

<b>Series:</b> Portraits of Jesus	<b>Reference:</b> <i>John 17</i>	<b>Title:</b> The Priest	<b>Date:</b> 05.31.2020
<b>Website Writeup:</b> Jesus was a bridge builder to God, going as far as giving His own life to finish the work!			

Built in the late 1800's, the Brooklyn Bridge took more than a decade to construct & cost the life of its designer, John Roebling. He died of lockjaw from an accident on site. His son Washington then ran the project. New York & Brooklyn, were two separate cities at the time with obvious advantages of linking the two. The idea was thought to be impossible because of the width of the waterway, its turbulence & tidal conditions, and that it was one of the busiest waterways on earth. A suspension bridge was the only solution - the largest bridge ever built at the time. Many died during construction & more than 125 years after its completion, the bridge is still a vital route bridging two cities, making them one.

We have come to the end of Jesus ministry in John giving us a unique opportunity to view His purpose. This series is titled Portraits of Jesus. Today John paints the portrait of Jesus as Priest. What is a priest or pastor? The best definition I've heard is they're bridge-builders to God. Keep that in mind as we explore the idea of Jesus as Priest. Today let's look at Jesus as priest, bridge builder to God.

Jesus also died building a relational bridge between us & the Father. Making us one with the Father, Son & Spirit, and one with each other. This scene in the Garden of Gethsemane is one of His final acts of Priesthood for us. Notice, on the night of His betrayal & arrest He took the time to pray for you. His prayer is seen to have an upward, inward & outward focus.

Firstly, this prayer has an Upward Focus towards the Father's Glory. Starting in v1 of John 17...*'After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven & said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.*

At Christmas we see Jesus' coming into the world, here we see why. His ministry, begun in the manger, revolved around one single purpose - to glorify the Father by bridging the Gap between God & His people (John 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). He was the perfect expression of the Father; when you see Jesus, you see the Father. Going back to John 1:18, it says...  
*<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but the one & only Son, who is himself God & is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.* He's just finished saying He's the way, truth & life - no one comes to the Father except across the bridge of Jesus (John 14:6;1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 4:12). It's to the Father's Glory Jesus has accomplished His purposes by bridging the gap between God & man.

His prayer's an Upward Focus reminding us of The Father's Gift - verse 6, <sup>6</sup> *"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*

At Christmas we celebrate God coming in the form of a child, putting Himself in the middle of our world, experiencing all we experience. Which says, God pursues us. We didn't pursue him. Romans tells us no one seeks God. Ephesians 2 tells us we are spiritually dead in sin, but made alive in Christ & dead people don't respond. But in His coming & building this bridge Jesus glorifies the Father by breathing spiritual life back into us. Accomplished as God the Spirit quickens our spirit applying the finished work of Christ to us (John 16:8-11). We're joyously awakened & convicted of our need of reconciliation with God (John 6:44; 6:65). We're the Father's gift to the Son, and what the Father gives, the Son never refuses (John 6:37).

I was speaking with someone recently who's struggling with the person of Jesus. They asked all the typical questions...how was the Bible put together, isn't it just a made up story, isn't God found in all religions, etc. I gave technical answers, but at the end of the conversation I said, *"You feel this is a sham. Yet, I can't get past the day my heart was warmed, the lights went on when I met Jesus. It was as if I was dead & had been made alive. Jesus was so unique & different than anything or anyone I had ever experienced, still is, and He's changed my life."* That's certainly not proof enough for any skeptic, it's a work of the Spirit, yet it's my witness.

This prayer's also an Upward Focus in reminding us of The Father's Grace, V7...<sup>7</sup> *Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them & know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*

Someone once said, "By Grace, become who you are, by Grace." We are what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). For me, it's comforting to hear this prayer made by God the Son on my behalf, outlining His love in pursuit to gather us back into relationship with Himself. The Christian should be self-aware. We should know deeply how broken, hurtful & prideful we are at the core. We should be the ones who know very clearly of our need to be reconciled. Not in a self-loathing, but in joyous conviction of need. To know our position in Christ, sealed by his Grace, comforts us. We're not destroyed by failure, but grow through it. Grace affords us the ability to hold our head high, but in humility. Secured in grace (justified), we rely on grace to become like Him (sanctified).

His prayer also has an Inward Focus as He prays for Assistance. He asks in vv1 & 5... *glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you..... <sup>5</sup> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.*

This is his time of suffering; the cross before Him. Working together in community with the Father & Spirit Jesus asks for assistance in finishing His purpose. Soon to be betrayed, arrested, tried & crucified, He asks the Father to aide Him in these last hours to accomplish the task for which He came.

We started out saying Roebling died for his dream to build the Brooklyn Bridge. Over the 14 years of building, many others died as well to see that dream realized. Jesus died building this bridge to the Father & prayed for assistance in carrying out the task. Over the history of the Church many others have given their lives for the Kingdom as well. We too, sacrifice ourselves for the Kingdom, maybe not in physical death, but when we die to self for others, we continue the work of Jesus.

The Confessing Church was organized in Nazi Germany to fight against government interference in Church affairs in opposition to the Nazi Party & its policies. They fought injustice & held secret meetings where they'd pass the hat to donate identity cards & passbooks, which were modified by forgers & given to underground Jews so they could pass as legal German citizens. Several members of the Confessing Church were caught, tried, jailed, or killed for their part. Leaders were sent to concentration camps & many died. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in such a camp.

Would I be willing to give my life for others in such a way? Am I at least willing to die to self in small ways now for the sake of others? Jesus himself relied on the Father for assistance in living out His purpose, and many in the Church have had to over history, as should we.

