

In the Shadow of the Cross - Jesus Prays for Himself

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon explores Jesus' prayer for Himself in John 17, emphasizing His requests for glory and the significance of His intercession for believers.

Duration: 55:52

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:51-53, John 12:20-27, John 17:1-5, John 20:17, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. He mentions the supernatural occurrences that took place during Jesus' trial, such as Pilate's wife sending him a message and the earth shaking. The speaker also highlights the darkness that covered the world for three hours while Jesus died on the cross. He concludes by mentioning Judas' remorse and his attempt to return the 30 pieces of silver he received for betraying Jesus.

Transcript

And we are continuing this evening with our theme, the theme that we took up a few weeks ago for our evening worship, In the Shadow of the Cross. And we come to the first five verses in John 17 where Jesus prays for himself. You will have noticed evidently that this prayer begins with this vein in which Jesus prays for himself.

And then it enlarges its compass, first of all to include very particularly those who were around him at that time. And ultimately, before we come to the end of the prayer, he envisages the whole believing community of the ages. And thus does our Lord, as it were, gather the whole world and the whole of the believing community of all time within his arms, ere he concludes this amazing prayer of John 17.

Now, may I simply remind you before we come to the verses that we're going to look at tonight that we read tonight from John chapter 12. And we read those verses from there in order to remind you that really the truth, the main truths envisaged in these first five verses of John 17, take us right back to chapter 12. Everything that has happened in chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16 have taken place in one evening.

They met early in the evening and everything that has taken place in these chapters has taken place in the space of a couple of hours. So that in thought, our Lord now goes back to something that he had spoken

about in those verses beginning with verse 20 in John chapter 12. Do you remember how our Father says that he has already glorified him? Jesus said, Father, what shall I say? Now is my heart troubled.

What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. That's verse 27. No, he says, this is the NIV.

No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. And rather than us to be saved from this hour, verse 27 puts his plea in these words. Father, glorify your name.

Now that is the link with the prayer that Jesus comes to offer in John 17. Look at the first verse. Father, the time has come.

Glorify your son in order that your son may glorify you. This has been called, this prayer in John 17, as the holy of holies in the sacred pages of Holy Writ. And it may well be thus designated.

It is glorious and majestic for so many reasons. Without going into that kind of approach tonight, let me simply say this. I find it tremendously rewarding and richly satisfying to meditate upon this chapter because I believe it gives us an insight into our Lord's present intercession for his own.

I'm not the first to say that. I don't want to convey a false impression. The great Matthew Henry spoke of this prayer as a prayer after sermon, a prayer after sacrament, a family prayer, a parting prayer, a prayer before a sacrifice, and a prayer which is a specimen of Christ's intercession.

And if this is indeed a specimen of the present intercession of our Lord for his own at the right hand of the Father, then I want to suggest to you, you and I have something very precious, something that can teach us what no other part of scripture can. And we do well to come to a passage such as this with all our minds alert and all our hearts eager to see what's really going on in the Holy of Holies. How does our blessed Lord and Redeemer pray for his own? But now I have to choose some one segment of truth tonight, because the first five verses are really too much for us to take in at one time.

In coming to the one segment that I'm going to stay with for a little while, I want you to notice that there are two main requests that our Lord makes in these five verses ostensibly for the same thing. In verse one, he prays for glory, and in verse five he prays for glory. But there's a world of difference between the two.

Now you look at the text and you will see it. Let me read the first verse again. After Jesus had said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed, Father, the time has come, or the hour has come, glorify your Son, in order that your Son may glorify you.

That's the first plea for glory. Now look at the end of the prayer, verse five. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world war.

Now there's a world of difference between the plea, the petition of the first verse and the petition in the last. The petition in the first verse is that he would be glorified in the hour that has just arrived, in the process of going through the bitter anguish of the cross and all that is related to it. It is a prayer that God would glorify him in order that he in turn should glorify the Father in the midst of the most terrifying anguish that this world has ever known.

