

## 3.26.23 Sermon

# What Do You See? | John 17

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

jesus, god, prayer, high priests, disciples, world, pray, answered, talking, chapter, read, justification, glorify, wisdom, gave, holies, moment, people, sermon, speak

### SPEAKERS

Rev. James Bady

It is wonderful to have the opportunity to speak in front of you today, and every day that I have this chance. Sometimes, when I come here, I feel like the tin man from the Wizard of Oz, constantly in need of oil. That's why Joni and the team intentionally play "How He Loves" before I speak. It ministers to me, but also torments me, because it accurately reflects how my heart feels.

The word "Oh" in the song is what I focus on, as it can either be a surprise or a revelation of what I did not know about the depths and intensity of love. We use the word "love" so freely that we often fail to understand how inclusive and all-gathering God's love is. It's a reality that's complete and intense, and we should drink it in.

Today, I want to approach this sermon a little differently than I have before, for a reason beyond the success of the NCAA team. I want us to think about what it was like to be in the church when it first started, before it became what we see today. Nowadays, it's often just one person like myself standing up here, talking about texts and contacts, and trying to convince you to believe what I believe. But there's another way to think about this.

The early church was essentially a conversation. People gathered together to talk about their different beliefs. Paul and the other original disciples went out into

various areas to discuss faith and God with others. They would try to construct thoughts about God through these conversations. It would be very unusual for someone in the middle of a discussion trying to convince others to only speak at them. There would be a back-and-forth, with questions and responses.

As part of this process, we have to be mindful of how we express ourselves. We will capture some of your thoughts, and we will do this together. We are now exploring Chapter 17 of John, which has already been discussed by two speakers.

In previous discussions, we talked about the disciples being sent out into the world and the importance of unity. Jesus prayed for them, hoping they would become one. Dr. D addressed verses 18 and 20 last week, which discuss being sent out into the world to continue the work Jesus started. These ideas are embedded within Chapter 17, and together we will build upon those concepts.

First, I will read the entire chapter. You may be surprised, but the reason for this is that you may pick up things that I would not. This is part of the exchange. So, get ready, put on your thinking and questioning caps. I will try to read this in a neutral way and then we will discuss the text, considering the different thoughts and interpretations that may arise. This is our sermon today.

I will read Chapter 17 of John from the NRSV version of the Bible.

So, it says, After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And 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 earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. <sup>6</sup> "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have

received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

<sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

<sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

<sup>20</sup> "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them." The reading of the Word.

What stood out to you while it's still fresh in your mind? What popped out for you? Anything else? Unity and love, so verb, okay, when what will be given? They do not know you, but I know, okay, yes, gotcha. What else have we got? Desire for us to be one, praying for us. What else have we got? Advocate, yeah, yeah, there's glory going on. Anything else? This is good, good. They're not, that is a future, okay, more. Is there any type and online? I want to get that too, if there is, but also not, okay.

It's curious where I am. And Jesus is already talking about himself as he's gone. Okay, one more or two more. The connection between knowing the Father and knowing your love, okay. That's one. How do you define eternal life as knowing that? You, okay, you've made this really hard on me for the rest of the sermon, but hey, you gotta Amen. Corner. Good. All right now, I'm feeling better.

So, I want to put this in the context of what Jesus is praying about. And it is a prayer, right? So, at the end of chapter 16, Jesus is having a conversation with his disciples, and the disciples, to me, I think always funny. They are some funny guys when you really think about it, right? So, they've been complaining for 15 and a half chapters about Jesus, talking in parallels and parables and mystery. But when Jesus tells them there's about to be some trouble, they go, "Hold on, that's clear. Now we understand exactly what you're talking about." And they say, "There, now we believe." And Jesus says to them, "Do you believe in me?" And I guess it was something in how they looked back at him or something in their voice, where Jesus says, "Yeah, you believe."

Then he turns and says, "You know, because you believe, I'm going to pray for you. And in me, you will find peace. In the world, you will find persecution. But don't fear. I have overcome the world." That's how he ends chapter 16: "Okay, you believe in me, I'll pray for you. Because you know, these troubles are real.

