

Prayer for Our Generation

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Spirit and being missionaries, as revealed in Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Duration: 44:42

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, John 15:4, John 17:20, John 20:21, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 4:12

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a witness for Christ in our daily lives. He refers to Jesus' instructions to abide in Him and the love of Christ that compels us to live for Him. The speaker uses the analogy of a light bulb being securely placed in a socket to illustrate the need for believers to be firmly rooted in Christ. He also highlights the opportunity we have to share our faith when people notice something different about us and express their curiosity. The sermon encourages every member of the body of Christ to engage in the task of being a witness for Him.

Transcript

And we would normally have put his birth as the dividing time between B.C. and A.D., but that error was later corrected, so actually he was born in 4 B.C., according to our present table, which would have meant that he was crucified in the year 30, 29 or 30, and descended into heaven at that time. And if John's gospel was written, as the evidence seems to indicate, 85 A.D., that was approximately 55 years after the events that are described in the gospel. Now, this evening we've had several leaders in prayer.

And apart from our brother that's there with the tape recorder, I would venture to say there isn't anyone here that would want to repeat verbatim any of the several prayers that have been offered to the Lord in our midst, so far in this service of just a few minutes. Can you imagine what you would try to do with the prayer offered 55 years earlier? Well, how in the world did John, the apostle, get it into this record so correctly? Well, it's not hard, is it? You understand. You realize what happened.

Remember what the Lord said? When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you. And the reason I take time to say that is because I want you to realize that this prayer was not offered for that first generation of believers, or even for the second generation of believers, but rather for the third generation. That it might be clear to us tonight that this prayer was intended for us.

We're so apt to think that everything was for the early church, but this record was not even given until 55 years after the ascension of our Lord. It had been prayed in the presence of the apostles. There's no reference to it elsewhere.

And so it must be that God the Father wanted us to know what our great high priest is praying for us tonight. You see, He has an unchangeable priesthood that continueth ever. Now, we know that if we ask anything according to the will of God, He hears us.

What is more perfectly the will of God for you than that which your high priest is praying for you tonight? And that's the significance of this prayer. It's for you. You're the center of it.

He said, neither pray I for these, that's those that were with Him in the upper room or in the garden, for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That's what we are. We believe the testimony of Peter and John and the other disciples that when they came into that grave area, the grave clothes were as though wrapped around a body, but they were empty.

Our Lord had risen from the dead. He left the grave clothes, I believe, undisturbed. They were not in a pile, unwrapped.

They were lying there with the head cloth where it had been when His face was under it. And He wanted us to know that. And He wants us to identify with it.

And He wants us to pray what He's praying. Now, I ask you to notice verse 18 of John 17. It's a very, very crucial verse.

And we should not pass it lightly. Just because it begins with a two-letter word doesn't mean it's unimportant. What are the words? As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Thayer's, in his Greek-English lexicon, tells us that the Greek word translated as, I believe it's pronounced *kathos*, has several possible renderings. It can be just as, accordingly as, in a similar way, in identically the same way. Now, I think you understand what our Lord said.

Let's put it together. In the identical same way, thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. Now, wait just a moment, you might remonstrate.

Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Ghost. One cell in the body of Mary was quickened, not with male sperm, but with the life of the triune God. And that which was born of Mary was Emmanuel, God come in the flesh.

And we're coming the same way? Well, think for a moment. How did you come out of death into life? You were born of the Spirit. Do you understand? It was the Spirit of God that brooded over you in response to intercession and witness, that awakened you, that convicted you of your crimes, that moved you to repent, that quickened in your repentant heart saving faith, and in response to that saving faith, joined Himself to your spirit.

And you were born from above, born of God. Ah, as the Father sent me, so send I you. Now, the Scripture says, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of here.