In the last verse of the paragraph, he is praying to be glorified in the more distant future when the work of that hour is completed and done with, and he is back again in the presence of the Father in heaven. In the one plea, he desires to be glorified during his humiliation. In the other, beyond it.

In the former plea, he wants to be glorified in order to do the Father's will. Whilst in the latter, he asks to be glorified after he's finished the Father's will. In the one, he asks to be glorified on earth.

In the other, he asks to be glorified in the Father's presence in heaven. So then, there are two prayers, two requests for glory, and we tonight will have to confine ourselves to the first of these, a plea for glory in the then present, in the hour that, according to the timepiece of God, has already struck, the hour of destiny, the one unrepeatable hour in the history of the world when the God-sent Deliverer and Savior puts his shoulder as well as his heart under the burden of men and women's sin and bears it, and in bearing it, offers himself as a sacrifice for it, and bears it away. So that it no longer obtrudes and stands between those for whom Christ died and the glory toward which he calls them.

In this unrepeatable hour, the hour upon which hangs the destiny of the whole world, Christ prays that the Father would glorify him in order that, notice there's nothing selfish about this prayer, Jesus prays that the Father would glorify him in order that he, in turn, should glorify the Father. Now, I said I was going to spend my time with a petition as such. I'm not.

What I want to spend my time with tonight is to show you that that prayer was not only heard but answered. If there is one thing that you and I need for our comfort, if we are truly believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, it is the assurance, it is the blessed assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ's intercession is an infallible intercession. I wonder how you feel when you fall into temptation.

Do you sometimes feel lonely in the world? Do you sometimes feel desolate? Do you sometimes feel cut off? Do you sometimes feel as if there was no one who understood what you were going through and experiencing? Do you sometimes feel that you can't even share your heart's anguish with anyone, anyone? If ever you do have moments like that, and I have a sneaking feeling that most of us do, then, my friend, I want you to know that if you're a child of God, you have a great high priest in the heavens who makes intercession for you and his intercession is unailing. And I want you to know that when he prayed a prayer, it was heard. And when the prayer that he uttered was heard, it was answered.

Now, on the face of it, this is one of the most ridiculous prayers ever offered. Lord, forgive me if I'm saying that in the wrong way. But if you were going to be crucified, if you were going out to hang upon a gibbet tomorrow, or, shall we say, if you were going to the electric chair, or if you were going to be hung by your neck, how on earth do you expect God to glorify you, that you could glorify God in those circumstances? Here is our Lord in the full knowledge of what's ahead of him, Gethsemane, the trials before Caiaphas, first of all, the high priest, then another high priest's court early next morning, then Pilate, then Herod, then back to Pilate, and you remember how he was shuttled back and forth, back and forth, then the manhandling in Herod's court and in Pilate's praetorium, then the bearing of his cross to Galdatha, then being made a curse on the cross, then being forsaken of God and dying and being buried in a borrowed tomb.

How on earth does he expect to be glorified in those circumstances? There is something here that should make your hearts shudder with a sense of awe that the blessed Savior knew that his Father could hear a prayer like this and answer it, and answer it, and answer it he did. Now I say this, I say this not just not because it is part of the teaching, important as that is, but I say particularly because I believe that you and I need a new grip of this truth, upon this truth, and you and I need a new vision of the glory of our Lord Jesus as the intercessor, and of God the Father as the one who hears our feeble prayers offered in Jesus' name. How then did God answer this kind of prayer, this first petition for glory in the midst of the hideous

experiences of our Lord's being arrested, being falsely arraigned, and falsely accused, and maltreated, scoffed at, spat upon, finally bearing his cross to die on Calvary's brow? How, how did God answer that prayer? Well, now come with me.

