

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit
Worship at Home
16th May 2021

Jesus prays for his Disciples

'Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so'

This is a chorus I've heard all my life, I would be very young when I was taught it, and it's probably very familiar to you too. But if you were asked for a Bible passage to prove that Jesus loves you, what would you choose? Today we will read how Jesus, with love in his heart, prayed for his friends, and also for us. And I hope you'll agree, it is a perfect Reading for showing that Jesus loves us.

Call to worship

If you are facing hard times: Come!
If you need strength to support those close to you who are suffering: Come!
If you are full of happiness: Come!
If you are burdened, or too busy: Come!
Come let us unite in worship of the one who offers us love, protection, comfort, joy and peace. Amen

Hymn StF489

- 1 All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss ;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*
- 2 Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

- 3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Prayers of adoration and confession

God of yesterday, tomorrow and today,
we are children of the world
you love and care for.
We praise you, heavenly Father,
for calling us into relationship with you.
We praise you, Lord Jesus,
for the power of your name and the
protection of your prayers.
We praise you, Holy Spirit,
for your guidance and gifts that enable us to
draw others to you.
Lord, you are faithful in times of uncertainty,
strong when we are weak,
and the breath of all our being,
the energy of all our doing
and the peace of all our resting.

Forgive us, gracious God,
when we have turned away from your word
and immersed ourselves
in the distractions of the world.
Forgive us, when we have
sought to belong to the world
and compromised your truth to fit in.
Forgive us, when we have
bickered among ourselves
and not shown the world that we are one.
Forgive us, when we have distanced ourselves
from those you have called us to serve.
Forgive us, O God; protect us and unite us.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Gracious God,
we thank you for the enduring prayer
of Jesus for his disciples
which reaches and reassures us today
as we walk in their footsteps,
reminding us that we are not alone
but protected, empowered, forgiven,

and surrounded by your grace every step of the way. Amen

We read now the words of a prayer Jesus said for his Disciples:

Bible Reading John 17:6-19

⁶ “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³ “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Word

As I began preparation for this service, I did as I usually do; I turned to the Lectionary readings for this Sunday, beginning with the Bible passage above, from John. I have read

John's Gospel through, in it's entirety, on several occasions, the last time being not so long ago. Yet as I read this passage, I didn't recognise the words. “How sweet”, I think, that Jesus should pray for his disciples. And then thought, why am I saying that? Did I think Jesus had never prayed for them before? Did I think he only prayed for himself, such as in the Garden of Gethsemane? But as I contemplated this, I realised this is the only time we have the words Jesus was praying for others written down. (One of the things we can thank John for, is all the conversations Jesus had with others, that we can hear him speak – and pray – in this Gospel.) Returning to the Bible passage, I read it again, this time including the preceding chapters, to put the text in context.

It's set during the Last Supper.

When they arrived, Jesus washed his Disciples' feet. “You call me master, but I am your servant. I will do whatever you ask of me”. After supper, he tells them he will be leaving them soon, but not to be troubled.

“Remember me”, he says, as he offers them bread and wine. And he gives them his final teaching. He will lead and guide them to the Father. He promises them the Holy Spirit will come upon them and then, finally, he prays for them, his chosen men.

He brings them before God in prayer. They are the ones chosen by God to be the first disciples. Given to Jesus to teach, and given to Jesus to send out into the world to be the branches bearing much fruit, from the vine that is Jesus.

Jesus prays that His Father will keep them safe, keep them in unity with each other, keep them safe from Satan's clutches, keep them trusting and believing so they are sanctified – cleansed and made holy, to be able to take the truth of God's word into the world.

Jesus loved his disciples, and he knows they have been set a daunting task to undertake when he returns to his Father. He knows how hard it will be for them at times, and although he tried to prepare them, at this time they were still not fully understanding. So Jesus did

what we all do when we are worried about our friends and family, he prays for them, and places them in the hands of his Father. A very safe place to be.

I then continued reading the verses to the end of the chapter, v 20-26. Why are these not in the Lectionary with the others verses? These verses are for me, for you, for us, for everyone who comes today to know Jesus. Jesus prayed for us. Before he went to the cross to die for us, he prayed for us. How could I have missed this prayer? I was rather overwhelmed, reduced to tears, in fact, but my heart was soaring and I'm singing 'Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so'.

So, let me give you the words from **John 17: 20-26**, and as you read, reflect that Jesus prayed this for you, shortly before he was arrested in Garden of Gethsemane.

²⁰My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴ Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory that you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. ²⁵ Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

Jesus prays for all who will follow him - you, me, other Christians we know, and don't know. He prays that we will be one church in unity, building each other up, praying for each other, working together, so that the world will

come to know Jesus through us, and then, together, we can all be one in God's eternal glory. Jesus knows this is a daunting task for us. He knows we too face challenges ahead, and so he brings us before God, places us in God's safe hands, prays that we will have the love of God in us, just as it is in Jesus and those first disciples. Jesus loves us and wants us to share in that love and I pray that you may feel God's love within you today.

And I pray further:

Lord Jesus, as your disciples in the world today,
we thank you that your word of truth,
your prayer of power and your heart of love,
continue to protect, inspire and unite us
as we live out our faith,
build up our relationships,
and hold the world before you in prayer.
Amen.

Hymn: 503

- 1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art ;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.
- 2 Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive ;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.
- 3 Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be ;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee :
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise !

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayers for Intercession

To our sacred world of worship,
we bring our secular selves,

with all the burdens of the people
we know and love;
all the burdens of the people we hear of and
see;
all the burdens of the people we laugh with
and cry with.

All-powerful God, who understands our needs
before we think and speak,
we bring before you our pains and joys,
our sorrows and our celebrations,
and we bring before you, and place in your
safe hands, all those who :
are hurting, in distress and in pain today;
we place in your safe hands those who are
loved and those who are loveless;
we place in your safe hands the young and
old, every gender and every race;
we place in your safe hands the believers and
non-believers;
those certain of their faith and those who
waver;
those of different faiths and different cultures;
we place in your safe hands those whose
bodies are etched with the marks of death
and dying;
the grieving whose minds are bewildered and
burdened by grief.
Almighty God, we place all these for whom we
pray, into your safe hands.
All-powerful God, surround each and every
one with the circle of your protection. Amen.

We join in the prayer that Jesus, himself,
taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the
glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 611

- 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.
- 2 We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road ;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.
- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear ;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.
- 4 I will weep when you are weeping ;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.
- 5 When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.
- 6 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (*b.* 1953)

Blessing

As we close this time of worship,
may our prayers be just the beginning;
may what we have learned
and what we have discovered
lead us into action and lives full
of love and desire to worship you
every hour of the day.

May the love of Jesus fill your heart with joy,
may the Spirit guide and teach you,
and the peace of God comfort and strengthen
you wherever the road takes you this week.
Amen.

Kathy Lowrie