

John 17:1-26

That last Passover Feast with Jesus had been most unforgettable.

Not only had He given the disciples His promise of inner peace, but He had introduced them to a new privilege in prayer.

John 16:23 "--- **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.**"

No, He had never given them a promise like that before. Indeed, it had never been possible before.

However, after He completed His work of salvation, and after He took His place at His Father's right hand, it would be possible.

In fact, it would be inevitable.

Yes, Jesus would soon become their Mediator
(or go between).

And it is a ministry on the behalf of all
believers which continues unto this
present day.

Certainly, this was a new and wonderful
ministry, but it wasn't a new idea.

No, it had been conceived in a far off
eternity, and it had been foreshadowed
during that long period of Old
Testament Law in the construction of
the tabernacle in the wilderness.

And finally, it would be revealed in the
Book of Hebrews.

Please turn with me to Hebrews 4:14-16

**"Seeing then that we have a great high
priest, that is passed into the
heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us**

hold fast our profession.

15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

V 16 admonishes all believers to **"come boldly unto the throne of grace."**

Even though the tabernacle was primarily constructed to portray God's dear Son, it's overall layout, and the positioning of the furniture in front of it, gives us an interesting picture of man's way back to God.

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In order to explain this whole situation, I will be moving back and forth between the earthly tabernacle and the true tabernacle in heaven that it represented.

I hope it will not be too confusing.

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In Old Testament times, the average Israelite was denied direct access to God.

He could enter the courtyard that surrounded the tabernacle, but at that point, he must give his offering to a priest who would present it to God on his behalf.

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However, after the Lamb of God completed His work on Cavalry and took **"away the sin of the world,"** all of this changed.

Yes, Jesus has opened up a pathway back to God, a pathway that had been faithfully portrayed in the layout of the tabernacle during those long years of Old Testament Law.

Let's begin our journey.

When a sinful man enters the gate of the courtyard that surrounds the tabernacle, the first thing he sees is the brazen altar.

That's where the sacrifices were burned, and that altar pictures Calvary where Jesus was made "**sin for us.**"

If he turns back at that point, all hope is lost.

For there's only one way back to God, and that's the way of the cross.

However, if he accepts God's remedy for sin, he can continue his journey as a born again believer.

The next item of furniture he will encounter is the laver of brass.

The laver was the large ornate container that held water for ritual cleansing.

Under Old Testament Law, the priests were required to wash thoroughly there before entering the tabernacle to do service for God.

In the upper room, and as Jesus was washing the disciples' feet, He alluded to the necessity of daily cleansing --- **"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."**

However, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our**

sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

So, if the New Testament believer wishes to serve God, He too must avail himself of Christ's offer of daily cleansing.

Having done so, he is now ready to continue his journey.

As he pulls back the curtain at the entrance of the tabernacle, he will find himself in the first of two rooms.

That was also the case with the Old Testament priests.

This room is called the Holy Place, and it was the place where the priests ministered to God on a daily basis.

However, behind a curtain, or veil, there was a second room called the Holy of Holies (or Holiest).

The priests never went in there.

Behind that curtain you would find the Ark
of the Covenant with the mercy seat,
which was placed on top of it.

But more importantly, the very presence of
God resided in that room just over the
mercy seat.

If any priest tried to enter that room,
God's glory would immediately strike
him dead.

However, once a year, on the Day of
Atonement, the High priest was required
to enter the Holiest.

There he would sprinkle the blood of the
sacrifice on the mercy seat and
immediately in front of it.

And by so doing, the sins of the people
would be set aside for another year.

However, next year, the whole process would
need to be repeated.

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This annual event foreshadowed a much greater event.

In fact, it foreshadowed the most important event in history.

Hebrews 9:24-28 **"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:**
25: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
26: For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27: And as it is appointed unto men
once to die, but after this the
judgment:

28: So Christ was once offered to bear
the sins of many; and unto them that
look for him shall he appear the second
time without sin unto salvation."

Yes, on the cross of Calvary, Jesus took
away the sin that separated us from
God.

But He did something else.

As our great High Priest, He opened up a new
avenue of prayer for every believer.

All this is explained in Hebrews 10:19-22

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness
to enter into the holiest by the blood
of Jesus,

20: By a new and living way, which he
hath consecrated for us, through the

veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21: And having an high priest over the house of God;

22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

This, of course, is a heavenly scene, but, once again, it was foreshadowed on earth.

We see that in Mark 15:37-38 "**And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.**

38: And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

I'm sure the priests repaired the earthly veil in the Temple, but the heavenly veil has remained open ever since,

giving us access into the Holy of
Holies.

Yes, Jesus has provided "**a new and living
way**" into His Father's presence, and He
expects us to use it --- "**ask, and ye
shall receive, that your joy may be
full.**"

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But there are times when our hearts are so
burdened that the words will not come.
Often that's the very time when our
petitions would have been most
effective.

Don't despair.

That's also the time when the Holy Spirit
steps in to put our longings into
words.

