

Jesus Prays For You

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, February 18, 2025
PASSAGES	John 17; 1 John 3; Colossians 1; 2 Corinthians 4
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:16:06 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Hours before his arrest, Jesus prays — and the prayer reaches past the eleven men in the room to everyone who would ever believe through their word. What he asks for is not more output. It is that we be one with him, full of joy, and loved by the Father with the same love the Father has for the Son.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The hardest thing about Christianity, Matt said, is not obedience — it is accepting the depth of Christ's love without adding to it or distorting it.
- ◆ Opposition to the church is rooted in not knowing Jesus. You cannot love God and hate his people; the two are the same object.
- ◆ "Ask and you will receive" has a stated purpose attached to it: *that your joy may be full*. Joy is the goal, not a side effect of getting things done.
- ◆ You were not enlisted into an army of chore doers. God is not short-handed, and he is not depending on you.
- ◆ Peace is not the absence of trouble. Jesus promised trouble in the same breath he promised peace, because the peace is a person.
- ◆ Christian unity is not shared politics, denomination, liturgy or culture. It is shared nature — being in Christ, as the Father is in the Son.

- ◆ Making the Father's love known is Jesus' own project, not a burden he handed off. He said he would keep making it known.

► 1:16:06

Matt admitted at the outset that he was nervous about this passage — not because it is obscure but because it is the center. John 16 and 17 are Jesus' last words to his friends before the betrayal, and words that central either strike the heart with power or, if a veil is still there, sound like so much religious noise. What he kept returning to was his own difficulty: "One of the hardest things for me is to truly really accept the depth of Christ's love for me and to hold on to it without adding to it or distorting it with my own nonsense."

Why the world pushes back

► 1:19:48

Jesus opens by naming what is coming — expulsion from the synagogues, and a day when killing his followers will look to the killers like a service to God (John 16:1–4). He gives one reason for it: they have not known the Father or the Son. Hatred of Christians is visible evidence of hatred for Christ. "It is a lie to say I love God but I hate Christians," Matt said, "or to say I love Jesus but I hate the church." And love here is not a mood — it is love in deed and in truth. Christ did not send a note expressing positive feelings.

The Helper he sends

► 1:21:19

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

JOHN 16:7–8 ↗

An enthroned Christ is better for us than a local one: by the Spirit his presence is with his people everywhere at once. And the initiative was his. "Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit," Matt pointed out. "We didn't climb into heaven and get him." Conviction is the Spirit's work, not ours — we participate by saying what is true. As for the ruler of this world already being judged: 2 Corinthians 4:4 names a god

of this age who blinds unbelieving minds, and [Colossians 2:13–14](#) has the written record against us nailed to the cross and those powers disarmed.

► 1:23:11

The Spirit of truth “will not speak on his own authority” but takes what is Christ’s and declares it to us ([John 16:13–14](#)). Matt paused here to say plainly that Hope takes this at face value — the Spirit still speaks, which is why people come to the front and say so. The pattern in the text is a Trinity in perfect harmony: the Father gives to the Son, the Spirit takes what is the Son’s and hands it to the body, and the Son is honored.

Ask, that your joy may be full

► 1:25:03

“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you... Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

JOHN 16:22–24 ↗

Two verses after promising they will be hunted, he promises a joy no one can take. Matt confessed the temptation to file this under “special promise, apostles only,” and then ruled it out: [whoever believes in him will do the works he does, and we have confidence that if we ask according to his will, he hears us](#). His will is in play. But look at what his will turns out to be.

► 1:27:00

“You have not been enlisted into an army of chore doers so that the Lord can get more done intergalactically,” Matt said. He does not say *ask, so that together we can finish the job faster* — if he wanted speed he would do it himself. Then the illustration he keeps returning to: have you ever walked into the kitchen and forgotten why you went in there? Is the Lord depending on you? The joy is not accidental overflow from a productive week. It is the stated goal of a relationship in which we learn dependence on a Father. And the access is direct — [“the Father himself loves you”](#). Ask a brother or sister to pray for you by all means, but you have your own line.

No mere messenger

► 1:29:38

The disciples answer, “now we know that you know all things” — and Matt argued that is a heavier sentence than it sounds. They were not saying he was a very clever guy. Who knows all things?

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me... you discern my thoughts from afar.”

God is greater, and he knows everything. Saying Jesus is “from God” is the same kind of statement: “He’s from God like a lion is from a tribe of lions,” Matt said. Not a courier. A nature.

Peace is not the absence of trouble

► 1:31:00

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

JOHN 16:33 ↗

Matt called our alternatives mirages: the right job, the right amount of money, a different roommate, a new house, the vacation. Take the trip and something always goes wrong — someone gets sick, someone is rude, there is a detour. The scheme is the problem. He promised trouble in the same sentence he promised peace, because the peace was never going to come from the trouble stopping.

