

June 18, 2023
The Third Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

“PPP-Fathers”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. We've begun Pentecost with the P.P.P. Sermon Series talking about prayer. We began with Jesus's disciples asking Him to teach them to pray. And then the last two weeks we've looked at both Daniel and Hezekiah and their prayers for deliverance. Prayers for deliverance to the glory of God's name.

Today we take the series to what is possibly the most powerful prayer recorded in scripture. It's Jesus's own prayer found in John chapter 17. We call it His 'high priestly prayer' and it comes in three parts. In the first part, He prays for Himself. He's going to be facing pain. He's going to be facing His disciples running away from Him and Peter even denied Him. He is facing death and what does He pray for? Surprise, surprise, He prays that God would be glorified just like Daniel, just like Hezekiah.

But in the second part of the prayer, He prays for His disciples. We hear that part of the prayer our gospel reading this morning. He prays that God would keep them in His name. He prays that they may be one, even as God the Father and He are one. Now, that is some serious unity because God the Father, and God the Son are inseparable. He prayed that His joy may be in them, and that they may have it for themselves. What is His joy? His joy is people being saved. God desires that all men would be saved, and that His disciples would take joy in seeing people saved. He prays that God would keep His disciples from the evil one. He's not praying that they'd be taken out of the world, He's praying that they would be protected. And put together with what we heard last week that they won't fall into temptation. He then prayed that God would sanctify them in the truth. Sanctify, set them apart in the truth which is something really lacking nowadays. But Jesus takes it one step further and He defines truth. Your Word is truth. And then He prays and He

says, I'm sending them into the world and for their sake I consecrate myself.

Consecrate; it means to dedicate, to set apart, or to set apart towards. And when we look at the gospel of Luke Chapter 9, verse 51 we see what Jesus set Himself to, set His heart to, He set His face to Jerusalem. He was dedicated, He was determined to go. He would not be distracted. It was a cognitive decision. He was going to Jerusalem. He was going to the cross. Why? Well wait for it, "that they also may be sanctified in the truth." Sanctified, set apart, wholly devoted to the truth, to God's word. Why is this so important that these disciples be set apart in the truth of God's word?

Because of the third part of the prayer. That's where He prays for, I quote, "those who will believe in me through them." In other words, Jesus prayed for us. And the prayer for us is the same as the prayer for His disciples, "that we may be one as He and the Father of one." But then He takes it one step further and prays that we, you and me, that we would become perfectly one.

There's definitely a theme through His high priestly prayer. Father and Son are one, disciples are one, we are one, in a trinitarian prayer, and a trinitarian unity. The shift today is taking that, the gospel, Christ's prayer, perfectly unified, joyful in salvation, sanctified in the in the truth. We're very special to God. We're called by Him, we're prayed for by the Messiah. But now then, how do we pray?

And we look to the Old Testament for that. Meet Jabez. Found in First Chronicles 4, two whole verses about Jabez. Yet an entire book has been written about him. First Chronicles 4 is a continuation of the lineage of Judah, which is the House of Jesse, the House of David, the family the lineage of Christ. There are some great names in this lineage of course beginning with Abraham. But here First Chronicles 4, we read of Ephrathah, who had a son named Bethlehem you think about Christmas, 'but you Bethlehem, Ephrathah. These are the names of people, great people of God. We even find the name of another person in the House of David, the lineage of David, his name is Tekoa, the city was

named after him. It's the city that the prophet Amos came from. And those of you and next fall's Bible study, you're going to hear a little bit about prophet from Tekoa.

