

April 25, 2021

“Hearing Jesus Pray - Part One”
John 17:1-5

FCF: An unteachable spirit in a Christian

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Listening to Jesus pray
(magnet) reshapes what it means to follow Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Some things simply do not belong where we find them. A recent news story ([READ](#)):

A man in Sydney, Australia discovered he had bought more than just lettuce when he returned from a grocery trip...Alexander White noticed a small venomous snake was hanging out in a produce bag he had just brought home from Aldi. The young animal, which apparently came free with purchase, was identified as a pale-headed snake...While there aren't any known human fatalities resulting from this particular species' bite, the snake's venom "can produce some unpleasant symptoms, including severe headache, blurred vision, localized pain, and abnormal bleeding," according to [the Australian Museum](#). White (said) he realized the lettuce stowaway was a snake rather than a worm when it started flicking its tongue. "I would have been more comfortable with a worm, to be honest." The snake was picked up by wildlife officials and will be returned to the wild eventually. The lettuce, however, did not survive the ordeal. White told reporters he used it in a salad wrap for lunch later on.

Some things do not belong where we find them. The point? For Christians to think we know what we need to know, to have our act together, to have little left to learn - none of that belongs.

An unteachable spirit in a Christian is like a snake in the salad. It simply doesn't belong.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 17:1-5](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Think with me about “the heroic journey.” Much has been written on this topic. All the great stories and myths, ancient and modern, are shaped by it. The heroic journey is a template with certain recurring features. There is a hero, a great quest, daunting obstacles along the way, a process of self-discovery, and then the final accomplishment. All the great stories have these. One more thing. In each of them, there is a mentor, a wise guide. Think about it. Arthur had Merlin. Frodo had Gandalf. Luke had Obi-Wan and Yoda. Harry had Dumbledore. What is the common thread? An older wiser figure without whom the hero has no chance to succeed. And from whom they have much to learn and unlearn, much training and retraining to undergo.

The needed guide. Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. His is a one-sided monergistic work. It is finished and full, to be received and embraced. And yet He is also our brother and friend, our shepherd and guide. Jesus is the pattern for what it means to be fully human, to live in close communion with God. Or, put another way, Christ is the model of the Christian life.

So it is wise to watch Him, to fix our eyes upon Him, even to hear Him pray. This is part of the lesson of our text. Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him. This is the first of three messages on this. Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him.

This comes out in three ways. First, dependency. Second, intimacy. And third, priority.

I. DEPENDENCY

First, our dependency. We see this just in the fact that Jesus prays. Think with me. Jesus continually - not just here but all the time - goes to the Father to listen, learn, and lean upon Him.

A) Consider Who This Is

1. Negatively

And who is this we are speaking of? This is not someone who is weak and disobedient, with mixed and confused motives, whose efforts are half-hearted, whose teaching varies with its level of truthfulness and helpfulness. No, this is not someone like you and me. This is Jesus.

2. Positively

He is always good, faithful, and true. Think of what is inferred throughout this prayer. There are clear claims to His deity, obvious references to His eternal pre-existence as the Son of God.

B) Consider What He Asks

Consider who this is who is praying. And then consider what He prays, what He asks.

1. The requests

Jesus asks for the acceptance of His sacrifice on the cross by His Father. And He asks for the impact of His teaching upon His disciples. He asks that the purposes for each would be realized.

2. The stance

Think of the stance behind these requests. Jesus does not presume upon any of this. All of this was promised, planned, guaranteed. But He does not presume. So He pleads with the Father.

Listening to Jesus pray, we learn dependency upon the Father.

Illustration:

Parenting is a challenge to our impatience. Think of the shoe-tying stage. It's parental training for the driving lessons. We offer to help but such offers are spurned by this pre-school sage with the much knotted shoes who insists, "I can do it all by myself!" We're not too sure.

Application:

But that is me. And Jesus is showing that needs to change. Jerram Barrs writes ([READ](#)):
Jesus is showing us in the clearest possible way that our work in God's kingdom will be ineffective without our prayer for the Father to accomplish his purposes through his blessing on all we do... Jesus is teaching us that in all the things we do, it is not enough to be busy for the Lord, not enough to be active in doing his work, not enough to be committed to teaching his Word. In addition to the work we do, we are always to beg the Lord to do his work in people's hearts and minds. For without his work, without his blessing, all our labors will be in vain.

Jesus' dependency upon the Father in prayer shows us what our posture must be as well.

Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him. It means dependency.

II. INTIMACY

Which then takes us from the fact Jesus prays to who He prays to - to His Father.

A) The Meaning

What does it mean for Jesus to refer to God this way? We ought not to breeze past this.

