



Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 63

Sunday 16th May 2021

John 17.6-19- Prayer, Protection and Promise

As we consider this great prayer of Jesus for His disciples - and for us, their successors, those who have not seen Jesus with our own eyes and yet have believed, we can see from our standpoint just how faithfully that prayer has been answered by our loving heavenly Father. We know from our own experience how faithfully God answers our prayer - perhaps not in the way we have asked but for our greatest good. We know the reality of Jesus saying that with God all things are possible. We remember too how often Jesus did make time to commune in prayer with His Father and recognise how important prayer is in our own lives - it's just that just sometimes we forget. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has left us a simple, yet all-embracing pattern.

Jesus has left us well provided for. As we anticipate Pentecost we see the transformation that was brought to the formerly no doubt apprehensive disciples. And the change the Holy Spirit has made to so many Christian lives ever since. When I saw Jesus' words 'everything you have given me is from you' my thoughts went to the chorus of that harvest hymn 'All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above'. Just as the disciples were kept on track during Jesus' physical presence so they were emboldened through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus said that they had received the words that Jesus had given them - through Pentecost those words were turned into actions.

Jesus prays on their and our behalf- He intercedes for us. He recognises that we need God's protection. We should never forget that some Christians today suffer discrimination even persecution for their faith. Jesus sees that whilst we are in the world, we should not be of the world. The values and standards of this world are so often at odds with our Christian beliefs and so we need God's strength to overcome them in our lives. The psalmists and the prophets often spoke out about the injustices that prevailed in their day. We must remain true in ours.

Jesus' prayer is not that God take His followers out of the world but protect us within it. The present pandemic has taught us the need to be protected but although levels in the UK have been drastically reduced through lockdown and vaccination we must not turn our backs on the rest of the world, where infection levels are at their highest levels since the start of the pandemic. Again as conditions ease it is important to recognise that whilst food banks remain there is much inequality, which in our small way we can help alleviate. Yet again, in our normal daily lives and conversations we can refuse to tolerate racist attitudes or comments, sometimes most subtly expressed (if there's one thing we remember about the serpent it was that he was subtle). To remember whilst prejudice of any kind remains, that all people

have been created in the image of God and as such are of great value.

There are many types of Christian service. There is a place for physical service and no less a place for spiritual service for both are inspired by the one Holy Spirit. To pray to God is a service that is open to all - with who can say with what consequences? - we only know that God always hears our prayer. Christians should mutually respect one another and recognise the validity of each other's service.

Jesus prays for love and unity amongst his followers.

And what of the Promise? Hidden away in Jesus' prayer like a secret treasure is Jesus' hope that His followers may have His joy made complete in themselves - this surely is Life in abundance. And we should not forget His more famous words: In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

AMEN.

Michael Adams

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone



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