

A PRAYER FOR YOU



Scripture:

Psalm 97

¹The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! ²Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. ³Fire goes before him, and consumes his adversaries on every side. ⁴His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.

⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory. ⁷All worshipers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him. ⁸Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O God. ⁹For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰The LORD loves those who hate evil; he guards the lives of his faithful; he rescues them from the hand of the wicked. ¹¹Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. ¹²Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

John 17:20-26

(Talking to God. This is the last half of a prayer Jesus prayed before his arrest.

He has just had the Last Supper on his last night with his disciples before his crucifixion.)

²⁰“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



A PRAYER FOR YOU

Just before he physically left this earth, Jesus prayed for you! How does that feel to know Jesus prayed for you?

You might be wondering how we can trust that each of us are included in this final prayer?? Here is the evidence for your inclusion. In the 20th verse Jesus clearly states I ask not only on behalf of these (meaning those disciples he was currently residing with) but also on behalf of those who will believe in me. You are included in that group!

The group that believes today can give credit and thanks to those early disciples who were brave enough to spread the Good News of God's love in Christ's way. And their mission was so effective that the Good News stretched across the globe and still has a positive impact on people today, two-thousand years later!

ONENESS, ETERNAL LIFE AND LOVE

So, what exactly did Jesus pray for us? Let's break it down and see what was important to Jesus before he was crucified. If we summarize the themes with a few words it would be: Oneness, Eternal Life, and Love.

He didn't pray that we all be well, or have prosperity, or success. He prayed that we all "be one." And to "be one," he says, we first need to realize that Jesus had God in him, and we also have God and Jesus in us.

Now why do we say, "Christ in us" or "God in us?" A blog by Steve Moody called "Life, Truth and Hope" explains it this way: We need to open our hearts to Jesus and "allow him to live in us." Then he goes on to ask the question: "What does Jesus Christ do when we allow Him to live in us? Does He begin living our lives for us? Does He begin making our choices for us? No.

The Bible makes it clear that we are to be the temple and abode of God (2 Corinthians 6:16). But how do God and Christ live in us? It is through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11). Therefore, the degree to which God and Jesus Christ dwell in us depends on the degree to which we follow the leading of God's Spirit and use its power to actually become like God and Jesus Christ in nature, character, spirit, attitudes, approach to life and love.

THE FORMULA FOR BEING ONE

Now that leads us to the other part of what could be called the formula for being one. (Ha! We carry Formula One in us! Sounds like a car's fuel additive! We can think of it like that. When you have Formula One in you, your life is stronger, more loving, and more peaceful. The formula is love.)

Trusting that we are loved the same way God loved Jesus is an important ingredient on being one. Jesus prayed, "so that the love with which you have loved me will be in them and I in them."

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

It is a big deal to trust that Jesus prayed for each one of us in this prayer. But prayer in general or telling someone you will pray for them seems to be losing its impact. It is being devalued somehow. Currently, people in the mass media and social media (such as on Facebook posts) intentionally avoid saying, "Our thoughts and prayers are with you," because the phrase "thoughts and prayers" has been over-used in response to tragedies like mass shootings. "Sending prayers" is no longer thought of as a comforting message after mass shootings, it seems.

I understand it though. People are so frustrated that many distant responses are, "Oh! Our thoughts and prayers are with you," and then they forget about the tragedy until the next mass shooting.

This has become a frustrating cliché because saying, "My thoughts and prayers are with you," seems to excuse them from trying to change

things that may prevent more shootings from happening in the future.

NOT ENOUGH

The rallying cry after the massive Parkland, Texas school shooting was, “Thoughts and prayers are not enough! The gun control laws must be changed!” And now there was another mass shooting in Virginia Beach. Sadly, we become numb to all the mass shootings. One of the TV broadcasters said, “We have to be careful and not say, ‘It was only twelve people this time.’”

We might forget that this number represents twelve people who had plans for the weekend, and their families won’t ever see them walk in the door of their homes again. No more summer vacations for them, their dogs wonder when they are coming back, no more July 4th fireworks or picnics. The twelve are dead and four more injured for no reason other than they were in the path of an angry co-worker with a lethal weapon that could kill and injure many innocent people in a short amount of time. Think about it.