I'm going to be terribly simple tonight, but I trust that through this simplicity the Lord will graciously write upon your heart and mind the message we need from it. First of all, God heard this prayer, and Jesus was glorified in the very humiliation of Gethsemane. Though bowed with bitter sorrow down and pressed so utterly in his spirit that physically he sweat as it were great drops of blood, as Luke tells us, the lone petitioner of Gethsemane was glorified in that same sacred scene.

I read in John chapter 18 verses 4 to 6 these words. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, this is in the garden now, who is it that you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. I am he, said Jesus.

And Judas the traitor was standing there with them. When Jesus said, I am he, they drew back and they fell to the ground. Did you ever ask yourselves what happened there? Did somebody stumble? Was there a stone on the path? Did somebody push somebody over with a hand, with a strong hand or with something of that kind? Nothing of that kind happened.

There is no physical warfare going on here. Peter hasn't yet brought out his sword from his chief and tried to cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. He did that a little later on.

That's not what we have here. You notice what we have here? Come back again to those verses in John chapter 18. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth, they said.

Evidently they didn't recognize him yet. Judas had not given him the kiss of betrayal. And then Jesus said, it says here in the English, and obviously it has to be translated that way, I am he.

That's not what he said though. What he said was a pronoun I and the verb I am, meaning I am. He echoed in the garden of Gethsemane, the designation that God gave to himself as he introduced himself to Moses in the burning bush.

I am without anybody saying anything. When Jesus said, I am, they drew back and they fell to the ground. What's happened? Oh, my friends, how can I tell you? It is as if something of the Shekinah glory indwelling the eternal son of God was allowed for a moment to flash out before their blinded eyes and they couldn't take it.

You see, Jesus had never ceased to be the eternal son of God, even though he had become the son of Mary. There was always the glory of the deity in him, but it was veiled in flesh, as Wesley beautifully puts it. Now, if you ask me to prove that, I can do so.

And one way in which I would do so would be to take you to the Mount of Transfiguration. And there is a particular emphasis there. Those of you who are students will hardly need me to tell you.

It is emphasized in the three gospels that Jesus was transfigured and the emphasis is upon before them, before them. And the implication of that emphasis appears to be this, that he was many times transfigured. In other words, many times his glory manifested itself as he communed with the Father.

Many times the Shekinah within his soul expressed itself, but no one was allowed to see it, so that he did not wear a halo. There was nothing significantly divine to mark out the man Jesus of Nazareth. But in the presence of the Father, there was a glory.

And here on the Mount of Transfiguration, as something quite exceptional, he was metamorphosed. Now the meaning of the word is that he was transformed, not from outside inwards, but from inside outward. That a glory from within his own soul shone through the body, through the flesh, and through the garments, and he seemed as incandescent before their eyes.

He had become all a sheath of glory. And you remember they couldn't take it either. And here in the Garden of Gethsemane, the temple, the temple soldiers were coming to arrest him, and they thought he was a scoundrel.

And they thought this, and they thought that about him. But suddenly, just a little flash of that eternal glory that he had with the Father before the world was, and now had been hidden in the depths of his being, veiled in flesh, it shone out. And there on their faces, that was the Father's way of glorifying his Son in the moment of his arrest.

So that when these soldiers take him away, they are given to understand that they're taking someone away who is extraordinary. They've never arrested anyone of that category before. He stands apart.

Secondly, Jesus was glorified in the confession of Judas Iscariot. Now you know Judas's story, and you know how Judas was the main agent of Satan in the whole diabolical affair that took place in the selling of Jesus of Nazareth for 30 pieces of silver and betraying him to those who would crucify him. Judas got his 30 pieces of silver.

He got them all right, but those 30 pieces of silver which Judas sought and secured as the price of his act of betrayal were no sooner in his hands than they began to singe his guilty conscience and even to burn his hands. And they continued to burn and burn until the greedy, lucre, loving son of perdition could hold on to them no longer. Now this is something.

When a greedy man who's given anything for gold or silver, he can't hold on to the money that he's got. It speaks eloquently of his discomfort. The greedy man had to get rid of his silver.