So, from the moment of the new birth, the Spirit of God is in us as a source of life in Christ. But remember, with our Lord, He was indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Remember that from that very moment of conception, certainly of birth, our Lord Jesus was the embodiment of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

For thirty years He continued, as it were, at root out of the dry ground. No beauty we should desire Him. Simply fulfilling the responsibilities of a lad born into a Jewish community and home, increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

And then at the age of thirty, He was down at Jordan's bank where His cousin John was preaching, and walked out into the water. John, seeing Him, said, I cannot baptize you. I ought to be baptized by you.

And our Lord says, It behooves you to fulfill all righteousness. And so He went into baptism. Baptism is to us a picture of our union with Christ in death.

Now to us it's death to sin and death to self. But what would it be to our Lord? In Him was no sin. He had not sinned.

Why then was it appropriate for Him to go into the water of baptism? He did not go there to indicate union in death, by death to sin, but rather to the right to His rights. Who is He? He is the Eternal Son. God come in the flesh.

And He has the right to act in His essential deity as Son. But if He had, He never could have said, As the Father sent Me, so send I You. And so that He might be able to say that, and to fulfill all of the Father's will for Him, He being found in the fashion of a man, humbled Himself, accepted the limitation of His humanity, and presented to the Father not only His body, but the right to act in His essential deity as Son.

He laid down the right to act as Son. He who had made the worlds and all that is in them, now for the purpose of our redemption, to fulfill everything that the Father had planned, He says, Father, from here on, I will do nothing of Myself. I will not speak of Myself.

I will be totally and completely available to You in identically the same way that I want My people to be totally and completely available to Me. And so He went into the water of baptism. And what happened? The Spirit of God visible to John in the form of a dove descended upon Christ and passed upon Him.

Of which it was then later said by Him, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. The Spirit of the Lord had been in Him prior to coming upon Him. Now in the days of my Baptist dispensationalism, I was quite argumentative with all the people that talked about an experience after salvation.

And I could argue from sunset to sunrise that since the Spirit of God comes at regeneration to bring life, we've got all there is to get of God and it only remains for Him to get more of us. And all the time so desperately hungry for the Lord that I couldn't stand it. But still caught up in the teaching which I had been indoctrinated.

But that all seemed to fade away the day I realized that when the Spirit of God came upon Christ, He was in Christ. And He could come upon Him even while He was in Him. Because He was in Him in nature and He came upon Him to cover Him and clothe Him, immerse Him and submerge Him, that He might be thus in a relationship where it could be said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

He has sent me to preach the Gospel, open blind eyes, set at liberty them that are bound. And everything done by Christ in the three years of His public ministry was done by the Father through the Spirit. I have not counted them, but I have read, and I think those who wrote it had counted them, that 47 times in the Gospel of John in one form or another, not in these words, but in equivalent significance, the Lord Jesus says something to the effect, I don't speak of Myself.

I speak as I receive commandment of the Father. I don't do the works of Myself. I do what I see the Father do, indicating that He was totally and completely submissive and obedient to the will of the Father.

F.B. Meyer and the little book published by Moody called Portage under the title The Christ Life or the Self Life declares that we must remember everything done by Christ in the three years of His public ministry was done by the Father through the Spirit and not by the Son in His essential deity. Now why is that so important? Because of what our Lord is telling the Father here in this prayer. As Thou hast sent Me in identically the same way.

What does it mean? We are born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, but not ready for our ministry until we are clothed upon and covered, submerged, submersed, filled, baptized. Terms you may choose. All of them are appropriate with the Spirit of God.

Because it is to be with us as it was with our Lord. We are to do nothing of ourselves. We are only to do what we see the Father do.

We are to speak as we receive commandment of the Father. We are to be obedient to Him in everything. So, it's highly important.

But now you must see another significant word in this 18th verse. As the Father sent Me. The word send in Latin is mito.

You that have had Latin remember trying to get acquainted with all the aspects and forms of mito. Well, one of the forms transliterated into English from the Latin word mito is our word missionary. It's mito-ary if you please, but it's elided down from the T to the S. Missionary.

