He prayed for Peter before Peter confessed Him as Christ. He prayed at His transfiguration. He prayed for the little children that were brought to Him.

He prayed when the 70 missionaries returned to Him. He prayed before giving the Lord's Prayer. He prayed before raising Lazarus from the dead.

[10 : 54] Prayed at the Last Supper. Prayed for the strength of Peter. Prayed in Gethsemane where He sweat blood. He prayed while hanging on the cross. He prayed for His disciples on the road to Emmaus.

And He prayed at His ascension when He went back into heaven. Now that's just a few of examples. And then we come to John chapter 17 and we have this magnificent prayer that lasts 26 verses.

And some of the theologians of old call this the inter-Trinitarian conversation. Now we don't have any input here. You know what?

Peter is not going to interrupt. It's sort of a miracle. But Peter is not going to interrupt as he often did. There's not going to be any disturbance from Roman soldiers or temple police. Not even Satan himself is going to be able to stop this prayer though I'm certain he wanted to. This prayer will go undisturbed between the Son and the Father.

[12:05] And you know what's really marvelous about this? We get to listen in. We get to listen in. When we come to John chapter 17 we're sort of the fly on the wall.

And we're going to listen to every word that Jesus prays to the Father. And let me say this also. When we come to this prayer we are on holy ground.

We're on holy ground, guys. We talked about that the last couple of Sundays. I actually have my shoes off.

Because we're on holy ground and my feet hurt. But we're on holy ground. This is our burning bush. We are in the presence of the awesome and holy trinity of God.

And while the Holy Spirit may not be overtly present during this prayer, He's there with the Father and with the Son. And in every age the elect of God have listened in to this most holy conversation.

[13:23] It was the English Puritan Thomas Watson who said, A man cannot live unless he takes in breath nor can the soul unless it breathes forth its desires to God.

For the true believer prayer and breathing are synonymous. We do one breathing we do to live physically to stay alive and we pray to live spiritually.

And interesting, the Bible commands prayer but also indicates the willingness of God's people to be in prayer. Now, if we're really conscientious in our study of this great prayer, we're going to realize that the prayer itself encompasses all of the great themes of redemptive history.

And we'll cover those as we go through this in the coming weeks. It will take us from election to regeneration. It will take us to revelation, to illumination, to justification, to sanctification, to preservation, to glorification.

It is in this greatest of prayers that the Spirit of Christ escorts us into the very Holy of Holies to the very throne of God the Father.

[14:45] And one thing we see at the very outset is the timing of the prayer. And this comes right in the midst of the Lord Jesus offering comfort to His disciples just before His death.

His death is intimate. First part of the first verse there says this, Jesus spoke these things, and that's John 13 through 16, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, Father, the hour has come. Boy, that is titanic. That is major. The time that Jesus has spent with the disciples in the upper room is drawing to a close.

The previous hours were filled with Jesus serving, comforting, and instructing His followers. They were anxious. The evening began with foot washing as the Lord humbled Himself and washed even the feet of Judas.

There was the meal, and during that meal the Lord revealed that one of their number would betray Him. He told the disciples He was about to die.

[16:05] He told Peter, the strongest in the band, you're going to deny me repeatedly. And, you know, it's really no wonder that these disciples are like us guys, except they were better at fishing than most of us.

they were afraid, they were dismayed at the information and what lay ahead for Jesus and them. And the Lord comforts them by describing heaven and that they would be living there with Him in a short while.

And He gave them this promise of the Holy Spirit who would come and minister to them and through them. They would not be left as orphans. and He told them though the world hates you, you will receive strength and encouragement from the indwelling Spirit.

Jesus in John 15 uses the imagery of the vine and the vinedresser to describe their vital connection to Him and through Him to the Father.

And they would draw all spiritual strength from the vine and through them the Lord would produce much fruit. You know, you take an apple tree, the branch doesn't produce the fruit.

[17:21] That doesn't come from the tree produces that, not the branch. Branches don't produce anything. Jesus next revealed to them that they had not chosen Him.

The reality was that He had chosen them. And let me tell you guys, that's still true today. That's true of every believer. And you know, a lot of people are repulsed by that idea.

They're repulsed by it. I talked to a guy one time, I'm not going to call his name, you would know it. He's not in this church, most of you would know it. He said, Jesus didn't choose me, I chose Him, I remember when I did it.

That was his view. Jesus told them they would weep over His death and they would weep over His departure, but that one day their grief was going to be turned to joy.

And He gave them that promise. Now, probably the most disturbing thing in all of this was what I would call Jesus' failure, and that's in quotation marks by the way, to live up to the disciples' preconceived notions as to what the Messiah was supposed to accomplish.

[18 : 47] You see, the Messianic view in the Jewish mind was you have the period of the law, and then the Messiah comes and He kicks out whoever's oppressing them at the time, in this time it was the Romans, and establishes His kingdom, and He sits on the throne and He gives little thrones to all His faithful followers.

And so, they're thinking any moment now He's going to overthrow Rome, establish His kingdom.

That's their Messianic view. And now He says, guys, I'm going away.

That didn't fit. That's not what their mother used to tell them when they were little kids before they went to bed. That's not what the rabbis taught.

He says, I'm going away. And actually, it can be said and proven by Scripture, this was more than Judas could handle. He couldn't handle it.

And at some point, Judas concluded Jesus cannot be the Messiah. And He can't be worthy of being followed because He did not fulfill the Messianic vision that had been handed down for 1600 years by the Jewish religious leadership.

[20 : 07] And we learn in the opening verse that Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven. He lifts them up. That was a way of acknowledging that God's throne was in heaven above.

