

## SERMON - JOHN 17

Today we have the opportunity to revisit the subject of Prayer. John 17 is all about prayer so read the passage for yourself.

Many years ago, I was the leader of a Scripture Union Holiday Bible Club and as part of it we taught the children songs and explained their meeting. One song we sang was “Joy is a flag held high” We asked the children what the letters stood for. Being bright J was soon identified as Jesus and the Y as yourself unfortunately they suggested Oborski for the O. I hope they have been praying for me ever since but I don’t hold my breath. The correct answer O – Others. Jesus others Yourself and that’s the way we tend to view our prayers we pray to Jesus then for others and then if we get that far yourself.

But in this passage that’s not the case Jesus advocates a different order yourself, those close to you, everyone. I don’t think YoJ is a flag held high would work but we need to reflect on why Jesus sets a different order for prayer.

The context is important Jesus the Son of God is about to depart – to die upon a cross and to be resurrected giving life to the whole world. In that critical moment his prayer is that the purpose he was sent for might be fulfilled through what he now does, that his disciples will play their part and thus everyone will come to benefit.

Jesus prays for himself. That he might see through the plan God has set in front of him. I wonder if we ever pray in the same way?

God has a plan for each of us and he invites us to pray into it – to hear his voice and to respond to him. When was the last time you prayed to God and asked him about his plan for you and those you love?

Ask yourself what does God want of me? In the case of Jesus he knew what God wanted him to do so he asks for help to achieve it.

So often we hear God’s call to do something and we step out to do it in our own strength. Somehow we forget to ask for God’s help that we might get it right. The challenge is to commit everything we do to God in prayer. God wants us to be so concerned with all that we do for him that we pray about it and pray over it. And sometimes as we do he speaks to us about why something isn’t working or how we could make it better. Have you ever had that experience?

Jesus prays for what he needs – it is a reminder that we can pray about our needs – how often do we forget to pray about our needs. God longs for us to be perfect to be whole and so he actively encourages us to pray about ourselves. When did you last pray for yourself? Why do we shy away from asking God for the things we need in our lives?

Each and every one of us needs prayer to stay close to God. Perhaps more importantly we need to know there are people who are praying for us who we can talk to when life is tough. We need to hold ourselves accountable to someone we trust.

In verse 15 we see what it is all about. You and I who believe in God have an important role to play as God's disciples – by our lives we are witnesses to God's Sovereign rule and of his Grace that forgives the stranger and restores life in all its fullness.

Simply put our prayer for one another is to keep trusting in God and to enable us to witness God's love to a hurting, broken, rebellious world. One of the gifts of Methodism is the ability of seeing ourselves as belonging not only to one another in the local church but also as belonging to circuit and even wider to the District and the Connexion. It is important to realise that we belong to something that is much bigger than our local group of friends and to recognise that our prayer is for the whole world.

Jesus sees the church as a growing community verse 20 and 21 he prays for those “who are to believe through their word”. The call is to pray for those who by living their lives will witness the truth of God and see people turn to God. The prayer “that they may be one”. We are to pray for the unity of the church and its growth. At this time of fear and doubt people are asking questions there is an openness to hear God and we need to be ready to share God's love with those who are seeking.