The same root of mito. To send. And a missionary is a sent one.

Now, literally then it's this. As Thou, Father, missionaried me, so have I also missionaried them. As the Father sent me, so have I also sent them.

Now, I am sure the word in the Greek is apostolos, and it's a little difficult for us because we've attached so much significance to the word apostle, but the word apostle simply means a sent one. And I suppose if we in English had used the word apostle instead of the Greek root, instead of the Latin root, all of our missionaries would be known as apostles. And that might make it a little easier for us to use the word apostle.

Sometimes it becomes a little bit difficult to identify, but in the text it simply means one that sent. As the Father sent the Lord Jesus, so He sent. Whom did He send? In the 20th verse He said, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word.

Who was sent? You were sent. In the very same way the Father sent the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus sent you. And He's appointed you to be a missionary.

Now we need to understand this. We need to realize how fundamental and basic and foundational this responsibility is to everyone who names the name of Christ. If you have passed from death to life through faith in Christ, then this word is for you.

As the Father sent the Lord Jesus, as He missionaried the Lord Jesus, as the Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily, clothed upon or baptized with the Holy Ghost, and all the work performed by Him was by the Father through the Spirit, so you have been born of the Spirit, indwelt by Him, and that I trust it is true that you have been baptized or filled or submerged or immersed with the Holy Spirit, and that you too recognize, as did our Lord, that everything that's going to endure to the glory of God and escape from the fire of His judgment is going to be that which He does through you, not so much that which we do for Him. And so I want to bring each of us to the place that we recognize that we are not spectators in this enormous task of getting the Gospel out to the ends of the earth. We are participants.

And there isn't any provision that God has made for anyone that is not available to you. Now I suppose having said that, I'd better qualify it. I've had people think that if they were filled with the Spirit, that they were going to turn out to be a Charles Finney or at least a D.L. Moody or a Billy Sunday, something like that.

They were going to be something very much other than what they are. But we have in our home a whole variety of electric lights. Some with high wattage, 300 watts.

Some with 10 watts. Each has its place and its responsibility, its task. Each one has been designed by the manufacturer to provide a certain service.

Now do you think that when the 10 watt bulb is filled with electricity that it's automatically going to be 300 watts of illumination? No. It's going to be a 10 watt bulb filled with electricity and fulfilling its purpose. It's not going to change its wattage.

When you are filled with the fullness of Christ by the Holy Spirit, you're going to be you filled with the Spirit. Now what's the alternative for a light bulb between being filled with electricity to the limit of its wattage or not being filled with electricity? Well, the 10 watt bulb is going to be just as dark as the 300 watt bulb if they are not filled with electricity. The darkness is going to be similar even though the illumination may, when they are filled, be somewhat different.

And so God in His wisdom has made each of us for a different purpose, a different service, a different place of responsibility. And that does not imply, therefore, that if He sends us and fills us with Himself, that we are going to be any other than what we are. We're going to be ourselves effective for the glory of Christ.

And that's what we're interested in. We're not trying to change you. The Lord will in His own time and way in response to your obedience and faith enlarge the effectiveness of your ministry.

But there will still be an upper limit that He has imposed in your personality and your nature, in your talents, your endowments. And what He's asking you, therefore, is not to be somebody else, but to be you filled with Himself and thus to glorify Him. Now you know that for a light bulb to become incandescent, it has to be a proper light bulb tested and complete.

But I'm sure the custodian here has a closet in which they have a whole variety of light bulbs on shelves. I'm satisfied of that. Now if you go into that closet and you look at 150 watt bulbs and 200 watt bulbs and so on right on down to the smaller ones for closets, and you shut the door expecting that those light bulbs on the shelf are going to dispel the darkness, I have news for you.