And so, of course, you remember what happened. You see him pathetically running hither and thither to get hold of those who had bargained with him, first of all, and given him the silver in order to betray the Lord Jesus, the scribes and the elders, the priests and the elders. And so he comes to the temple and he's looking for them.

And in order to return, of course, the 30 pieces of silver to them, but couldn't find them for the moment. And then when at last he comes into the temple, we hear him saying, I have sinned. Matthew 27 verses four and five.

I have sinned, he says, for I have betrayed innocent blood. What is that to us? They replied, that's your responsibility. So Judas threw the money into the temple and left.

Then he went out and he hanged himself. Now, what I want you to notice is this. The hideous nature of Judas's deed had come home to roost by this time, tormented by the gravity of his sin against the one whom he was forced by the facts to describe as innocent.

Judas found no conceivable alleviation for his soul's anguish. There was no peace. And Judas could only have found peace apart from receiving it from God on the basis of repentance, pure and simple.

The only place to find peace was here, psychologically speaking, not biblically speaking. The only place where Judas could have had peace was this, was here. If only he could find some faults in the Lord Jesus Christ to justify his deeds.

Now, if Judas could have been able to make a case, well, now, after all, he's been a, he's been a crazy fellow. He's taught us all sorts of things which have proved wrong, or just a few things that have proved wrong. You see, his conscience might have been eased a little, and he could have kept the silver.

And he could have gone on just as things were, he would have been able perhaps to rationalize the situation and to justify his deed, if only he could have found a fault in the Savior. But listen what he says. Judas comes rushing into the very temple.

He comes up to the chief priests and the scribes, and he cries in their midst, I have betrayed innocent blood. Now, Judas was no stranger to Jesus. He'd been with him for three and a half years.

He'd been one of the inside circle. He'd been the treasurer of the little company. He knew all that had gone on.

He'd seen the miracles. He'd heard the teaching. He'd experienced what very few people outside the twelve actually saw and heard and experienced.

And so he knew what had gone on. And now, as it were, witnessing against himself and taking from under him, as it were, the only solitary hope for peace of conscience, he confesses unwillingly and unwittingly, perhaps, but he has to do it. I have betrayed innocent blood.

Who was it that extracted that confession from the foul mouth of Judas Iscariot and his foul heart? Why do you think he said it? Oh, I'm quite sure there were natural causes. His conscience is pricking, and we can understand it in that sense. But wait a moment.

I want to suggest to you that that utterance was heard in the very temple in Jerusalem by the chief priests and the scribes, because God was answering the prayer of his son. God would glorify him and have one of the twelve, the very one who betrayed him, the only one that has raised a finger against him, and have him to announce in the public eye, in the most public place in Jerusalem, I have betrayed innocent blood and I find no comfort on earth. And I consummate my bewilderment and loss in taking my own life.

Thirdly, Jesus was glorified in that hour in and through the dream given to Pilate's wife. Have you read the gospels recently? Read them before Good Friday. I'm taking for granted that so many of these things are familiar to us.

I trust that is not baseless. Whilst Pilate was sitting on his judgment seat, bargaining and arguing with the Jews and offering to release Barabbas or Jesus, and so many other things went on there, a very remarkable thing took place. Utterly discomposed and contrary to all the laws of propriety, Pilate's wife intruded and intervened at the very point when no one was allowed to intervene.

When, as the Roman governor, he was actually, officially engaged in dealing with the case. While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message. And what was the message? Well, here it

is, Matthew 27, 19.

Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him. Now, there is much that we cannot understand about this. We don't know the background.