Jesus lifted up His head because He had no sin to deal with. This is in stark contrast to the tax collector who could not lift His eyes toward heaven but beat His breast for the burden of sin.

He carried Lord have mercy on me a sinner. By the way that's the closest you'll come to the sinner's prayer anywhere in scripture. Other than that prayer there isn't one. But that's a pretty good prayer.

And I told the group yesterday in church about the one guy that every morning when he wakes up before his feet hit the floor he says Lord have mercy on me a sinner. Every morning.

Now the other thing that Jesus does in this prayer he refers to God as my father. That was unthinkable. It was unthinkable in that culture.

[21 : 15] It is unthinkable in other cultures. That never happens by the way in Islam. It's considered a flagrant sin, a flagrant violation.

It was a form of address considered far too familiar with the holy God of the universe. But we see Jesus praying to his father.

And this is an example of both his submission to the father and his equality with the father. Israel over the centuries had developed a remote view of God.

He was very distant and standoffish. They would not use his name for fear of taking it in vain. But we see Jesus calling God his father.

He was in intimate fellowship with the father. The same fellowship by the way, every believer can share with the father because of Christ.

[22 : 26] Every believer. Another important point to be made here. This is just an introduction of a brief time this evening. On the one hand, the Lord was clearly making himself equal with God.

And after all, he claimed to be the very son of God. On the other, he is also demonstrating his distinctiveness from God. There are three persons in the Trinity, right?

We know that. And now, how do we know he's distinct from the father because Jesus wasn't praying to himself. He's praying to the father. He didn't offer this prayer to himself.

Now, that fact has theological implications. The son is equal to the father, yet distinct from him. He is equal in essence.

He even shares with the father's eternal glory. But he is more than a mere shadow or manifestation of the father. He is a distinct person, that's Jesus, within the Godhead.

[23 : 31] So by calling God his father, Jesus here is underscoring the reality of the Trinity. Now, several times in the gospel, we heard the words concerning Jesus that his time had not yet come.

Many times the religious leadership wanted to kill him. and he just slipped through. He disappeared. And the scriptures tell us his time hadn't come.

It wasn't time to kill him. It wasn't time to arrest him and try him. It wasn't time to crucify him. And now he says, Father, the hour has come.

There's deep emotion in that. The hour has come. And he knows in the minutest details what that entails. That phrase means that his ministry on earth is drawing to a very rapid close.

He is on the brink of death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. And the culminating event of redemptive history, the most important history in the universe, has reached its zenith.

[24 : 51] The plans made by the Godhead eons in the past are now coming to fruition. The hours come in which the Son of God and the Son of Man will offer himself as the only, the exclusive, perfect, and atoning sacrifice, the only atoning, sacrificial lamb for sin.

the time of God's wrath toward all mankind is drawing to a close. He's going to satisfy completely, appease completely the wrath of God toward those who believe.

And that time is coming to a close. The certificate of death by which each one of us deserves hell is going to be nailed to the cross.

he who knew no sin would soon become sin so that those of us who believe could and would become the very righteousness of God in him.

And by the way, he didn't become a sinner. He took upon himself our sins. Satan would very soon receive a fatal blow to the head.

[26 : 09] all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the death of the Messiah are going to be fulfilled in the next few hours. And people ask me all the time, why do you think Christianity is true?

We've got fulfilled prophecy in minute detail. And I can't remember how many dozens and dozens were fulfilled in the last 24 hours of his life. Dozens of them.

The shadows of the Old Testament sacrificial system would give way to the one true sacrifice, and that's Christ. The veil that separated the people from the Holy of Holies is going to be rent from top to bottom.

And by the way, who tears something that big from top to bottom? God tore it. And I'll tell you, I did a study on that one time. That thing was so big, this one physicist said, you could hook two locomotives to it in opposite directions and they wouldn't be able to tear it.

It was so thick and interwoven. Well, God rent it, tore it, when Christ's flesh was torn on the cross, that was torn, meaning redeemed mankind would have unfettered access to God.

[27 : 32] Fellows, every time you pray as a believer, you have unfettered access to God. You're in the Holy of Holies. And I said this, I think, last week, you're walking around with the Holy of Holies inside you, inside you.

Christ is about to defeat sin and death and Satan and hell and he's going to redeem a people for his namesake.

And let me say this, all of human history, from God's perspective, is a history of redemption. God is still calling out a people who are going to worship his son for eternity.

And he lets us be part of that process, doesn't he? Preaching, teaching, witnessing, sharing the gospel. But God is still in the business of redeeming people who will praise and worship his son forever.

I get aggravated when people say, well, I'm leaving the church. Why are you leaving the church? I'm not getting anything out of worship. Or does it say you are supposed to get something out of worship? It's a giving experience.

[28 : 49] We give worship to the Lord. We're there to give. When we give properly, we receive back, don't we? A hundred fold. But Christ is about to win.

And the hour of great suffering had come, and soon the hour of great victory would follow. And so the hour that all of creation had been waiting for, every atom in the universe had waited for, has come.

God and as he entered into this hour, the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, lifts up his head toward heaven and he begins his heavenly ministry of interceding for his disciples.

And we're going to see something in the weeks ahead. This is in three parts and they're all interrelated. Jesus is going to pray to his father about himself, he's going to pray to the father about disciples, and then he's going to pray to every person who would ever believe, including down to the 21st century, in the multi-purpose room at Highland Park Baptist Church.

so it's this three parts here. And he's entered into his intercessory ministry, and fellas, that's where we're going to pick it up next time.