It will be just as dark with a closet full of light bulbs in their nice little corrugated paper cartons as though there were no light bulbs there at all. Well, you say, they're light bulbs and they work, but they're not giving any light. Many times when I've sat on the pulpit and looked at the congregation, you know what I thought they were? Shelves in the custodian's closets and there were little light bulbs, each one in its corrugated paper, different sizes, sitting there, but not giving any light.

Well, why? Well, you see, our Lord Jesus didn't only tell the Father, as Thou hast sent me, so send I You. But He gave instructions in the previous chapter, in chapter 15, to us. This is all part of the same evening's ministry of our Lord.

When He said, Abide in Me. Now when the custodian wants to dispel the darkness and prepare the room for a meeting, he makes certain that the light bulbs that are out of the little corrugated paper carton and are there, not just tied by a string to the socket, but they are secured in the socket. And as I look at that light bulb base, I find it has five threads on it.

Forgive me, please, for naming those threads. The first one is, Abide in Christ crucified with Him. To the rights to your rights.

Abide in Christ buried with Him. To the world with all of its enticements. Abide in Christ quickened with Him, and raised with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenlies.

Abide in Christ. Now when that light bulb base has been twisted into the socket of God's providing love, crucified with Christ, and buried with Christ, and quickened with Christ, and raised with Christ, and seated with Christ, contact is made. And that power generated by God and His love at Calvary is going to flow into that life.

And that life is going to become incandescent with the presence of the risen Lord. And every time you look at a light bulb, I would like to have you see that. Am I abiding in Christ? Is His life flowing through me? Am I becoming incandescent with His presence? That's what he said as the Father sent me.

So send I you that night when He came into the upper room. And He saw there that company of His own. Those that had believed on Him and gathered, save Thomas, all were there in His first words, peace, give I unto you.

And then He said, as the Father has sent Me, so send I you. And then, He did something strange to those disciples. Now the way the text reads in the Greek is He breathed.

It can be on. If so, it was this. And it could also be He breathed in.

And it would be if it was breathing on, He was indicating what He was doing. If it was breathing in, He was teaching the disciples what they must do. He said, receive you the Holy Ghost.

Again, in the days of my Baptist dispensationalism, I said that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. But the reason I said that was because of my ignorance of the laws of Greek grammar. That

promise never could have been fulfilled any other time than then, because it is in the aorist imperative which demands instantaneous obedience.

And the very moment that Christ said to these disciples, receive you, take you the Holy Ghost, I believe the Spirit of God who had been with them now came in them, joining Himself to their spirits, similarly as He does to us in regeneration. So that on the day of Pentecost, it was an upon-baptism. The Spirit of God shall come upon you, and you shall receive power.

Similar to that which our Lord Jesus experienced when He went into the waters of baptism at the Jordan River. Thus it is that everyone born into the Father's family is expected to have the same relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ that the Lord Jesus had to the Father. And His prayer, Father, that they may live in Me the way I lived in Thee, and I can live in them the way You lived in Me, now becomes the very secret of missionary achievement.

And everyone here tonight is expected to begin serving the Lord when you leave the house. This is not the place of witness and service. This is the place of fellowship and instruction.

And Dick Halverson, pastor of the great Fourth Presbyterian Church in the Washington, D.C. area in Bethesda, Maryland, would say as he dismissed the people, and now as you go, go with God's blessing as the church begins its work for the Lord for this week. Because the church, the body of believers, is now to go out into schools and offices and factories, places of work and service and fellowship and recreation and all of the other affairs that engage us, and there to let the risen life of Christ cause us to become incandescent with His presence. And people want to know Him because we walked among them and sat among them and worked among them, and they saw something different in our lives.

It is thus that this task becomes one where every member of the body of Christ is to be engaged. Every one of us are to be witnesses for Him. Ye shall receive power, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me.

I believe the most excellent opportunity anyone has to talk to witness for Christ is when someone with whom you've worked, someone whose neighbor you've been, near whom you've lived, comes to you in the time of their need and said, You know, I've watched you. There's something different about you. There's something that I've got a great problem, and as I was thinking about it, who do I know that would be interested in it, would care? I could think of you.