“This is eternal life, that they know you”

► 1:32:18

Then Jesus lifts his eyes and prays (John 17:1–3), and the harmony is the same: glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

JOHN 17:3 ↗

► 1:35:43

Read it for meaning, not woodenly, Matt urged — the way English says *happiness is a warm puppy* without claiming a puppy is an emotion. Jesus talks this way too:

“the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life”, and “his commandment is eternal life.” These are not equations but arrows — one thing leading to another. Which means knowing *about* God is not the finish line. Paul corrects himself mid-sentence — you know God, or rather are known by God — and the one who loves God is known by him. The alternative is the worst sentence in the Gospels: “I never knew you.” Even a devil can quote scripture without accepting it.

► 1:37:16

The image Matt used to close the point was Jesus’ own: the bread that came down from heaven. Israel ate manna and still died. This bread has to be come to and eaten.

He is praying for you

► 1:38:40

Jesus says how he manifested the Father’s name — he cast out devils, healed the sick, preached good news to the poor, and revealed the Father perfectly in his life, death and resurrection. Then:

“I am praying for them... for they are yours.” He asks the Father to keep them in his name, that they may be one as we are one.

► 1:40:13

And the reason he says it out loud, in front of them, is “that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” It matters to him that his body has joy in him. Note also how the oneness is defined: as the Father and Son are one — by nature. Our unity is not manufactured by gathering in one building or working the same park project. It follows from what we now are.

Set apart, and sent

► 1:43:19

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth... And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

Matt noticed the shape: it opens with the prayer and closes with the plan to accomplish it, and the hinge in the middle is that we are sent as he was sent. He is inviting us into his own mission.

► 1:44:03

Holiness, he added, is not the same as purity. A sheep can be clean, unblemished and perfectly healthy and still be entirely mundane, standing on a hill. Offer it to the Lord and it is holy — because it belongs to him and is marked by his presence. You are forgiven, yes. You are also claimed.

The unity that persuades the world

► 1:45:41

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word — see, that’s where you get included,” Matt said. He told about standing at the counter of a McDonald’s, discouraged, pouring half-and-half into a coffee, when a stranger stepped up beside him and he felt the same nearness of Christ he knows from being comforted by him. He asked the man if he was a believer. The man said he was Roman Catholic, then added that he loves Jesus. Matt asked him to pray, followed him to his table, and was ministered to.

► 1:47:43

The man had worried the denominational gap would be a problem. What Matt sensed was deeper than a denomination — and that is exactly the point of the prayer. Unity is not common political action, common structure of liturgy, or uniformity of color, culture or language. You can have every one of those and have no unity at all, if one is in the vine and another is not.

“Even as you loved me”

► 1:48:36

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

JOHN 17:22-23 ↗

Matt stopped and read the last clause twice — it was in his own notes and on the slide behind him, and he was still stunned by it. It is not hard to believe the Father loves the Son. So, he said, let us repent of believing we are a charity case on Jesus’ refrigerator, pitied and visited out of obligation. The love named here is the Father’s love for the Son, given to us. Christ in us, the hope of glory — and he wants us with him to see that glory. “You are destined for glory whether you like it or not,” Matt said, “Jesus’ own glory, no less. You need a miracle to believe that.” So he stopped and prayed for exactly that — that the veil would tear, that striving would cease.

Where he left it

► 1:54:33

Four things. First, the unity of the Trinity is one of nature, not of hobby; the body of Christ is one the same way — so abide in him, because there is nowhere else unity and life are found. Second, he wants the prayer relationship, so be like the persistent widow and do not lose heart; and remember whose project this is, because there are seasons when you are trying to feast on his love and doing it badly, and he is the one making sure you are fed. Third,

“I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known” — so speak about Jesus freely and confidently rather than under a weight of fear, since he and the Spirit are doing the convicting. Fourth, we are sent as he was sent, carrying his name and reputation wherever we are, which is why the hostility comes at all. There is no such thing as unhated witness, because at bottom it was never about you.

The largest service, Matt said, is to the Lord himself, who wants us to abide in him. Then the question he had asked twice already, once more: have you answered that call, for real?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- John 16:1–4
- 1 John 3:18
- John 16:7–8
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- Colossians 2:13–14
- John 16:13–14
- John 16:22–24
- John 14:12
- 1 John 5:14
- John 16:26–27
- John 16:29–30
- Psalm 139:1–2
- 1 John 3:20
- John 16:33
- John 17:1–3
- John 17:3
- John 6:63
- John 12:49–50
- Galatians 4:9
- 1 Corinthians 8:3
- Matthew 7:23
- John 6:51
- John 17:9
- John 17:11
- John 17:17–19
- John 17:20–21
- John 17:22–23
- Colossians 1:27
- John 17:24
- Luke 18:1–8
- John 17:26

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said the hardest thing for him is accepting the depth of Christ's love without adding to it or distorting it. What does your version of adding to it look like?
2. "You have not been enlisted into an army of chore doers." Where have you been treating your relationship with God as work assigned rather than joy intended?
3. What is your current mirage — the job, the money, the move, the different people — that you are quietly expecting to produce peace?
4. Jesus prays that we would be one as he and the Father are one, by nature rather than by shared preferences. Where have you mistaken agreement for unity, or difference for division?
5. He said he would keep making the Father's name known, and that we get to participate rather than carry it. What does that free you to do differently this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNpfumVz-_U&t=4566s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.