

What Jesus Wants

John 17:9-13

It is incredible is it not that Jesus considered the disciples to be God's (the Father's) gift to Himself. He looked as we saw beyond their disobedience and saw their obedience, "They have kept Your word." They had settled certain truths in their minds and hearts. "1) that Jesus' life is explainable only by God's gifts to Him. 2) That Jesus' words are the very words of God. 3) That Jesus came down from the very side of God above. 4) That Jesus is God's great hour of sharing, God's major mission."

It is our privilege to see ourselves in this group of Galileans. Astonishingly, Jesus looks at us and sees what God has done. He receives us as a gift from the Father. And, God has so worked in our lives that we agree with the conclusions of the eleven. When Jesus worked, God worked. There is no other explanation for what He did. When Jesus spoke, His words were God's word. Jesus was in fact, pre-existent. He came from the right hand of the Father and returned to His right hand when His work was completed. Jesus' life and ministry was God's ultimate testament to His love and compassion for every soul. Jesus speaks personally and individually to you to say on behalf of His Father, I love you and I have a beautiful plan for your life, Follow Me.

Of the disciples, Jesus said to His Father, "I pray for them." When Jesus says that He prays, this is significant, is it not? It is comforting when we tell each other, "I will pray for you." If I am praying for you then I am on your side. My prayers are an expression of goodwill. If I approach the Father on your behalf then there is no one more powerful or concerned or invested in your life situation to whom I could go. To pray for your brother is the most you can do but it is not all you can do. Do not be the one who with holds good and then offers to pray, such prayers are insincere.

So, Jesus prays for us. We also have Paul's witness that the Holy Spirit prays for us. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one. That is, they are unified. There is no

disagreement possible for them. What one wants the other wants. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit prays in order to be of help to us in our weaknesses. We will sometimes be unable to know how to pray or what we should pray for but "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." This goes to the intensity of the Holy Spirit's praying. As to the content of His praying, "He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." As to our experience of what the will of God is for our lives, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Jesus prayed and He spoke specifically of what He was asking the Father to do on behalf of the disciples. "I come to You, Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as we are." The keeping of the disciples was first, an immediate crisis. They could easily have scattered in all directions from Jerusalem as soon as it became clear that Jesus would be crucified or at least as soon as it was clear that He was dead. If Jerusalem had been unsafe for Jesus then it was certainly unsafe for them. The people who had Jesus killed would not hesitate to do the same to them. Getting away was the most reasonable course but, they didn't leave the city. God needed them to be there so they could witness the empty grave and encounter their risen Savior. But to be there and to experience the resurrection they needed to be kept. Thomas' story gives witness to this necessity. He was not in the upper room on resurrection day as the others and he did not believe as the others who were there. The disciples needed to be kept and Jesus prayed that they would be kept.

The broader meaning of being kept has to do with loyalty to Jesus and fidelity to the cause. Jesus had kept them till then (with the necessary exception of Judas) but when He left, the keeping of the disciples would belong to the Father. But Jesus' objective here was profound, "That they may be one as we are." Father and Son in agreement, unified in the mission to bring salvation to humankind. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the

throne of God." Father and Son, one in essence, one in purpose, one in word and in power. "That they may be one as we are."

Finally Jesus added that the objective of His words was that "they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." With the heaviness and burden of the cross overshadowing Him, Jesus spoke of His joy. Hebrews had it right. The joy here is beyond the present. It is a future joy. It is a joy possible only through the completion of the present work of suffering and sacrifice. But it is joy that is palpable now when our eyes are on the prize. It is a joy that keeps us where we are, working, striving, and faithful to His call.