But in me, you're going to find peace. In the world, you're going to find persecution, but don't fret. I've overcome the world."

Then Jesus goes into this prayer. So, the context of the moment is Jesus is starting to move into what the rest of the New Testament talks about Jesus being our high priest. And so, he's starting to operate that way, right now, right? He's talking about himself as if he's already gone, right? So, he's operating as if he's already been sacrificed and moved on. And so, he starts doing these things that a high priest would do.

And just so we're all on the same page about a high priest: in the tradition of the Jewish culture at that time, the high priest would perform some of the functions of the temple. But in addition to that, there were these key other activities. There were the blood sacrifices for the sin of the people, the sacrifices for the prayers for the people, for both what the high priest thought was important for the people and the petitions of the people to God, right? So, this is what the high priest would do in Jesus's time.

This is Jesus's opening the veil so that you can come into the Holy of Holies and watch the conversation between God and God's people as their needs are met. That's where we are in this moment, and talking about Jesus in chapter 17. The holiest of holies is now being extended to everybody who will hear, and your high priest is making a petition for you. That is the moment.

And in that prayer, there's this interesting, there are five different pieces of this prayer that are going on, and I want to capture those here if I can. I apologize for those online that you may not be able to read my writing because of how the angles are. And I apologize to you, those of you that are in the room because it is torturous to read my writing. But there are five parts kind of to this prayer that Jesus outlines for us.

1. Identifying the moment or the time, right? There's this moment. And in this moment, it is Jesus ending his earthly ministry.

2. The season, right, that's occurring. In the season, it is the growth of the disciples to now lead the ministry that Jesus is leaving on Earth. This is a series of things that they are now going to have to do.
3. The thing, right? So most of us are familiar with this part of a prayer. The thing? What do I mean by that? It is what you want to change. Life is going on, I'm not happy, this thing needs to change, right?
4. The justification for this prayer being answered.
5. The praise for coming through, right? These are the components that are occurring within the prayer.

The reason this is fascinating to me is that the times we are in, or the moment, the situation is ours; the season we are in and the condition of our life over a period of time is ours. The change that we want is ours. The praise and the celebration of our prayers being answered is ours. But the justification has to be your high priest, whoever that may be. It's your high priest.

So how does that play out here? So, this is the situation at the moment. The season is when they're growing, and they now believe. They don't need any other encouragement to know I am from you, God. They have accepted your word, and your word is in them, right? That's when they're developing their growth. The thing is, and this is what we started to capture in here, the thing is unity and love be one, knowing God.

One of the other things that Jesus wants to see change is that he wants them protected from the evil one. Whoever that may be, he wants us to be with them in glory. These are the things Jesus is asking for. He sees a path, he wants that path changed. He wants all of his disciples to continue to live with him in glory. He wants them unified because he sees the problems that are coming their way. And you all need to have one another's back. That's what he's praying for.

The big change is the justification. Did you guys get it? As the son, I completed my tasks on the earth that you sent me to do. I've given them your word. They've accepted your word. And now they're ready to go and cascade it to the rest of the world. Because of these things, number one being I am the son who completed

my work and made your name known. I am their high priest. I am the justification for that prayer, your prayers, God's prayers being answered.

But the interesting part about Jesus is that he is the gentleman who asked, "Do you want me to be your high priest?" Because of yes, I'll go into the holiest of holies and pray for you. Romans 8 says Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and prays continually, interceding on our behalf, going and praying to God for us, on our behalf for all the things we want given to us, for all the things that we want to know, and how we want to belong or not belong, and how the spirit will be in us. These are the things.

And I often wonder when Jesus asked the question of the disciples, "Do you believe?" It is because they've been walking with him, right? And they can see the change, and now he's comfortable. But there's been 2000 years between then and now. And I asked myself the question, if we ask ourselves truly, what do we believe? Do we still believe in this Jesus guy? Do we still believe that prayer changes things? Do we still believe that Jesus is capable and listens?