Romans 8:26-27 "**Likewise the Spirit also
helpeth our infirmities: for we know**

not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

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As we enter John chapter 17, the subject is still prayer.

But this time it's the Lord's prayer.

During Jesus' public ministry, one of His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray.

He began by saying --- **"Our Father which art in heaven."**

We call that the Lord's Prayer, but,
actually, that's the disciples' *sample*
prayer.

But there is a Lord's Prayer, and that's
what we will be meditating upon today.

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Jesus and His disciples were on their way to
the Garden of Gethsemane.

Having left Jerusalem, they were walking
down the long incline to the brook
Kidron, which runs through a valley
about 100 feet below the city.

Somewhere along the way, Jesus lifted up His
eyes and prayed.

Certainly, He might have paused under an
olive tree or at some other convenient
spot, but more than likely, He kept on
walking, with His disciples clustered
around Him.

And more than likely, He was praying out
loud in the hearing of His disciples.

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It was now evening, and possibly the
moonlight was casting the shimmering
shadow of giant olive trees on the
grassy slope.

In the middle of this quiet scene, we see a
Shepherd with His little flock trailing
out behind Him.

As He walked, He --- **lifted up his eyes to
heaven, and said, Father, the hour is
come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son
also may glorify thee:"** John 17:1

Jesus was always conscious of the time,
especially as it concerned His Father's
agenda.

So we're not too surprised to hear Him
saying --- **"Father, the hour is come".**

John the Baptist had introduced Him as "----
**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the
sin of the world."**

It was now time to do just exactly that.

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And then He turned His concern to His sheep.
It was also time to leave His little flock
behind.

John 17:2-3 **"As thou hast given him power
over all flesh, that he should give
eternal life to as many as thou hast
given him.**

**3: And this is life eternal, that they
might know thee the only true God, and
Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."**

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John 1:3 says **"All things were made by him;
and without him was not any thing made
that was made."**

So as part of the Godhead, Jesus has always been the source of physical life.

Soon He would become the author of "**eternal life,**" that is, to as many as God had "**given him.**"

And herein we have a problem.

Seven times in His prayer, Jesus referred to His sheep as being given Him by His Father, even though the Scriptures make perfectly clear that man has a free will.

Certainly, we belong to God by virtue of the fact that He made us.

Actually, that's true of all of His creation.

But man is different than the rest of His creation.

Every man can choose either to accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour, or reject God's offer of mercy.

Of course, as with any choice, there are natural consequences.

John 3:36 says, **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."**

However, having said all that, how do we reconcile our free choice with Jesus' words concerning His sheep?

Does God's sovereignty cancel out our free will?

Well, it could have, but it didn't.

That's because, according to God's sovereign will, He allowed Adam and Eve, and,

indeed, all mankind to choose for or
against Him.

And as we all know, our choices have made us
enemies of God.

So, even though we are God's creation, He is
not at liberty to simply to give us to
His Son.

No, two things must happen before we can be
Jesus' sheep.

We must *choose* Christ, and He must satisfy
God's righteous judgment against us.

That night, Jesus was on His way to do just
exactly that.

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As He walked along the road to Gethsemane,
Jesus prayed for the little flock that
God had committed into His care.

And He had more than those 11 men in mind.

We know that, because in V 20 He says ---

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

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So, as Jesus walked down the grassy slope to the brook Kidron, He **"lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said"**, in V 4, **"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."**

No one could argue the fact that Jesus had fulfilled His Father's promise to Israel.

And as far as His disciples were concerned, He had left no stone unturned to provide for them.

But how could someone who was always so conscious of time say **"I have finished**

the work which thou gavest me to do,"
when His greatest work was yet
unaccomplished?

It almost seems that the Eternal One had
stepped ahead in time.

Also, in V 11, we find Him saying --- **"And
now I am no more in the world,"** in
spite of the fact that He was presently
walking down the road to Gethsemane.

Yes, there's no doubt about it. In the mind
of Jesus, and in the mind of God, the
cross was already an accomplished fact.
Actually, it had always been an accomplished
fact.

Jesus had always been --- **"a lamb without
blemish and without spot:**

**20: Who verily was foreordained before
the foundation of the world."**

The wrath of the Pharisees and the might of Rome were completely irrelevant.

And even though the Roman soldiers would look upon Jesus' crucifixion as a standard execution, there would be nothing standard about it.

First of all, His death would be voluntary -- **"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."**

No, Jesus wouldn't die from the loss of blood. He **"gave up the ghost."**

In other words, He would dismiss His Spirit.

And when He uttered the words **"It is finished,"** He didn't mean *I am finished*.

No, it was a cry of victory, not a cry of defeat!

So here in John 17:4, Jesus simply says --- **"I have glorified thee on the earth: I**

have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

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V 5-8 "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

6: I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7: Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8: For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

I'm quite sure the disciples were listening to every word and nodding their heads in agreement.

Yes, their Master had drawn them into a very personal relationship with His Father -
--- **"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world."**

And isn't that the first thing we want to know when meeting a stranger?