This prayer has an Inward Focus as He Prayed About His Accomplishment, V4...<sup>4</sup> *I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.* I imagine the Roebling family was consumed with building the Brooklyn Bridge. Jesus was consumed with the kingdom, set on building this bridge to the Father, determined to finish it.

Do you have a hard time finishing things? Maybe much of it's not worth finishing. There have been a few things in my life which I've been determined to finish. My cafe. The work I started in Lampung. The three English Schools I started in Lampung. This church. And all of those share a very important purpose - they were all bridges to God. Maybe if we have a hard time finishing things, we don't see the greater purpose of doing so? Maybe we have compartmentalized the Gospel out of our daily activities? Everything is spiritual, at whatever we put our minds to is to be used for the sake of the Kingdom. And ultimately our purpose, far beyond being lawyers, carpenters, or teachers, is to represent Christ in all ways. We continue His work.

It's an Inward Focus since He Prayed About Assurance, V5...<sup>5</sup> *So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.* Jesus was going home & knew it, fully assured of His position with the Father. As harsh as the experience of the cross was for Jesus, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Peter,

Timothy, yourself, or anyone who'd give up their life for others, we are assured of where we're headed. The cross, as heavy as it may be, is filled with future hope because we're assured of our future glory with the Father.

His prayer had an Outward Focus, vv9-18...<sup>9</sup>*I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.* <sup>10</sup>*All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.* <sup>11</sup>*And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.* <sup>12</sup>*While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them...*

<sup>13</sup>*But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.* <sup>14</sup>*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.* <sup>15</sup>*I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.* <sup>16</sup>*They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.* <sup>17</sup>*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* <sup>18</sup>*As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

He now turns his attention outward praying for their Preservation. He fully understood the weight the Disciples feel & face as He leaves. He'd promised the Holy Spirit as a result. 1 Pet 1:3-6 paints a great picture of this preservation, <sup>3</sup>...*In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* <sup>4</sup>*and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,* <sup>5</sup>*who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.* <sup>6</sup>*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

Remember, by Grace, become who you are, by Grace. God pursues & sustains us in a relationship which will never perish, spoil, or fade.

It's an Outward Focus as He prays for their Protection. We live in a world set against the Kingdom rule of God. 1 Pet. 5:8-10 gives us a glimpse of our situation, <sup>8</sup>*Be alert & of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* <sup>9</sup>*Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* <sup>10</sup>*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you & make you strong, firm & steadfast.*

Kevlar's a woven fabric when layered upon itself about 30 times can stop a bullet by absorbing impact & spreading out energy. You're a child of the King; your life's hidden in Him (Col 3:3). Although you & I may face suffering, we have future hope, strengthened,

protected & preserved in Christ. He becomes our shield, our Kevlar, against what would otherwise destroy us.

It's Outward Focused as He prays for their Purity. His prayer is, they might live their lives against the backdrop of the Word, a life holy & pleasing to the Father. C.S. Lewis once said, *"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We're half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink, sex & ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he can't imagine what's meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We're far too easily pleased."* I agree, we're constantly growing into understanding what we have in Christ.

It's Outwardly Focused as He prays for Harmony/Unity. He's modeled this harmony in the His relationship with God the Father & God the Spirit. He calls us to the same. There's no strife or confusion within the Trinity. They're not at odds with one another & when we are, we know God's calling us to learn to love at a deeper level. Churches are messy places. Think about it, where else do you address the darkness of your soul in community other than in church? You don't & it's hard work. Jesus knew that, it's the reason He prays for unity. We're His witness striving for harmony in order to witness well. Would you buy a car if you moved it & there was a huge oil leak underneath? No, you wouldn't. And it's the same for the church - not to play church politics, or save face in front of the world, covering up & hiding our sin. That does nothing but sweep issues under the rug. Eventually someone picks up the rug & exposes the dirt. No, we want to actually fix the leaks. Jesus calls us to a continual ongoing journey of love, forgiveness, integrity & deepening maturity which knows when to let things go. A maturity which is increasingly able to address issues with humility & love towards the goal of reconciliation. We're not to play act, but to live the Gospel, uniting each other in Christ.

As Jesus brought His prayer to a close, He took a minute to pray we'd be filled with His love. A love which only a child of God can know & experience through the ministry of the Spirit. A love which empowers & enables us to live the Gospel out in community.

Therefore, as we consider the beginning at Christmas, let's remember the end. The purpose & work of Jesus as Priest in bridge-building. Just before his crucifixion he prayed upward, glorifying the Father reminding us of His grace. He prayed inward, for assistance, accomplishment & assurance. And outward, for protection, preservation, purity & harmony. This time of social-distancing can be a lonely & trying time for people. Be encouraged, Jesus knew you before time began & prayed for you that last night in the Garden of Gethsemane. Be encouraged, He finished His bridge, reconnecting us to the Father, and left us with all we need to continue His work.

## Community Group Questions

1. Check-in. Hear how each other are handling week 11 now of red zone living.
2. Pray for one another.
3. Read John 17 together and hear Jesus' prayer.
4. Pastor Jason breaks down Jesus' bridge-building prayer between us and the Father in the following ways:
  1. Upward focus: He glorifies God the Father and reminds us of His grace.
  2. Inward focus: for assistance, accomplishment and assurance.
  3. Outward focus: for protection, preservation, purity and harmony.
5. Which piece or pieces of Jesus prayer stick out to you? Why?
6. Pray: All together as a group pray in the model of Jesus' prayer here. Break up the pieces and make this a communal offering to God.
  1. Someone pray with an Upward focus-glorifying God and honoring His grace
  2. Several people pray with an Inward focus-for God's assistance, accomplishments for His Kingdom and assurance this side of Heaven.
  3. Several people pray with an Outward focus-for protection, preservation, purity and harmony.