The woman doesn't tell us enough. She doesn't tell us hardly anything. We just gathered that she'd had a dream and the dream was something, somehow related to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And somehow or other, here she is convinced that he was an innocent man. And she's sufficiently convinced that he was an innocent man that she intrudes and intervenes, lest her husband should say anything or do anything to commit himself against the innocent man that had caused her such a terrifying dream or whatever. The anguish and the poignancy in that plea, together with the obvious urgency with which he dared intrude whilst her husband was involved in the judicial function of a governor, prove the deep impression made upon her by her dream.

Where did that dream come from? Now, you psychologists, I can hear you answering already. I remember once writing a long, long essay on the psychology of dreams. Don't remember much about it now.

But I guess there would be a psychosomatic reason for this dream, as for most dreams. I don't care what your reasons are. They're not adequate unless they include this.

God was in that dream. God was in that dream. And Pilate's wife's dream was in measure inspired in heaven, because God was determined to glorify his son in the hour that has already arrived.

That's why she stepped in. She too would add her word to the innocence and therefore the glory of the one who is being so ingloriously handled and maliciously charred. God has not only heard but is determined to answer the prayer of his son.

Fourthly, Pilate's own verdict at the trial likewise glorified the Savior. Now, if you're not familiar with the Gospels, that may sound a little bit strange at first, so let me explain. Pilate's verdict, of course, was ultimately to hand him over to the with him.

Ah, yes, but let's get the whole picture. Despite the fact that false witness is testified against Jesus before the high priest, Matthew 26, 59 to 61, and that Pilate was so vitally concerned with his own status and standing and reputation that he would almost do anything to pacify the Jews, lest they should make a row and bring in the power of Rome, and he would lose something or other, some power or possibility of promotion. But it's most remarkable.

Even Pilate, the vacillating Pilate, Pilate who was so concerned for his own skin and was so afraid that something would happen to jeopardize his position politically. Pilate himself more than once, twice or three times in the course of the trial, announced that Jesus was innocent. Let me ask you to turn to Luke 23 verses 13 to 15.

Let me read. Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, you brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him, says Pilate.

Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us, as you can see. He has done nothing to deserve death. Now, nothing could be plainer than that.

And if you want an additional testimony again, you can turn to John chapter 18 verse 38, which is different from the one I quoted. What is truth? Pilate asked. And with this, he went again to the Jews and said, I find no basis for a charge against him.

Neither Pilate nor Herod found any basis for the charge against our Lord Jesus. Now, this is amazing. Thus did the Roman power lend its weighty testimony to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in the very hour of his death and become so involved in inconsistency that having done this, he nevertheless yielded Jesus to the Jews to do with him as they pleased.

He's betraying his own character. He's showing his own vacillating spirit that there is some ulterior motive here rather than the sheer desire to be just and righteous. But the thing I want you to notice is this, that even Pilate, the judge, three times over, if you include Herod's, Pilate twice and Herod once acknowledged that our Lord Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against him.

And my question to you is this, what made Pilate make such an acknowledgement? What made Pilate make such a confession in those very, very significant days and hours? How did it come about? What forced him? Shall I tell you? I don't care what other natural reason there may be. The most significant reason is this. God was answering the prayer of his son.

Father, glorify your son in order that your son may also glorify you. Come again in the fifth place, the very elements joined in glorifying the Savior during that imponderable hour as the scriptures speak of it. Note well how fully and completely did God the Father hear and heed the plea of his son to be so glorified in his dying hour that he might glorify the Father in turn.

Not only did the Father cause a shattering ray of Shekinah light to bring those temple priests onto their faces in confusion in the garden of Gethsemane, and not only did the Father cause Judas to add his self-condemning words of testimony to the Savior's innocence in the presence of the temple, and not only did Pilate's wife speak of that most disconcerting dream which assured her that Jesus was an innocent person, and not only do we read that Pilate acknowledged that Jesus was likewise not guilty of the charges brought against him, but we have something else. God also summoned the very forces of nature into action to add their sense of bewilderment at the crime of our Lord's crucifixion. Now Matthew puts this in a nutshell, and that's why I'm just going to quote from Matthew tonight.

