

Sermon – 06/08/2006 pm

Jesus Prays for Believers to be with Him

Study Text: John 17:24-26

In many societies marriages are arranged. Parents or relatives seek out suitable partners for a boy or girl of marriageable age, without necessarily consulting the boy or girl. Those to be married will not meet each other until the wedding day. They will have little or nothing to do with the arrangements, even after they are engaged or betrothed. They may be allowed to correspond and speak on the phone but never meet.

This is very different to western society in which we have what are called ‘love marriages’ – that is if the couple get married all. A boy and a girl meet and fall in love. They start talking, and decide to go out together. They see a lot of each other and they decide to get engaged. After some time they come together in marriage. While we may see arranged marriages as strange, love marriages are frowned upon in other societies. Which is best? Which is right? Not really for us to decide – not today anyway!

Your Maker is your husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name (Isaiah 54:5). The Lord is referred to as the husband of his people; they are his bride. The church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:7). We are the bride of Christ. Christ loved the church and gave himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). We might ponder if this marriage between Christ and the church was an arranged marriage or a love marriage!

In one way at least it is like an arranged marriage. We are betrothed but do not see our beloved until the ‘marriage supper of the lamb’ (Revelation 21:9). On that great day we will be made ready; we will be made ready by Christ himself to be presented unto him. *That he might present her to himself as a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish* (Ephesians 5:27). Our sanctification will be complete. We will be made perfect and we will see our husband, our Lord, in all his glory – and we shall be like him (I John 3:2).

May They Be With Me

As Jesus comes to the end of this profound prayer, he asks his Father that his disciples may be with him. *Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am* (17:24). Jesus was still in the upper room at this time. He had not yet returned to his Father and to the glory he had with the Father in the beginning (17:5). Via the Cross, resurrection and ascension he would soon return to his Father.

Here on earth he revealed the glory of the only begotten of the Father – *we beheld his glory* (1:14). Yet his heavenly glory, the fullness of his glory awaits the believer in heaven. We are not able to comprehend it in our present condition. Only in heaven will we behold the glory of God the Father and God the Son in all its fullness.

In this final petition Jesus *desires* or wills that those whom the Father gave him may be with him where he is – that is in heaven with the Father. That is where Jesus was going and wanted

all those who believe in him to be with him there. He wanted them to behold his glory (17:24).

It was traumatic for the disciples hearing that Jesus was leaving them – they did not understand where he was going. It was also difficult for Jesus leaving them behind. He had spent a lot of time comforting them, and now praying for them. He told them he was going to prepare a place for them and that he would come again (14:3). Still it was not easy for Jesus to leave these disciples whom he loved.

Jesus also loved his Father and wanted to be with him in glory. Was Jesus somewhat torn between the two? He was of course also troubled by the anticipated agony of the Cross. Yet Jesus prayed for, and rejoiced in the hope of being united with his disciples again – united in a deeper sense that he ever was on this earth.

What a wonderful day it will be when we who believe are with Christ in his heavenly home, and see him in his heavenly glory. *We shall see him as he is, and we shall be like him* (I John 3:2). *We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them (those who have died in Christ) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord* (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Jesus prayed that you would be with him where he is now. The question is – do you pray the same thing. Do you pray and rejoice in the prospect of being with the Lord? Are you living in a state of tension? Not tension about your work or your income, but about being with the Lord in heaven, yet knowing that he has things for you to do here on earth. *I am pressed between the two* said Paul, *having a desire to depart and be with Christ...* but knowing that to remain is more needful (Philippians 1:23).

Do you sometimes think about those you love and where they will spend eternity? You will be separated by death, but if they believe like you, then you will see them again in the presence of the Lord. All who are in Christ will be raised to life – but those who are outside, those who have done evil and have no Redeemer, will rise to condemnation and eternal death (5:28). Comfort one another with these words, and challenge one another also to live godly lives in Christ Jesus.

Jesus said he would not leave his disciples as orphans in this world but would send the HS to dwell in them. We are betrothed as it were, with an arrangement like that which Joseph had with Mary. Jesus has promised us to himself. Yet in this world, in this flesh we are tempted and fall into sin. We are not yet ready to join him in glory. But his prayer is that we will be. Jesus desires that we be with him in that place of no sin – no more death or crying or pain – only glory.

Jesus has already prayed for the sanctification of his disciples – that they might be made holy. He prayed for their preservation, for their sanctification and for their unity. Now he concludes by praying that they will join him in the glorious presence of his Father.

I in Them

Jesus concluded on the same note that he began – with confidence and praise. *O righteous Father* he declared. He had completed the work the Father sent him to do (17:4). He came into a world that did not know God, a world that was hostile to its Creator. But Jesus walked

in obedience to his Father, and those whom the Father gave him also came to know and believe that he was sent by God the Father.

Just eleven men who believed in him, but Jesus felt no failure. The majority of the Jews had rejected him and were about to put him to death but he felt no failure. He had spoken the truth, he had declared the most magnificent and powerful name in heaven and on earth. Those who rejected him did so at their own peril.

Jesus was thankful for these men and full of praise for them. He was confident they would tell out the gospel to the lost world. That name by which we must be saved he revealed to his disciples and he said he would continue to declare it (17:26). Presumably he was thinking of the Holy Spirit whom he would send, and who would continue his ministry in the world. Has he declared that name to your heart? Do you know the power that is in the name of Jesus – the power to save you from death?

It was love that moved the Father to send his Son into this world and so this prayer ends on the note of love. *God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son...* (3:16). That divine love, which we know as grace, was revealed to the world in God the Son. The Father loved the Son *before the foundation of the world* (17:24). In this fallen world such love was not known before – before Jesus made it known. Jesus shared that love with his disciples and he shares it with all who come to him crying out for mercy.

Do you know that love of Jesus? It is more powerful than either the pen or the sword. The love of God is changing hearts and lives around the world still today. God is still working to save his chosen ones. Jesus prayed that *the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them* (17:26). Is that love of Jesus in you? Are you walking in the love of Christ and in obedience to his commands? Do you know something at least of the greatest of that love that took Jesus to the Cross to die for you?

Are you excited at the prospect of being with Jesus, of seeing him in all his glory? He loved you and died for you. He desires that you be with him where he now is. Do you share his desire? 'Happy is that Christian who cares for nothing so much as to be holy and loving like his Master while he lives, and a companion of his Master when he dies'.

Oh what a glorious day it will be when we are united with Jesus, and the Father and with all the saints in glory – united in love, in glory and in everlasting praise to the one who sits up the eternal throne in heaven!

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