1. Usage

The Gospels record twenty-one prayers of Jesus. And each time, Jesus uses this way of address. Each time, that is, except for His cry of abandonment as He hung dying upon the cross.

2. Image

The image is of one to whom He looks for strength, wisdom, provision, protection. It could be translated “Daddy” - the way a small child speaks, stretching out their arms to their male parent.

B) The Significance

Let's not race past this. Think of the significance of this, not just for Jesus but for us.

1. For Jesus

This is the Trinity - a unity of being and diversity of persons, equal in honor and glory, the Son subordinating Himself to the Father. Jesus alone stands in relation to the Father as the Son.

2. For His disciples

Yet we have brought near as children. Jesus makes this clear immediately after His resurrection (**READ John 20:17b**). We have been adopted into the family, with all the rights and privileges.

Listening to Jesus pray, we learn of our intimacy with the Father.

Illustration:

Some of you may have heard me use this illustration before. Who gets to wake the king in the middle of the night, asking for a glass of water? A guard can burst in if there's some sort of threat in the castle. An advisor might come if there's some international crisis. But a glass of water? Who gets to wake the king in the middle of the night for that? A child of the king.

Application:

My friend, if you are a Christian, a disciple, a follower of Jesus, that's you. And the King gladly receives you. He welcomes us - no matter when and for no matter what. No matter when and for no matter what. Why? How can this possibly be? He's our Father, our Pater, our Abba.

Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him. And it means intimacy.

III. PRIORITY

So we have the fact Jesus prays, to whom He prays, and then what He prays - for glory. It's mentioned five times here. Clearly, that is the theme of this prayer. What does this mean?

A) Understanding the Terms

1. Glory

We need to understand the terms. What is glory? Generally, it is the unique magnificence, the particular honor, the special splendor of a person or thing. Every bird, flower, sunset, and person has its own glory. Specifically, the Scriptures speak much of God's glory. And Jesus' as well.

2. Glorify

What then is it for God to be glorified? It means to show forth His glory, to make it known and let it be seen. We especially can glorify God by trusting Him, by obeying and imitating Him.

B) Understanding the Prayer

So how does this come out in this prayer? How does Jesus pray about glory?

1. Eternal glory

He prays for eternal glory (**READ John 17:5**). Jesus is asking that He would again share with the Father the glory He had laid down to accomplish His mission. So this is a restoration of glory.

2. Glory on earth

He prays for glory on earth (**READ John 17:4**). Jesus reflects on the way He has brought glory to the Father through His life and ministry. In all His speaking, His serving others, loving those around Him, keeping the Father's commands - Jesus has been pointing people to the Father.

3. Glory in death

But He also prays for glory in His death (**READ John 17:1**). This is a clear reference to Jesus' coming death on the cross. This is the supreme expression of His glory, the clearest way we see who He is in His love and mercy towards us. "Father, the moment has come. The time is at hand. Glorify me that you may be glorified." As He taught before, "Hallowed be your name."

Listening to Jesus pray, we learn of the necessary priority of the Father's glory.

Application:

We have to acknowledge that this is so very challenging. Think with me. What is the focus, the priority, of our prayers? What is our heart's burden as we cry out to God? Or perhaps we should ask what makes us cry out to God? It's not to say there is no place for our needs and desires. Hardly. But the first and prior place must be given to the Father's glory, that He would be seen, known, honored, esteemed, trusted, obeyed, and praised. By all people. In all things.

Through all our trials, in all our temptations, in the midst of any tribulation, our heart's burden must be the Father's glory - whatever the outcome. This gives shape to it all. It doesn't necessarily rule out our needs and desires. But it can order and reorder, place and replace them.

Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him. It directs our priority.

CONCLUSION:

Let me take you back to this idea of our need for a mentor, a wise guide for the journey. Think with me of a scene from *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*. Luke Skywalker is struggling in his Jedi training under Master Yoda. Luke has learned much but has much yet to learn. In this scene, he cannot see how he can possibly lift his X-Wing from the swamp. This is obviously different than just sticks and rocks. To which Master Yoda proclaims (**READ quote**), "No, no different. Only different in your mind. You must unlearn what you have learned."

The point? Sometimes the way to do the most important things, the most vital things, may not be the way we think. That's true for Jedi training. And it's true for Christian prayer as well. And not just prayer. It includes that but it actually touches everything that comes with following Jesus. We need to check our assumptions at the door. As we listen to Jesus' prayer, we see that there is much in life, in following Him as a disciple, that we so need to unlearn.

Listening to Jesus pray reshapes what it means to follow Him. May we listen.

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