

Sermon Easter 7 2020

John 17: 1-11

The famous 19th century English Preacher, Charles Spurgeon once said “some brethren pray by the yard: but true prayer is measured by weight and not length”. He was of course referring to Jesus high Priestly prayer in Chapter 17 of John’s Gospel. It is the prayer Jesus prayed to his father on the night before his death. I have been informed on good authority that it is only about 650 words taking only 3 minutes and 30 seconds to read it aloud. And in case you’re wondering I haven’t counted the words nor have I timed it. It may only be 650 words but it is the longest recorded prayer in any of the Gospels.

It is Maundy Thursday; Jesus is with his disciples in the upper room. He is telling them that soon he must leave the world and He is handing over His mission to them. And then Jesus starts to pray. He doesn’t go off alone somewhere to pray as he quite often did, instead he permits his disciples to listen to him. Here is Jesus the night before his crucifixion, knowing what torture and pain lies in store for him the next day and he begins to pray in the most intimate way, sharing his deepest and most heartfelt concerns. In the first eleven verse of this prayer in John 17 we hear Jesus pray for Himself that He might Glorify God. Jesus did this by giving up his life and dying on the cross. Notice how many times a derivative of Glory is used in these first five verses, no less than five times.

Jesus then goes on to pray for the disciples because He knows that when He is gone, they will be persecuted as He was. The world will hate them, just as it hated Jesus (John 16:1-4). He prays that his disciples will be one as He and the Father is one, praying for their unity until he returns in power and glory. Although the lectionary

reading this morning ended at Verse 11 if you read on, Jesus then prays for the unity of all believers, that is you and me.

Jesus life was rich in prayer. He prayed at all times, in all manner places and for all manner of people for varying lengths of time. Jesus prayed alone and would go off to some solitary place to be with his heavenly Father. Before Jesus started His ministry, he spent forty days alone in the desert (Mark 1:12-13). And Mark 1:35 tells us "Jesus rose very early in the morning, went to a deserted place and prayed". After feeding the five thousand, Jesus departed from his disciples and went up on the mountain to pray (Mark 6:45-46). Jesus went away to be alone with God after he heard the bad news about John the Baptist. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus withdraws from some of the friends he took with him, to be alone with the Father. Jesus prayed: at his baptism, before walking on water, before Peter's confession, at the transfiguration. He said grace before the feeding miracles, at the last supper and at the supper at Emmaus.

Jesus understood the importance of praying alone and also of praying with and for others. Jesus prayed so regularly that it was integrated into His daily life. We can learn so much from this prayer life of Jesus. If Jesus needed to pray then how much more do, we? Jesus had a life of a prayer, so why don't you give it a go? Start now, there is no time like the present.