ANTHRAX OR EBOLA

If sixteen innocent people were intentionally infected with anthrax or Ebola at that municipal building in Virginia, you can bet the Centers for Disease Control would be there eradicating the Ebola or anthrax and whatever was used as a transmitter of the disease.

But when it is bullets killing people from guns that continue to kill masses of innocent people, we still allow the bullets and the guns to freely proliferate. It makes no sense to me at all. Bullets are worse than bacteria. We should treat them like a disease along with the gunman who most likely has a mental health sickness, too.

SANTA ROSA HIGH SCHOOL

But the news last Friday included us and our own Santa Rosa High School. It went on lockdown the same day as this Virginia Beach tragedy. A student with a gun was sighted and the high school went into disaster mode. The trauma imposed by a lockdown isn’t as damaging as the trauma when a shooter kills people around you, but it is still psychologically damaging to imagine murder is about to happen and not know if it might happen to you.

So, that is the reason the phrase “thoughts and prayers” is no longer comforting to some of the families and friends of shooting victims. They want action along with prayers.

So how do we learn to value prayer again? Pray for oneness.

Jesus wanted us to be one. His prayer included a prayer for oneness so that Christ’s people would live harmoniously with one another and accomplish the building up of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. To effectively shape and form this world in the way Jesus designed it to be we must work together and quit being so divided.

ONE IN THE SPIRIT

Being one in the Spirit is vital for our survival as a species. We must learn to cooperate and get along or we will wipe each other off the planet. Last year an article in the Journal Safety reported that it only takes one-hundred nuclear bombs to destroy the whole of life as we know it.

Currently there are fifteen-thousand nuclear bombs and missiles ready to deploy around the world. Fifteen thousand is literally overkill. It will only take one hundred to end it all for everyone on the planet. The scientists from Michigan and Tennessee also describe the devastating global environmental impact that would occur when a country deploys one hundred nuclear weapons, even if they are not aimed at us.

The experts estimate that China would quickly lose thirty-five million people (who live close together) if bombs were dropped there.

Over time, the “environmental blowback” would involve a significant drop in global temperatures as soot from nuclear blasts prevents sunlight from reaching earth’s surface. Combined with reduced precipitation and poor air quality, the dropping of one hundred bombs could severely impact food production, potentially resulting in mass starvation,” besides the long-term toxicity of radiation when it is unleashed. We just can’t let it happen.

If we obey what Jesus prayed, then being one means we look for common goals and beliefs. Then we pray and take steps to make it happen. For example: we all have a common goal of wanting our children to be healthy, to be safe and to succeed in life. It promotes one-ness when we take steps to help all children in the world achieve this goal, not just our own.

One-ness means we are working together towards a common goal. Another example of this is: we all want this church to grow and for it to stay clean so it will be here in the future. We can help this happen by inviting others to church and role model giving of our time, talents and resources.

To be one, we must have love as our foundation and freely share that love with all, even with the people who don’t agree on gun control, and even with those who are the opposite political party or in a foreign country.

CARRY FORTH GOD’S MINISTRY

God wants us all to be one in the spirit of love so we will carry forward Christ’s ministry in the world - which is to promote peace, justice, and loving mercy, forgiving and healing all who need it. That is our purpose. Where you see injustice being done, you are empowered by God to seek justice for that person. When you see an outcast, you are called by God to include him or her and welcome them into the fold. One-ness is about conforming your life into Christ’s life and becoming one with all those who seek the truth by living honestly and authentically as you were created to be for eternity.

Eternal life was also important in this prayer. This passage today says God loved Jesus before the foundation of the world. That gives us a hint that there was life eternal before the world was made and there will be life after. In the beginning of this prayer, earlier in chapter 17, Jesus says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God.....”

Our lives are meant to be prayerful and one with God in eternal life, enabling this world we live in to thrive and help others thrive as well.

May it be so. Amen

Benediction:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 reminds us to “pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for that is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

May you be one with all the other disciples of Jesus working in unity for the benefit of all.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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