If I look at the stats that they do all the time about monitoring people about their belief in Christianity, in church, the answer's no. There's a trend line that is undeniable. That has separated and continues to separate the concept of Christianity and continual church attendance, and it's just accelerating. And that's problematic. But the bigger problem for me is, does that separation in the label of organized religion as Christianity is, and attending that thing, the same as your separation from your belief in Jesus? Is it the same?

Because, as I said, you can be your own priest. It's a problem, but you can be your own priest. You can decide, you have some justification for going directly to God, and petitioning and getting the things that you want. Are you the child? If you say, "Yes, we got some problems, we'll talk." Did you complete your assignment perfectly? That last word is important, perfectly. Did you hear your words directly from God and be able to cascade them out to the world?

This is what it takes to be the high priest with justification to have those prayers answered, but you can do it. You can try, I should put it that way. Or you can say,

"Jesus, I'm yours. Jesus, I place my hand in your hand." Because if you do that, then you're like the disciples in chapter 16, going into 17. And at that moment, Jesus turns and prays not only for what he sees is important for you, but the petitions that you have for yourself that you want to be taken to God. That's what we are walking out in chapter 17.

And I often wonder, also, there are many reasons why people wouldn't follow organized religion and church. Right? We all know that there are some bad things and labels that have been attached to that. But if it's a separation from Jesus, then there's a bigger problem, because then you have to be on your own. And you are starting to depend on things such as your own wisdom, right? And I have nothing against wisdom. I practice it, I try to every day. I do wisdom; I hopefully manage my financial budget in a way that I don't need a financial miracle every day. Through wisdom, I try to eat and exercise in a certain way, so I don't need a health and healing ministry every day. And by the advancements of medicine, and doctors being creative, they help me to keep this body stronger, longer. With wisdom, but there is a moment where wisdom ends. And there's still room for us to need to believe.

And I ask that for everyone that's under the sound of my voice today, to not lose that reality. That there is a moment where your wisdom ends and the miracles of God now kick in to fill the next gap that is within you, your life. It is to help you to protect yourself as you move forward, it is to help you to live through the moment with Jesus, who said, "In me, you will find peace because the world will give you persecution."

A couple of weeks ago, as we wrapped up, each of you was invited to write down your prayers on a card by capacity. Did you guys remember that? Have you read your prayer since you wrote it? Have you referred back to it? Are you still holding on to it, that it will be delivered?

But I've got to be honest with you. A few years ago, when I did that exercise, and I had my card, I was afraid. I was afraid to write it. And the reason I was afraid is, what if it didn't happen? What if the thing that I admitted to myself that I needed and I could not control, and I could not handle myself or for my family? What if I

had to be transparent enough to say, "Here I am, totally incapable of handling this situation," and I opened my mouth and presented that to God, and God decided not to give it to me? It would hurt too much. So, I avoided it. I didn't want to write it. I didn't want to face the disappointment if it didn't come true. I would be shattered, I knew this. So, as long as I could, I wouldn't write it.

But one thing I did. And I'm so glad I did. Because it happened. And I watched the main part of the story, and it was hallelujah, my prayer was answered, not because of my desperation or my goodness, but because of the justification given to me by Jesus Christ.

So, I ask that each and every one of you be open enough, vulnerable enough to believe today. It's scary. But there's only one way God can prove God's self to you. If you can figure it out in your own wisdom, you don't need it; in your own power, your own ego, and your own talent, you don't need God. I'm talking about getting to the end of your skills, capability, and thought, and then asking God for the big things that you know you can't handle, and it will hurt if they don't come true. You know you need Jesus, so bring those things to Him, and He will bring you into the Holy of Holies. And together, we will petition God and watch God move because Jesus has justified it for you.

So, I'll close with this. I want each and every one of you to open your prayer card when you get home. And I want you to read it to yourself and be honest with yourself. Do you need this from God? And if the answer is yes, just lean in. Because God has no respect for a person, and I'm reminded of the hymn or whatever, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." All our sins and griefs to bear, oh what a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit, you're forfeiting it. Don't do it anymore. Amen. Amen.