We want to know their name.

What a joy it must have been when Jesus introduced His disciples to God by the name of Father.

And then we find Him saying in V 8 "--- **I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me."**

Certainly the disciples were not unique in that respect, for Jesus had proclaimed the Word of God to the entire nation.

But they were unique in their response ---

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them."

That certainly couldn't be said of Caiaphas, or Herod, or even Pilate who had to admit that he had found **"no fault in this man."**

No, those men had never received His words! But the disciples had.

In the face of an unbelieving and intolerant world, the disciples had believed every word Jesus said --- **"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."**

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John 17:9-10 **"I pray for them: I pray not
for the world, but for them which thou
hast given me; for they are thine.
10: And all mine are thine, and thine
are mine; and I am glorified in them."**

Certainly, Jesus cares for the whole world.
But that prayer on that particular evening
had nothing to do with the world.

No, it was a Shepherd's prayer, and it was
all about His sheep.

For 3-1/2 years He had poured His life into
these men.

True, they would forsake Him even on that
very evening, but the Good Shepherd
would bring them back.

You see, Sheep-herding is much different
than other forms of farming.

There are no fences to protect the sheep
from predators, or from straying.

There's no barn to sleep in in relative safety.

And there are no hay mows or granaries to meet their daily needs.

The shepherd is everything.

He's their keeper, their protector, and their guide.

For 3-1/2 years, Jesus had literally been their personal Shepherd.

Now, He must return to His Father.

Nevertheless, He would not abandon them.

No, His responsibility would never change.

As their Advocate and their Mediator, He would continue to be totally involved with their care.

Of course He could no longer walk before them, but He would ask His Heavenly Father to send them "**another Comforter.**"

V 11-12 "And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world, and I come
to thee. Holy Father, keep through
thine own name those whom thou hast
given me, that they may be one, as we
are.

12: While I was with them in the world,
I kept them in thy name: those that
thou gavest me I have kept, and none of
them is lost, but the son of perdition;
that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Do you know what I see here?

I see a Shepherd coming home.

He has led His sheep safely through the dark
valleys and the green pastures, and now
it is time to report in.

*Father, they are all present and accounted
for --- "While I was with them in the
world, I kept them in thy name: those*

that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost----."

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V 13 **"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."**

More than any other verse, I think this one points out the fact that Jesus was praying out loud.

V 14 **"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."**

Certainly the Christian can confidently say, **"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,"** but at the same time, the Word of God alienates us from the world.

Yes, the world hates the Word of God, and
even God Himself.

They hated His Word because it runs counter
to everything they hold dear.

It condemns the world's religions, denies
the world's philosophies, and
disregards its wisdom.

Yes, the world hates God's Word, and it also
hates His Son.

In fact, on that very evening as Jesus
walking to Gethsemane, the world was
gearing itself up to destroy Him.

The wood had already been cut for the cross.
The nails for His hands and feet were
already forged.

The legal machinery was in place, and the
verdict had been determined --- **"it is
expedient for us, that one man should
die for the people."**

No, the world is no friend of Jesus, and it
is no friend of His sheep.

That's why He prayed for His disciples'
protection.

V 15 **"I pray not that thou shouldst take
them out of the world, but that thou
shouldst keep them from the evil."**

True, the disciples were protected for many
years, but, in the end, most of them
were martyred.

Were Jesus' prayers answered?

Yes, I believe they were.

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No, we belong here, and we have a job to do.
The world is both our battlefield and our
mission field.

And to deal with both of these situations,
we have been given the Sword of the

Spirit --- "Sanctify them through thy
truth: thy word is truth."

Yes, we have been sanctified, or set apart.

And we have been set apart for a specific

purpose --- "As thou hast sent me into
the world, even so have I also sent
them into the world."

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V 20-23 "Neither pray I for these alone, but
for them also which shall believe on me
through their word; (yes, we are
included)

21: That they all may be one; as thou,
Father, art in me, and I in thee, that
they also may be one in us: that the
world may believe that thou hast sent
me.

22: And the glory which thou gavest me
I have given them; that they may be

one, even as we are one:

23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Four times in three verses, Jesus prayed that His followers would be one.

Like any shepherd, Jesus wants to keep His flock together, and what a job it has turned out to be!

V 24-26 "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25: O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee,

and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26: And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

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I would like to conclude this lesson by dwelling upon Jesus' words in V 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me".

All of us like to share our homes with our friends, don't we?

In a way, our home is part of us.

Its decorations reflect our tastes, and its contents reflect our choices.

So sharing our home is like sharing
ourselves.

I think Jesus is just waiting to show us
around His heaven, **"that they may
behold my glory, which thou hast given
me."**

Yes, someday Jesus will bring us home.

Some day His home will be our home.

And when He has finally gathered His flock
around Him, I wouldn't be surprised if
I hear the words --- **"I kept them in
thy name: those that thou gavest me I
have kept, and none of them is lost".**

Yes, they are all present and accounted for!