

Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 6 and John 17

Two prayers of Jesus: God answers prayer

John's bookend

After we pray what does God do? If we could see inside the mind of God, what would we see? Jesus said that he will intercede on our behalf to God the Father in heaven. That is why we pray in the name of Jesus. He has God's ear. Some old testament prayers ask God to lean his ear or face towards us. This prayer in John 17 is exactly that. God the Father and Jesus are having a conversation about those who consider themselves Jesus followers.

Jesus begins by saying the hour has come. In John 2 Jesus tells his mother that the hour has not yet come. Here in John 17 Jesus changes his mind. All through the gospels we have Jesus working, talking, and teaching, towards going back to heaven. In this bookend, Jesus is talking with his Father in heaven as if he is home. The prayers of people go up to some place. God hears or sees them. So, in Matthew 6 we are to pray for the glory of the kingdom first. Jesus begins this chapter 17 in John by saying that glory has come. To me that is an answered prayer. God heard and then he sent.

Sometimes prayer is not answered right away. Jesus is saying that it's time to empower the people. It's time to protect them, provide for them, and guide them on earth. In heaven that is what they do. They further the kingdom. The Matthew 6 prayer asks for what is done on earth to be done in heaven or visa versa. In John 17 Jesus is asking for the power of heaven to come and work itself on earth.

There is one other big difference. Jesus asks us to pray and give in private in Matthew 6. In John 17 Jesus asks the Father to reveal heaven to them so that they know who Jesus is. What makes this such a great bookend is the hidden and the revealed. Christianity should be done mostly in private. Our good deeds will be seen by God in heaven. People are changed by those secret deeds. Once this kingdom has fully appeared on earth, People will know it was God all along.

What's it all mean?

It's odd, but the kingdom of God begins and ends with us. Someone is yelling blasphemy because it begins and ends with Jesus. Oh really? Why does God exist? Some say that God is fully happy within himself. Then why have three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit? God is community. God loves to share himself. It's his nature to love and be loved. When we pray in Matthew 6 we are to love God as he loves us. In John 17 Jesus reveals that his love for us is the same love God the Father has for us. Jesus is asking for that love to come down to earth.

We are to give, pray, and act towards the public eye with purpose. Everything we do should be done with humility and honor towards those in need. The servant serves. We are the servants of God. Jesus also says the master must serve. In John 17 Jesus prays that God the holy master would serve those of us that believe. To protect and provide for us. What makes this so good as bookends is the focus. As we pray and focus on God, God intern focuses on us. We don't need to focus on our needs. Jesus is already doing that in heaven.

We should pray. We should use prayer like Jesus gives as an example. Yet, where is our head? John 17 clearly shows us where God's heart and head are at. Jesus says in Matthew 6 that we should pray like this. I will go further and say that we should pray like John 17 too. We should intercede for others towards God in heaven. We certainly are glorified (look special) when we think of others first. Did you notice that Jesus whole prayer in john 17 is about us? Jesus wants our needs to be taken care of. We might look special if we are seen giving or praying in public. Yet, nice people are seen as special because they feel nice. Maybe praying and giving in private to those in need feels special to others. Maybe that is how heaven touches them on earth. These are two awesome bookends.