Oh, I know I've laughed at you. I've criticized you being so religious. But now I realize that you're probably the only person in the world that I can come to and talk about my problem.

Now you've had a witness. Now you're going to have an opportunity to share. But in those days that you've lived and walked in that community, you've had a witness for Christ.

A pastor in Tennessee was called to the hospital to see a man who was dying of cancer. And as he went to the bedside of this man who had requested him to come, he gave to him the Gospel as best he knew it and asked the man to receive Christ, who did as best he knew. And they were sitting there a few moments after the man had testified that he had peace and that Christ had come into his heart.

And the pastor said, Where did you say you worked? He mentioned it, but I don't recall. Please refresh my mind. Why, he said, I've worked for nearly 35 years down at Combustion Engineering.

Oh, is that so? Well, that's interesting. One of our deacons also works at Combustion Engineering. Probably you never met him, but what was his name? His name was Tom so-and-so.

You don't mean Tom, that big man with the... Yes, that's the one I mean. He said, Doctor, I've worked right alongside of Tom for the last eight years, and I never even knew that he was a Christian. Now that's the contrast.

Between someone in whom Christ lives and dwells and is incandescent with His presence and someone who had a name to live, but evidently had everything but life. Do you realize that to some sinner you're the best Christian they know? And that if they ever come to Christ, they're going to come to Christ because they know you? And if they don't, it may be because of something they hear or see in your life. You're going to either be a stepping stone or you're going to be a barrier and fence depending on how real the Lord Jesus Christ is to you and how He's revealed through you.

And thus the Lord's plan was that as the Father had sent Him, He would send us. Now that's costly. Very, very costly.

My heart has been dwelling this afternoon on II Corinthians 5 where we read, The love of Christ constraineth us to thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that they which live ought not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them. I don't think it's enough for us to know just how He's going to work. I think it's important to understand why we should cooperate with Him and permit Him to work.

The text that I've just quoted says the love of Christ, our love for Him and His love for us, that love that He gave to us and we've returned to Him. The love of Christ forces, impels, constrains us to judge that since He died for us and we died with Him, we henceforth ought not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and who rose again. And the last verse of that fifth chapter says, He was made to be sin for us.

He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of Christ in Him. That's the love that should constrain us, but it's so hard for us to grasp, so difficult for us to understand. What did it cost the Lord Jesus to be made sin for us, thus to reveal His love for us? Perhaps you, like me, have seen Him in the garden kneeling over that great rock.

Perhaps you've seen that perspiration like clots of blood fall from His brow and splash on the rock over which He kneeled. I thought for a time that it was the great weight of my sin that pressed the perspiration from Him in that fashion. I thought perhaps it was the number of my sins that so moved the Lord.

But one day in Africa, I found out it wasn't the weight and it wasn't the number. It was something else. I was sent by the Sudan government to do work with several tribes and get samples of their language.

And one of the last that I was to interview was the Ngesenit tribe. And I couldn't get into their area. It was forbidden to go.

But they came into ours in the dry season to bring their cattle along the streams to eat the grass that might be growing and available. And they camped. And I had gone to their camp, had taken down some of the language and was going back the next day to finish up the study that I was doing.

I'd left the mission station about six o'clock. The sun was rising in the east. I was facing into it as I walked.

The grass was brown and yellow. I pulled my helmet down way over my eyes. My chin was down on my chest.

I was trying to keep the glare off the grass from the sun as I walked. Ahead of me, I saw a dark mark on the field. I wasn't looking at it very clearly at first.

I thought perhaps it was a bundle of grass someone had gathered and found too heavy to take in and left for the night. They were going to refax the roof. And I saw the shadow of it.

But as I came a little closer, I smelled a very obnoxious odor, a terrible odor, rotting human flesh. And I looked up, and there in front of me was a leper. Now, I had seen pictures of lepers and leprosy.

