

Midweek Lenten Sermon Series: “Christ’s Passionate Prayers”

Jesus was a man of prayer. His mission on earth was immersed in prayer. The season of Lent is a season for us to be in prayer conversing with our Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier.

1. Jesus’ Prayer for the Dead (John 11:41-42)

As we begin the penitential season of Lent, we are reminded that in the midst of death and sorrow, our Lord grieves with us and assures us that *“even though we die, yet shall we live!”* for Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

2. Jesus’ Prayer for God’s Will to be done (Matthew 26:36-46)

The way of the cross was not an easy road for Jesus to walk. His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. If there was another way to accomplish the salvation of humankind, Jesus prayed that it would replace the cross. But ultimately, Jesus said to His Father, *“May your will be done.”* The road our Lord sends us on is not always easy. Our life is also filled with sorrow and no doubt, we have prayed for another way. But, in the midst of *“God’s silence”* we pray, *“May your will be done.”*

3. Jesus’ Prayer for Glory (John 17:1-5)

Jesus’ understanding of glory is so different from what we see on a daily basis. Jesus’ glorious moment – his crowning achievement – occurred on a cross with a crown of thorns on his head. Yet, he endured this “glorious” moment so that we might experience heavenly glory for all eternity.

4. Jesus’ Prayer for Truth (John 17:6-19)

Jesus left his followers in the world so that they might testify to the truth. If they knew what awaited them Jesus’ disciples would have preferred to be taken out of this world. Instead Jesus prayed that His Father would protect them from the evil one ... that the Holy Spirit would sanctify them by the truth. In many ways we may prefer to be taken from this world once we are baptized but the Lord sanctifies us by His truth through preaching, catechesis, and the mutual encouragement of our fellow saints AND he gives us an assignment: to speak His truth to other people!

5. Jesus' Prayer for You (John 17:20-26)

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus had us on his mind. Our Saviour prayed, *"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."* (John 17:20) He, who is one with his Father from eternity, prays that his followers may experience peace and concord based upon the oneness we share through Christ and expressed in Ephesians 4:3-6. Jesus prays, *"May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (21) F.F. Bruce says this *"unity for which he prays is a unity of love; it is, in fact, their participation in the unity of love which subsists eternally between the Father and the Son."* (*The Gospel of John* by F.F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983, p. 335) This unity of love is reflected in the manner Christians relate to one another and serves as a corporate witness to those who do not yet believe in Christ. The love Christians demonstrate for one another is like a magnet as it draws unbelievers to Jesus.

6. Jesus' Prayer for Forgiveness (Luke 23:34)

Jesus practices what he preaches. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:44) Now, as Mary's son experiences the excruciating pain of a Roman crucifixion and the dissipation of his friends, Jesus prays, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* What manner of love is this!? Jesus' prayer reflects not only the love he has for his executioners, but his prayer reveals his love for all people who are guilty of nailing him to the cross as a result of their sin. In other words, *"Father, forgive them"* is Jesus interceding on our behalf. O Lord, may your prayer be our prayer for those we consider our "enemies"!

7. Maundy Thursday: Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving (Luke 22:14-20)

"He gave thanks." (17, 19) These are three simple words that are often passed over without much reflection and yet, these words are filled with hope. A torturous twenty-four hours awaited him ... the end of his life was imminent ... and yet, our Lord had reason to *"give thanks."* Why could he give thanks? Because he knew his death and resurrection would send Satan fleeing. He knew he would conquer sin and death with the eschatological result that the kingdom of God would come. (18) He gave thanks because the breaking of his body and the shedding of his blood would mean forgiveness for those who trust in him as their Saviour. In Christ, we have countless reasons to *"give thanks"* even in those tortuous times of our life when God is silent and Satan is creating havoc in our lives. In fact, we come to the Eucharist to receive God's forgiveness as we eat Jesus' Body and drink Jesus' Blood and to have a foretaste of the heavenly feast that awaits us!

8. **Good Friday: Jesus' Prayer of Despondency** (Matthew 27:46)

This is the saddest prayer in all of history. It's a testament to God's prophecy spoken to the serpent in the primal years of human history, *"You will strike his heel."* (Genesis 3:15) But, in other ways, Jesus' prayer is the most propitious prayer in all of history because Jesus' rejection by his Father for our sin means that God's prophecy spoken to the serpent, *"He will crush your head"* (Genesis 3:15) is coming to fulfillment. It is worth noting that the one apostle who stood at the foot of the cross witnessing the death of God's Son states, *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."* (1 John 3:8) Yes, Jesus' death is *"the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2) Who better expresses the propitious nature of Jesus' death than the evangelist of the Old Testament, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:3-5)

9. **Easter Sunday: Jesus' Departing Prayer** (Luke 23:46)

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." This was Jesus' final prayer before his death. His prayer demonstrates his confident resolve in the nature of his Father. Jesus trusted that his Father would raise him from the dead as promised. As we near the portals of death, we too can pray, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"* for our Father has adopted us as His own children in Holy Baptism. Our inheritance, guaranteed by Christ's death and resurrection, will *"never perish, spoil, or fade but being kept in heaven for us."* (1 Peter 1:3-4) That's our Father's promise to us. Of the fulfillment of this promise we can be certain! *"Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"* (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