There are other areas to which we might turn, but just let's confine ourselves to this. Matthew puts so much of this into a nutshell statement that we all too easily gloss over it and miss its significance. Matthew 27, 51 to 53.

Let me read. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.

The tombs broke open and the bodies of the many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. What an amazing thing.

I find that so many people gloss over this. Now this is something that you can't gloss over. It's either true or it is false.

If it is true, then it is highly significant. The curtain of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top. It wasn't a human hand that had done it, but it was somebody coming down from above, as it were.

The curtains were high and no human person would be allowed there. This was a supernatural act. But not only that, not only that, in the temple, evident for every worshiper to see, but the earth shook and the rocks were split and the tombs broke open and the bodies of the saints began to move.

And they walked into Jerusalem and at least when Jesus rose from the dead, they were there apparently to greet him. So there was a community of the risen. Moreover, all this followed in the wake of that long three hours darkness that draped the world whilst Jesus bowed his head and died.

How do you explain all this? You students of the stars, what have you to say about this? How did the sun hide his face? And why? Well, I don't know what natural reasons there may be, but I know the ultimate reason is found here. The father heard the prayer of his son and would glorify him and would show that there is something in the death of the Lord Jesus that shatters the universe and startles the powers innate in nature. But they respond with a sense of terror that such a thing should happen even on this fallen planet.

Well, might the sun in darkness hide and shut its glory in while God, the mighty maker died for man, the creatures sin. God would glorify his son. Lastly, to these, we must add the testimonies of the Roman centurion and that of the divine of the dying thief.

In the light of all that they had seen and heard as witnesses during those traumatic days, they bear their open and unsolicited testimony to Jesus Christ's glory. There is something tremendously significant about these two testimonies to the person of our Lord, to his character, to his behavior there upon the cross. Let me read to you from Matthew 27, 54.

The words of the mystified centurion. Now you remember that the centurion was in charge of the Roman soldiers to whom this hideous deed had been given to see through when the centurion and those with him who are guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened. They were terrified and they explained.

Surely he was the son of God. Surely he was the son of God. Now again, the scriptures don't tell us how they came to this conclusion.

We would love to ask them a number of questions. Why do you say that he was the son of God? Is it simply because of these events that have taken place, the earthquake and so forth, or is there something more? But we're not given the answer to those. Certain things are specified, but the fact is this.

Somehow or other, the centurion sensed that never had he witnessed the death of another person like this. And whether we are to take his words as meaning what they appear to mean to us or not, he is certainly bearing testimony to the fact that Jesus is not the criminal that others thought he was. On the contrary, he is a son of the gods, if not the son of God.

He can't make less than that out of his words. Whilst he may very well have had a shaft of divine light and a revelation from God himself and by the Spirit to see that Jesus in his wounds and in his dying was the very son of the living God, that may very well have been the case. I do not dogmatize, but equally vocal is the request of the dying thief to his companion in death.

I have always been thrilled with this. I don't know why it is, but early in my Christian life, I think this was one of the most remarkable passages to me, amazing the scriptures that appeal to different people. But I remember the first time probably I ever tried to study the story of the cross in the gospels.

This was something that gripped me as possibly very, very little else gripped me. That here in our Lord's dying hour, in the light of everything that has gone on, and his body is already mangled and lacerated, and as one of our Welsh poets puts it, his back is furrowed as if a plow had gone through the flesh with open furrows and wheels and bleeding. And here is a thief on the cross who turns to his fellow crucified and says, Lord, or Jesus, whichever is the correct rendering, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Kingdom? Jesus is dying. What kingdom has he got? Where is his scepter? They put a reed in his hand. That was mockery.

But here is someone at his side who's watched him, who's heard him, who's been listening to any curse that might have come over his lips, who would have been a witness to any word that had been said, which was out of place. And he cries to him and says, Jesus, or Lord, whichever it is, remember me when you come into your kingdom. I want to put my hand over my mouth, behind the blood and the spittle, behind the anguish and the torture and the agony and the humiliation of Golgotha.