But two verses about Jabez and it starts by telling us a little something about him. He was "more honorable than his brothers." Literally, it is honored his brothers and he was named Jabez by his mother because, I quote, "I bore him in pain." And the name Jabez literally means-he gives pain. It wasn't an easy pregnancy or delivery evidently, but now imagine having a name that means-he gives pain. Can you imagine the ridicule, the jokes this poor guy went through? By the way, he's going to address it in a little bit in his short little two verse prayer he prays, and he makes very clear who he's praying to. He's praying to quote, "the God of Israel." And that is so fitting because this is in the lineage of Israel, of Jesse, David, Jesus. And his prayer continues. "Oh, that You would bless me," it's an acknowledgement that God is in total control, and the blessings come from Him, God, not from Jabez's works. And then he prays "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border or multiply my territory. Is this a prosperity gospel prayer? "Oh Lord, you know I'm going to live for you, so make me filthy rich!" No! It goes back to the lineage. He's praying that he would have an impact on God's territory, on the Kingdom of God. He's praying that God would multiply his responsibility in God's Kingdom, that God would increase his spiritual territory. And we can see that, as he continues and prays, "that Your hand might be with me," it's all about God. It's why we sing that song: Oh, that's the Lord would guide my ways, to keep His statutes still. Oh, that my God would grant me grace, to know and do His will.

This is what he's praying for. He's praying for more responsibility, more working in God's Kingdom. And he's praying, I quote, "that You would keep me from harm, just as Jesus had prayed about His disciples, that they wouldn't fall into temptation, and told them to pray that they wouldn't fall into temptation. Jabez was light years ahead of His time.

But then he comes back to the pain, "so that it might not bring me pain." Oh, selfish Jabez, he just doesn't want to have any pain while

doing all this, right? Not hardly. The thing we have to ask ourselves is what is “it” so that it might not bring me pain. It refers right back to what was immediately before it. His increased spiritual territory, his increased responsibility in the Kingdom of God. And with that (that responsibility) that he's prayed for, he would be guided by God's hand, protected by God. It's all so that it won't bring him pain. Again, not selfish, not a wimp. What he is saying is that if I trust in myself that increased responsibility would be a disaster. But God, I need you when you God, work in me, through me, for your sake to your glory and for the salvation of the increased territory.

“Oh Lord, let me not experience pain!” What kind of pain? The pain of seeing a family member not saved. In my office I have pictures of my family: Marjie, myself, Paul and Bethany all sitting together at South Lake up in the mountains. I cherish that picture. It's my children, my wife and my prayer has always been, “Oh Lord I pray that they would all know you as God, and Christ as their Savior.” Now there's additions to that. There's our son-in-law, and granddaughter Avery, grandson Andrew; Oh LORD spare me the pain of seeing them not saved.

This is the prayer of Jabez. He is a father who understood his real role. He did not pray for a pastor or some great Christian teacher to build up his family. No! He prayed that he would have more responsibility, not just his family, God's family, to God's glory, and to their salvation. And LORD, let them all be saved so that I have no pain coming from my responsibility.

Last week we heard the call to dads to step up and be dads. Well dads, step up indeed. Be the leader! Raise your children, your grandchildren, your great grandchildren in God's word. More than that, don't be selfish. Step up like Jabez and say, “Oh Lord that you would increase my responsibility in your Kingdom to the glory of your Name and for the salvation of everyone in your family.

Dads, pray for more spiritual responsibility, not that others will take it for you. Look at yourself in the mirror and say, “I am God's answer to bring that word to this person, or to do this job in the church, or that

job in the church to the glory of God's name.” And then put it all like Jabez, in God's hands and ask Him for the guidance, ask Him for the protection that it would all be done through Him, for Him and to Him. And then pray “Oh Lord I pray that it would not bring me pain that every person you bring into my sphere, into my family, into my contact might come to know you as Lord and Savior and that I might see them in heaven forever.

There's a whopping big challenge in prayer to ask for more responsibility in a world that wants no responsibility and wants to point the finger everywhere else. But as Christians, especially Christian fathers, but also Christian mothers, and Christian children, Christian elderly people, Christian very young people; we're all called to be one with God and with each other and to have the mind of God-that we desire to see all men saved. But just like Jesus knew salvation began with Him, we need to change our mindset and start to think about our role in God's kingdom and say, God's ministry begins with me, right here right now. And then pray like Jabez and watch God answer. In our Savior's Name, Amen.