

John 17:1-11 Do You Hear How Much Christ Loves You? Easter 7 May 28, 2017

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from our Lord, Jesus Christ, who daily prays for you.

In the gospel lesson for the day we hear Jesus praying : John 17:1-11

These are Your words heavenly Father. Give us confidence in Your love. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

I recently heard on the news of a case of mistaken identity. A man in Milwaukee was arrested for a crime he did not do. He happened to have the same first and last name as another man who had committed a crime and was avoiding capture. The innocent man was able to convince the police of the mistaken identity. But by that time, his arrest had been published online. He was about to start a new job, but when the company checked the criminal reports, they didn't hire him. He is still today trying to clear his name because of a clerical mistake of his identity.

When it comes to God and His grace toward us, we could conclude that God has a case of mistaken identity. He is holy and we are sinners and His enemies by nature. How can He claim us as His own when we have done every sin possible to make Him disown us? We are the ones who deserve eternal prison time in hell. But, Jesus said that God knows those who are His; and He has blessings for us that we in no way deserve. Our names are written in His book of life; and God does not make clerical errors. In John 17, Christ prayed for His disciples and for all who would believe through their word. He answers the question:

Do You Hear How Much God Loves You?

First, Jesus intercedes to His Father for us! He said about His followers, *"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are Yours."* (v.9) There were two questions I had as I studied this. 1. Why isn't Jesus praying for the world? We know that God wants all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. So, why wouldn't Jesus pray for that? Later, Jesus prayed to the Father that the disciples would tell the world about Him. (v.23) 2. Also, it seems a contradiction to our reason: that God the Father is giving Jesus certain people to save that already belong to Him. From eternity, God knew those who were His. We who believe in Christ can be confident that before the creation of the world, God chose us to be His own. God's choosing by grace included calling people in their lifetime to a saving faith in Christ. His choosing from eternity will keep people in the true faith to eternal life.

Jesus continued His prayer, *"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."* (v.11) Jesus was soon going to be removed from their sight, first by death and second by ascending to heaven. Although His followers would miss seeing Jesus, He would commit them to the heavenly Father's powerful name. That name is everything He reveals about Himself to save us.

From what would God save us? His Word of love protects from the power of sin. Temptations can be so strong. The devil knows our weaknesses. But Jesus prayed for God's help. He gives strength against the power of sin through His Word. Jesus said that we would not be taken out of the world all at once, but He prayed that we will not be taken in by the world. The Bible warns, *"Do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2) God is changing us for good every time we hear His Word. Jesus also prayed to the Father to unite us just as He and the Father are united. This unity happens only through a whole-hearted devotion to God's Word, His law and His gospel in Christ.

The Gospel reminds us of Jesus' power. The Bible states, "*He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*" (Hebrews 7:25) God is saying that Christ saves from beginning to end. He gives us the complete package or all inclusive. He will not fail. The Gospel states, "*Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*" (Hebrews 9:28) With a love so great for us, we have every reason to be waiting for Jesus' return. He will take us, body and soul, to be with Him! Lastly the Gospel states, "*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*" (1 John 2:1) Jesus is the only man who can approach our Holy God. He is righteous, not just sinless but He has done all things perfectly out of love. His pleading for our forgiveness through His shed blood makes us holy in God's sight!

Second, Christ rejoices with the Father about us. Jesus prayed, "*Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority ... that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*" (v.1-3) It may seem strange to us that Jesus asks for glory for Himself for our benefit. In life, if someone else wins a prize we lose. But, Jesus is our representative. Through faith in Him, everything good connected to His name is credited to us. It is no mistake!

Also, when Jesus asked for glory from God, He knew that the way to glory was through the cross where He would pay the debt of our sins by His death. His glory was also in His resurrection which assures us that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and that He overcame death so that our bodies will be raised with Him in eternal glory. What a great love Jesus has to do all this for us!

Out of love Jesus wants us to be certain of His blessing. He said in His prayer, "*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.*" (v.8) The first blessing we receive from Christ's prayer is that we accept Jesus' teaching from God. Many people today even in Christian churches teach that the Bible is not God's Word and that the words of Jesus printed in red (if you have that kind of Bible) are not really His words. But, Jesus' word itself has convinced us by the power of the Gospel that every word of Jesus is the saving truth!

The second blessing we receive is that we accept the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, sent from God the Father. If Jesus is not God, we have no Savior. He would only be a man who saved Himself. His blood would have no value to pay for anyone's sins unless Jesus is God and man in one person. The disciples were led by our loving God to know the truth. John wrote, "*The Word became flesh.... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14)

We have spoken about mistaken identity and all the problems it can lead to. But, God's Word tells us that Jesus gives us a new identity. It is no mistake. It is God's amazing love willing to send His Son to die so we will be with Him in glory! Because we know our sins and weaknesses, we may wonder if God has it right? Did He really know our names from eternity or was it mistaken identity? Did Jesus really think about us as He prayed and as He died on the cross or not? Jesus loved us, even as sinners. As we trust in Christ to save us, He will give us a new identity and God's full blessings! There is no mistake with God's love in Christ! Amen.