Here is a man who saw in Jesus a king with a kingdom that stretched beyond the territory of death. He was going to die. Jesus was going to live to his kingdom.

And he says, give me a thought. And then came the majestic reply. If ever there was a moment in the life of any man when he deserved to think of his own troubles, surely that was a moment in the life of Jesus on the cross.

And if he'd been silent and mute to the cry of that wretched man by his side, you and I couldn't have pointed a finger at him, not for a moment, but forth from the grace of his undying spirit came the word today. You and I'll be together in paradise. You shall be with me in paradise.

Yes, I have a kingdom. Yes, I am the Lord. Yes, I can save you.

Yes, I'll remember you. When you add to all this, the evident and the blameless moral behavior of our Lord throughout his trial and suffering, it becomes an amazing picture. God did not only glorify him by these external circumstances that unequivocally pointed to his uniqueness and much else, but he also sustained him in a manner that his purity, his honesty shone through us clearly as his undying love for sinners and his loyalty to the father, to the honest, unprejudiced mind.

The facts are clear and compelling. A glory and folded the savior and inhabited his soul in the most inglorious, the most humiliating, the most desolating anguish through which man ever passed a glory and folded him to prove that he was no lawbreaker. He was no death deserving criminal, but rather one in whom God was well-pleased and whom God glorified in the very circumstances of his death, as if to say to the whole world, I don't agree with this.

Even though the lamb was slain according to the will of the father from before the foundation of the world, but with a sin of man that caused his death, Jesus was in total. God was in total disagreement. And so we not only discover that he was separate from sinners in his death, but he was under the sheath of the father's glory and he was glorified in the hour.

I come back to where I started. One thing you and I need to know as Christians, it is that our Lord Jesus Christ's prayers for us and intercession for us mean something. I wonder whether some of us have come to this service tonight and we have a burden and we don't know quite where to take it.

I want to tell you where to take it. Bring it to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ who ever liveth to make intercession for you. If his prayer was heard and answered in such a remarkable way as this, then his prayers for you, for he died for you, his prayers for you will be heard and his prayers for me will be heard.

If there is one thing in life and one thing in death that can banish the sense of desolation and lostness, yes, lostness even for saints, a sense of being away from God, a sense of being let down, a sense of being in a territory that I don't know and I'm not sure whether I'm going in the right direction, which is the experience of so many people passing into death as if they're going into an underground subway and here are many tunnels branching off and they don't know where they are and is there anybody that can take them safely? But here is one infallible intercessor to whom the feeblest, frailest human being who trusts in him can come with a plea. And if once your feeble plea can be brought alongside his infallible intercession, my friend, you and I have a privilege that is more precious than rubies. Now we've only just begun with this passage.

I don't propose at this time nor indeed next Sunday evening to go into it in detail. We'll come back to it again. We may move on into the passage, into the prayer a little bit, but I trust that these few thoughts will help someone tonight to see how God in heaven heard his son upon earth.

And now that the cross is a fact and the resurrection is a reality and the ascension has come about and the savior is seated at the father's right hand, how much more can we depend upon the one whom God has given us as our great high priest within the veil? Let us pray. Blessed heavenly father, God of grace and God of comfort. We thank you for your holy word and for what it teaches us.

We ask you our Lord to forgive us because we so often skim over the surface of it and miss so much of its significance. We thank you for the holy spirit and we pray that as tonight you have brought some of the deeper meanings of this passage and of our Lord's plea before us that you will use these thoughts to our encouragement and indeed that we should become more and more assured, not just encouraged, more assured as your people of the glorious vantage point that is given us when we can come to the throne of grace and plead our needs in the name of him who takes up our prayers and presents them on our behalf in the heavenlies. Accept us our father and teach us how to trust you and to trust your son the more.

Teach us how to pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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