

Sermon

June 1, 2025

John 17:20-26

Secured in Christ's Love

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!

Picture the year 1804, when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out on their daring expedition across the American wilderness. Their mission was to find a path to the Pacific Ocean, but the journey was brutal—raging rivers, towering mountains, and freezing winters pushed them to the brink. Starvation loomed, and hostile terrain tested their every step. Yet, with unwavering trust in God's guidance, they pressed on, reaching the Pacific coast after nearly two years of hardship. That journey mirrors our walk of faith, illuminated by Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-26—a prayer that promises God's presence will carry us through any storm, leading us to His glory on the last day. Today, Jesus lifts us up his prayer, knowing His help is so sure, so strong, that we can face anything with unshakable faith.

Let's dive into the Scripture. In John 17, Jesus is praying just before His arrest and crucifixion. It's a holy moment, like a captain rallying his crew before a fierce storm. He's not only praying for His disciples gathered around Him but for all who will believe in Him—that's you and me! In verses 20-26, He prays, "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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." Jesus longs for us to be one, united like a family, bound by God's love. His prayer is that God's presence would dwell in us, like a lighthouse's beacon cutting through the fog, so the world sees His truth shining through our faith.

This unity is more than a warm feeling—it's a source of hope. Think of the war in Ukraine. In 2022, amid chaos—bombs crashing, homes reduced to rubble—a small Lutheran congregation in Kyiv huddled in a basement. Sirens screamed outside, yet they sang hymns, their voices rising in faith. They weren't just Ukrainians; they were believers from different walks of life, united in Christ.

Their trust in God, even in the face of terror, showed the world that Jesus is real. That's what Jesus prays for: that we, His church, would be one, our faith so radiant that it points others to Him, no matter the darkness around us.

Jesus' prayer digs deeper. He asks that God would be in us, living in our hearts. This isn't a fleeting visit but a constant presence, like a river bringing life to a parched desert. When Jesus ascended into heaven, as Acts 1 tells us, His disciples watched Him rise, their eyes wide as He vanished into the clouds. They could've felt lost, abandoned. But Jesus didn't leave them alone. He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in them—and in us. That Spirit is God's presence, guiding us, comforting us, and holding us close to Jesus. It's like a compass in the wilderness, always pointing us toward home, no matter how rough the path. With Jesus' prayer and the Spirit's power, we can face any trial, knowing we're never alone.

In 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew sailed for Antarctica on the ship *Endurance*. Their dream was to cross the icy continent, but disaster struck. Their ship was trapped in ice, crushed, and sank, leaving them stranded in a frozen wasteland. Starvation, bitter cold, and despair threatened to break them. Yet Shackleton refused to surrender. He led his men on a grueling trek—hundreds of miles across ice and stormy seas in tiny lifeboats. After months of unimaginable hardship, they reached a whaling station on South Georgia Island. Miraculously, every man survived. Shackleton's relentless hope, his refusal to let the impossible win, echoes what Jesus does for us. His prayer in John 17 promises that God's presence will carry us through life's darkest moments, guiding us to His glory. With Jesus praying for us, no storm is too fierce, no obstacle too great.

Jesus' prayer also looks to the end of our journey. In verse 24, He prays, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." Jesus isn't just praying for our struggles now; He's praying for the day we'll stand with Him in heaven, gazing on His glory. That glory is like the first light of dawn after a long, cold night—radiant, warm, and bursting with joy. It's the moment when every fear, every pain, every tear will

vanish in the brilliance of His love. Jesus' prayer assures us that no matter what we face, He's leading us to that glorious day. This is the hope that fuels our faith, the certainty that lifts us above any trial.

Life can feel like the wilderness Lewis and Clark crossed—untamed, uncertain, even terrifying. Maybe you're battling illness, financial strain, fear, doubts or despair that tear at your heart. Jesus knows. That's why He prays, "May your love be in them, and I myself may be in them" (verse 26). His love is our anchor, our shield, our promise that we can endure anything. Just as Shackleton guided his crew through the ice, Jesus guides us through life, His prayer upholding us until we reach His glory. With His Spirit in us, we can face any challenge, trusting that He's already won the victory.

In the Old Testament of the Bible we learn how the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years after escaping Egypt's slavery. Their journey to the Promised Land was no easy stroll. They faced hunger, thirst, and enemies who wanted them dead. At times, they doubted, grumbled, and feared they'd never make it. But God was with them, guiding them with a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. He sent manna from heaven, water from rocks, and protection from danger. After decades of struggle, they crossed the Jordan River into Canaan, their home at last. God's presence never left them, just as Jesus promises to be with us through His Spirit. No matter how long or hard the journey, His prayer ensures we'll reach His glory. This is the faith that carries us—knowing Jesus is with us, praying for us, every step of the way.

Let's bring this close to our hearts. Jesus' prayer isn't just dry and dusty ancient words; it's a living promise that strengthens our faith. He prays for our unity, so our trust in Him shines as a witness to the world. He prays for God's presence to dwell in us, guiding us like a compass through the wild. And He prays for our final home, where we'll see His glory. This is our hope, our rock, our joy. Even when life feels like Ukraine's war-torn streets or Shackleton's icy ordeal, Jesus is with us. His prayer holds us, lifts us, and leads us home. With Jesus praying for you, no trial is too big, no fear too strong. You can face anything, because He's already overcome it all.

So, hold fast to this truth: Jesus is praying for you right now. Hebrews 7:25 tells us He's interceding before the Father, pleading for your strength, your faith, your victory. When doubts creep in, when life feels overwhelming, remember His prayer. It's like a lifeline, pulling you through the storm. The glory is coming. The day will break when you'll see Jesus, His face shining brighter than the sun, and every struggle will fade in His presence. This is the faith that carries us—not in *our* strength, but in His. No matter what you face, Jesus' prayer is your assurance: you will make it through.

Imagine a weary traveler climbing a jagged mountain. The path is steep, the wind howls, and his strength is nearly gone, like in a *Raiders of the Lost Ark* kind of way. But at the summit, he sees a city glowing with light, more beautiful than anything he's ever dreamed. That's what Jesus prays for us as he moves us upward through this life toward the heights of his glory. So, hang on and keep the faith. Jesus is praying us up to the top. And with Jesus you can get through anything. Thanks be to God! Amen.

The peace of God guards your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in Him. Amen.

Pastor Ron Breight

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