I'd seen motion pictures of missionaries amputating feet and hands. I thought I knew a lot about it. I'd talked with missionaries that had worked with lepers.

But you see, I'd never seen one face to face before. And there in front of me, sitting on his heel, or on his seat, rather, with his feet stretched in front of him, was a man who obviously had leprosy. His feet had all been eaten away.

The toes back into the instep had been eaten away. You could see the rotting flesh and the crawling maggots. He moved on the pads of his knees.

His fingers were gone. It was just a stub with rotting flesh. He moved this way.

Around his neck was a leather thong. Attached to that thong was a half of a gourd. I came close enough to see that in that gourd he had collected some grain that had fallen from the sheaves that were being carried to the village.

I knew how he did it. He'd take the palm of his hand and push the grain together and pick it up and put it in because he had no fingers. And then he would swirl it until the grain rose to the top.

And then he'd lay his tongue down and pick up with the moisture on his tongue, the kernels of grain, and hold it in his toothless jaws until it was soft enough to swallow. His lips were filled with pocking ulcers. His eyes, the lids were turned way down, filled with pus.

His nose was just an ulcer in the front of his face. And he was holding out his hands to me. And he was saying something.

I didn't understand his language, but I knew what he was saying. Put yourself in my place. What if you were the leper and I was the white man coming down the path? What would you want me to do? Put yourself in my place.

Help me. My plans were changed that day. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, but I knew I had to do something.

And I came over and knelt beside him and spoke so he didn't understand what I said. I said, I'll do anything I can to help you. And when I did, something happened in me.

Up till then, I'd been looking at a stranger that I'd never seen before. But when I said, I'll do anything I can to help you, it changed. I realized in a flashing moment that here was God's picture of a sinner.

God's picture of me. Leprosy is not a type of sin. Leprosy is the picture of the sinner.

And this was God's chosen picture of me. This is what I looked like to Him. My feet had taken me where I shouldn't have gone.

My hands had been used as they shouldn't have been. My lips had spoken as they had and should not have been. Everything about me corrupted by this committal of my will to please myself.

It was God's picture of me. And I had said, I'll do anything to help you, and it dawned on me that moment that the Lord Jesus had looked at me and looked at you and saw us thus. He in His infinite holiness, He who knew no sin, saw us as this.

And said, I'll do anything to help you. Now, I didn't do this. Please understand.

But I want you to realize that if I had done that day for that leper what the Lord Jesus did do for me, this is what I would have had to have done. I would have had to have stooped down and put my hands under His arms and lifted Him up. And then I would have had to have placed His rotting feet on my clean feet until rotting hand in my clean hand, rotting face pressed against my clean face, somehow in the alchemy of love I would have so compressed and so pulled that His disease would have come out upon me and my health would have passed upon Him.

That's what the Word says. He was made to be what you are that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Now when you hear that Word, the love of Christ constrains us to thus judge.

That if one died for all, then all for whom he died were dead, that they which live could not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and who rose again. As the Father sent me, so send I you. I don't know what it's going to mean for you.

I'm prepared and have been for years for what it means for me. But I know that only as that prayer is answered in each of us will those for whom the Savior died ever hear about His dying love. I entreat you, I beg you, I implore you in Jesus' name to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to live in you the way the Father lived in Him that the world may know and the world may be able to believe.

Shall we pray? Father, in Jesus' name, we come to Thee today asking that somehow the truth of Thy Word may move from the page of the book until it's imprinted upon our hearts, in our minds, until it captures our will and galvanizes our purpose, until we have totally brought our lives into focus to the point that we are to live not to ourselves, but to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. O Father of Jesus, might it be that because Thou art here and speaking and has spoken that somehow there will be people somewhere who will have an opportunity to hear that haven't heard before. We ask it with thanksgiving in Jesus' name.

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