

## *No Greater Love ☩ In Prayer*<sup>2</sup>

☩ **For Himself** (vv.1-5)

☩ **For His apostles** (vv.6-19)

☩ **For His Church of all time** (vv.20-26)

In the Name of Jesus, our great High Priest, who still prays to God for us all, dear friends of our Lord:

“Into every life a little rain must fall.” But sometimes it falls in buckets with no let up. Sometimes every aspect of your life seems to be falling apart. Either you messed up or it’s beyond your control. How would God ever know what that felt like if He had not come down to this earth to become one of us? Jesus walked this “road of rock and blood, a sinner’s road, for me.” (CWS 715:2) And on the way He teaches us an awesome lesson about God’s love. Beyond Jesus there is **No Greater Love – In Prayer**. The Holy Spirit’s fourth Gospel account through John records Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer. Here He pours out His heart **For Himself, For His apostles, For His Church of all time** – for you and me.

☩ **For Himself** (vv.1-5)

*Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come.”* Life is like a funnel. At the top kids’ hours seem like days, going round and round. But they move faster as you wish good times for teens could keep going. Then comes work, responsibility, tests and resumes. If God blesses you with a spouse and family, where are there enough hours in a day? Kids grow, generations have their own hours, their own lives, while yours keep flying by. Time won’t stand still for anyone...until that last final hour when you need to be prepared to meet your God.

Jesus was preparing – as God, to meet His God and Father. But *“the hour”* of which He spoke was the hour of suffering for which He had been preparing all His life, including three days in the temple at age twelve, until His thirty-third year when the temple of His body He would give over into death for us all. He prayed for God’s plan: *“Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. For you gave him authority over all flesh so he may give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had beside you before the world existed.”* To fulfill God’s will Jesus prayed first **For Himself**.

In tonight’s Penitential Psalm 102 is a strange superscription as old as the Psalm itself: *“A prayer of an afflicted man. When he is faint and pours out his lament before the LORD.”* (NIV84) This sounds like good King Hezekiah when the prophet Isaiah said his days on earth were done. Isaiah’s infected boil would not heal. *Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, “Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.* The LORD answered His faithful king with fifteen extra years. His prayer of thanks includes this insight: *“Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back....The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.”* (Isaiah 38:2f,17,20 NIV84) Hezekiah was given fifteen more years to worship the LORD on this earth. Then these bonus years of grace would give way to worshiping God in eternity for Jesus’ sake.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotes are from a draft translation by the undersigned for the Wartburg Project – John.

<sup>2</sup> From Lenten series: *No Greater Love – Our Savior’s Passion Sermons*. March-April, 2014 – New Life, Shoreview, MN

### ✠ For His apostles (vv.6-19)

Jesus saw suffering **For His apostles** and prays: *“Father, I revealed your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have guarded your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They learned the truth that I came from you. They believed that you sent me.”* God’s Name-reputation is revealed in His Holy Bible, the truth that holy God hates sin and sinners too. *“The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; You hate all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.”* (Psalm 5:5)

*“I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, because they are yours.”* Hezekiah had seen what the LORD meant when he got up one morning. The entire Assyrian army, 185,000 sadistic soldiers, all lay dead, slain by *the Angel of the LORD*, the pre-incarnate Christ, our Redeemer. But now Jesus willingly gives up His life to save us from death, hell and the devil.

On the way He prayed, *“All that is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. And I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>I am no longer in the world, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, guard them in your name which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them safe in your name, which you gave me. I protected them and not one of them perished, except the son of perdition, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”*

The *“son of perdition”* was terribly disappointed in Jesus. He did not use His powers for political, personal purposes as Judas expected. Thirty pieces of silver, a slave’s price, seemed enough for Judas – until his conscience caught up with him. He rejected Jesus as his Priest and Pastor, so he went to the only other pastors left, Jewish high priests. They were responsible to God to hear the sinner’s confession and absolve him of all his guilt. Instead they drove Judas over the edge of despair as we heard in the fourth part of the Lord’s Passion History: *“What is that to us? That’s your responsibility.”* Judas increased his torment by suicide. He botched his hanging, burst his intestines, and spilled his blood on the ground they bought with the thirty pieces of silver. That *Field of Blood, the Potter’s Field*, was just outside the Dung Gate which led to the Hinnom Valley, a.k.a. Gehenna. For centuries it had been a burning garbage dump the LORD’s prophets used to picture the eternal fires of hell. Some ancient Jews and their kings had sacrificed children in the fire there. From such gross, grotesque torment Christ came to save us all.

He prayed: *“But now I am coming to you and I am saying these things in the world, so that they may have my joy filled up in them. I have given them your word. The world hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, so they also may be sanctified by the truth.”*

### ✠ For His Church of all time (vv.20-26)

God planned better things for all who trust His Son through the Apostles’ message. At the cost of their own lives they witnessed to the truth. Even John, though not martyred himself, suffered persecution and exile for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus prayed for us who would hear them: *“Not only for them am I praying, but also for those who believe in me through their message. May they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. May they also be one in us, so the world may believe that you sent me. The glory you have given me, I have given them. May they may be one, as we are one.”* (vv.20-22)

Our world cannot understand this concept. One feeble attempt was back in 2009. A book and movie offered some “tough love advice for otherwise smart women on how to tell when a guy just doesn’t

like them *enough*, so they can stop wasting time making excuses for a dead-end relationship.” According to one source, *He’s Just Not That Into You*, is “the best relationship advice you’ll ever receive.”<sup>3</sup>

Hollywood can’t grasp the loving relationship of God for His people. He wants you to understand how He feels about you from all eternity. God sent His one and only begotten Son because both are “into you.” Christ came willingly, set aside the full use of His power and laid down His life for us all. The Father loves Jesus for His willing sacrifice for us. Their hearts are so entwined that Jesus says, “**You, Father, are in me, and I in you.**” And Jesus brings us into this intimate spiritual relationship when He prays: “**I in them, and you in me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**” (v.23) God is “that into you”!

**“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they will see my glory, which you have given me, because you loved me before the world’s foundation.<sup>25</sup> Righteous Father, the world did not know you, but I knew you; and these knew that you sent me.<sup>26</sup> I made your name known to them, and will make it known, so the love you have for me will be in them, and I in them.”**

Peter was a sinner like us whom Jesus wanted with Him. Though their sins were similar, Peter had something Judas did not. Peter saw Jesus; Judas never saw Jesus again on this earth. His time of grace was done. God finally gave Judas what he wanted: eternal existence without God, nothing less than eternal torment in hell. But in spite of Peter’s denials, when Jesus turned and looked at him, Peter knew God in His mercy and grace. Peter understood personally how “**mercy triumphs over judgment.**” (James 2:13) The only way to know God is through Jesus Christ His Son our Savior.

When Adam rebelled, he sent all of humanity flying down the highway to hell. God built an exit, one way off, in the wounds of Christ-crucified and risen. To take an exit takes faith. You have to trust what’s off that way will be better. The dear Holy Spirit is still up on the highway flagging folks down and calling to all: “**Follow Jesus Christ. You can trust Him. Look what He did for you!**” Get off with God. Pray for His grace to keep you in the faith until you can check in to heaven’s eternal resort. Find courage in Christ’s High Priestly Prayer. Jesus has already been kneeling here as your great High Priest. Beyond our Lord Christ, there is **No Greater Love ☩ In Prayer.** Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/Hes-Just-That-Into-Understanding/dp/141690977X>

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