



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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The Last Words Of Jesus
HG127: The Last Prayer

John 17:1-26

Home Group Study Notes

24 July 2016 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

How would you like to be remembered ?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



The Last Words Of Jesus HG127: The Last Prayer

John 17:1-26

Home Group Sermon Notes

24 July 2016 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

Jesus spent the last evening of his life with his disciples, he knew he was going to die the following day and this was his last chance, prior to his death to comfort them, warn them of impending dangers, and provide final words on how to remain resilient in the face of adversity. Then he prayed, and thankfully what he said was recorded so that so we also might know what he said in his last prayer, and as he raised his eyes to heaven its almost as if we are able to listen into the kind of conversation that Jesus would have with his Father. His prayer is given a whole chapter in John. Its often called “the High Priestly Prayer” and it falls neatly into 3 categories. Jesus first of all prays for himself v 1-5, he prays for his disciples v 6-19, and he prays for all believers, v 20-26. Even in his darkest hour Jesus was thinking of us.

Jesus prays for himself

The first thing Jesus did is something that most of us find hard to do, he prayed for himself. He said, “*The hour has come. Glorify the Son that the Son may glorify you.*” When Jesus predicted his death in John 12.23 he said something similar “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” So what did he mean? The glory of the Lord is everything that makes God who God is. It is all His characteristics, his authority, power, faithfulness, love, wisdom. All the immeasurable weight and magnitude of God are contained within God’s glory. Nothing is hidden or held back and it is Jesus the Son of God and second Person of the Trinity who reveals God to us. In John 1.18 Jesus says “*No-one has ever seen God but God the only Son, who was at the Father’s side, has made him known,*” in Heb 1:3 we read “*The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word,*” and in Jn 17 v 10 Jesus says, “*All that I have is yours and all that you have is mine.*” No one else but Jesus could utter this phrase and nowhere else does he so openly declare his oneness with God. Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus.

Throughout John’s gospel we see that the Father and Son’s glory are linked and bound up together. If we honour and worship the Father then we have to honour and worship the Son because there is no way to know and encounter the Father without first knowing the Son who shows us the Father. In v2 Jesus says that the Father gave the authority to him to give eternal life to those who believed in him.

4: Jesus has sent us out into the world, v18. How many non-Christian friends do you actually have?

5: Why is our unity a powerful argument for the reality of Jesus?

6: What encourages you the most or means the most to you after reading Jesus’ prayer?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: According to verse 4, how can we glorify the Father?

2: What should we avoid in our interaction with the non-believing world?

3: Is the monastic life that withdraws from society in contradiction to Jesus prayer that we should “*not be taken out of the world.*” v15 ?

Eternal life refers not just to the duration of life but to the quality of life, it is about entering into a life that knows God in the here and now and knowing what he is really like. He is not distant, stern and cruel, he is majestic, joyous, holy and loving. This knowledge of God the Father that Jesus has revealed is not just intellectual knowledge, its about understanding that we can have an intimate personal relationship with a loving God who is not remote and unapproachable but whose name and nature are love. Knowing God and knowing what he is like is impossible without Jesus.

The cross was the absolute worst that men could do to Jesus, but the cross was not the end, the resurrection followed. The cross was proof that men could do their worst yet Jesus would still triumph. William Barclay says of the cross, “*It was as if God pointed to the cross and said, “That is what men think of my Son,” and then pointed at the resurrection and said, “That is what I think of my Son.”*” So Jesus prayed that the glory he had before the world began may be restored to him. He had been sent out to do the most difficult task and now he was returning home, a victorious champion. He had come from the Father and he was returning to the Father and he would enjoy the victor’s reward knowing that the father would clothe him in glory and splendour and return to him the divine glory that he had shared before time, with God. The cross was the door he had to go through to return home and to once again be with his Father and it is from the viewpoint of the cross and his death that we see the true glory of Jesus. It was the completion off his work, Jesus knew that the cross would bring God glory and it would show the world what God is like, loving, holy, all powerful and now redeemer.

Jesus could have avoided the cross but his obedience to the Father would not have allowed him to do so. If he had turned away it would have been as if he was saying “*this is as far as I am going,*” and his action would have been seen as if God was saying to us that his love had limits. By going to the cross Jesus was showing us that there was nothing that God’s love was not prepared to do and suffer. There were no limits. Jesus knew that his obedience not only in life but in his death would reveal God’s glory and show us his true character and when he prays that the Father may glorify the Son he is expressing his willingness to obey the Father even unto death. God is interested in everything about us and he wants us to bring our concerns to him, that is all part of having a relationship with him and if we are to follow the example of Jesus we can conclude that it is OK to pray for ourselves. Perhaps we need to be mindful though that when Jesus prayed for himself his motivation was that the Father would be glorified and that men and women would be saved. Therefore it is also OK to pray for wisdom, strength, power and success in what we do as long as these things are needed for the benefit of others and in praying for these things we are aiming to be obedient and faithful to God and his call on our lives to serve Him and his world.

Jesus prays for his disciples

At this point in time Jesus was left with eleven very ordinary men who had chosen discipleship, the future may have seemed shaky to say the least but Jesus had belief in these men and belief in God and he also believes in us, he has put his trust in us. Like Jesus, if we have belief in God and in those who belong to him we need never be pessimistic as the possibilities are endless.

Jesus says that they were given to him by God meaning that as the Holy Spirit moved in their hearts they responded positively and acknowledged Jesus and Lord and because of this they would bring glory to him. In knowing him they were changed and that change is credited to Jesus, they were no longer *“in the world”* meaning the world that lives in rebellion to God. This comes with a warning to the disciples that they could not expect anything other than opposition and hatred from the world as their values were different. They could expect battles to be fought, hostility to be faced but through this and by standing together, going against the tide and popular belief, with their hope in Christ they could experience the Christian joy that can only be known and given by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus knew what lay ahead for his disciples but he did not pray that they would avoid trouble or be taken out of it, what he did pray was that God would protect them from the evil one and they would be victorious in their struggles. He is not praying for protection from physical harm. The following day he himself would face great physical harm in order to defeat the power of Satan and he knew that most of his disciples would face some kind of martyrdom. Jesus wanted them to be in the world facing all the problems and opposition head on and live out their Christianity in the midst of persecution and hatred. He wanted them to be able to face and defeat any temptations that could persuade them to give up on the kingdom of Christ and follow in the footsteps of Judas. He wanted them to take up their cross when things got tough. He prayed that they would be sanctified, or set apart, living in the world among unbelievers but distinct from it remaining faithful to the truth of the Word of God.

Christianity does not offer us a safe sanitised life free from problems and it does not intend us to shut ourselves away where we can live a quiet peaceful life free from stress. We, like the disciples are to be *“not of the world”* because Jesus very much wants us *in* the world, he is sending us out into the world that is lost where we must live out our Christianity trying to win the world for Christ rather than shutting the doors and abandoning it. As we all know from experience, Christianity does not mean that we won't have problems but we *will* have Someone to go to with them, it doesn't mean that life will be peaceful and trouble free but it does mean that we *will* have Someone to help us triumph when things get too hard. God has not left us on our own, any task he gives us, he equips us to do and any trial we face His Holy Spirit is right alongside us helping us.

Jesus prays for us

Jesus had prayed for himself and for his disciples and with complete confidence in this small group of men who he tasked to spread the gospel he now he looked into the future and he prayed for Christians everywhere and in every age, including us. He prayed for his Church and the thing that was important to him this night before he died was that his followers, those who loved him, would be united in their love for one another. Just as Christianity offers us a relationship with the Father he wanted us to be in relationship with each other, and to love one another because we love him. In praying that the disciples *“may be one as, as we are one,”* Jesus is praying for the unity of Christians down the ages everywhere, unity across the churches and across the denominations, there can be no divisions in the Body of Christ because disunity is against everything Jesus prayed about here.

We cannot show love to the world if we are fighting among ourselves, it is a very poor witness and grossly disobedient to Jesus command to us to *“love one another.”* We know that we are all different, we prefer one form of worship to another and that's fine but these things should never affect Christian unity which can easily be hindered and fractured when we begin to love our own creeds, rituals and organisations more than we love each other. Jesus prayed that it would be the believers unity that would convince the world of the truth of Christianity and of its Saviour Jesus Christ. He wanted the church to be one even as he was one with the Father. He and the Father are completely united, different Persons but totally in union. His heart must have been broken many times down the ages over the divisions and scandals within his Church.

When we pray we tend to have a wish list of things that often involve asking for healing, help, comfort and so on, and there's nothing wrong with any of these kind of prayers. Jesus prayed for his disciples and yes, he prayed that the Father would glorify him, but this was in order that the Father would be glorified first. It is only when we get to v 24 that Jesus personally *wants* something from his prayer and it takes your breath away. The night before he died, this *“want”* of Jesus is so humbling and precious. He says in v24, *“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.”*

As he comes to the end of his prayer we are again on his heart. He wants the disciples and he wants us to be with him one day and to share in his glory. He has been sent for us, he will die for us, he is not going anywhere without us. He is going back to the Father and he is taking us with him, we are on our journey following Him because he wants to share Heaven with us. The finished work of Christ will be as Rev 5.13 tells us when he at last presents all those whom the father has given him from all down the ages and all around the world, *“before him who sits on the throne.”*

Thomas Manton the Puritan wrote, *“When Christ made his will, heaven is one of the legacies which he bequeathed to us. This was the last will and testament, heaven is ours, a legacy left by Christ.”* Can you imagine that, Jesus left Heaven to us in his will. Until that day when we will see him face to face we walk by faith and not sight and we must be obedient to Christ's commission to go out into the world *“that does not know,”* v25, the Father and make him known. Our purpose on this earth is to declare that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We can only do this when we understand and recognise both in our head and in our heart, what Jesus did for us. His gift to us is peace and reconciliation with the Father, we need then to go out and tell the world that is lost of God's offer to them in Jesus Christ his Son.

Church Text for 2016

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.”

John 15:16