Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

The sermon last Sunday afternoon was about angels. And in 1 Peter 1:12 we read that the great truthes of salvation that we have in the Bible are “*things into which angels long to look*.” Because angels have not experienced the amazing thing that is our salvation in Christ, they wish they could read our Bibles! And that means with all of us sitting here with our Bibles open at John 17, there are bound to be vast numbers of angels peering down, wishing they could read what is written there. And that is because this chapter is one of the most beautiful, most profound, and most enlightening chapters in the whole Bible. In fact, I doubt that anyone would dispute the claim that this chapter is one of the most dearly loved chapters in the Bible. And it is so for several reasons:

* One preacher said,

*When a man is going on a long journey, he will find time on the eve of his departure for a quiet talk with his family, and – if he is a man of God – will end by commending to God not only himself and his journey, but also the family whom he leaves behind. [And this will] surely … be so if his journey is the last journey*.

Well, Jesus had spent three years with the disciples. They were His closest companions. But now the hour had come for Jesus to leave them and go the cross and from there to heaven. So He prayed for Himself and His disciples, *and we get to hear His prayer*! We get to hear Him speak about the love and honour shared between Himself and His Father, and we get to hear about His deep love for the disciples and for all who will believe in Him. So that means that if you are a follower of Jesus, as you read this prayer, you are hearing Jesus speak about His love for you! In fact, from vv20-26, which is where Jesus prays for all those who will believe in Him, you could legitimately substitute your name for the references to these and those and they! When Jesus prayed this prayer, He had you in mind! So that is one reason then why this is a most beautiful chapter.

* But it is a most beautiful prayer also because it is **the Lord’s Prayer**. And before you wonder if I have lost my marbles because this is not the Lord’s Prayer, what I mean is that while the place in the Bible where Jesus taught us how to pray is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer, this chapter is the Lord Jesus praying! In v1 we read that Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven and said, “*Father*…” and in v9 He said, “*I am praying for*…” So ch. 17 really is the Lord’s prayer!
  + And you might recall that in the last few chapters, Jesus has repeatedly spoken to the disciples about prayer: He said, “*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it … Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He [will] give it to you … truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you … ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full*.”
  + So this prayer of Jesus is the perfect example of a prayer that seeks to glorify the Father that is heard and answered! And as we shall see, it continues to be answered today!
* But a third reason why this chapter is so dearly loved by believers is seen in the chapter heading. If your Bible has chapter headings then the heading above chapter 17 is probably **The High Priestly Prayer**. Now, the chapter headings are not part of the inspired Word of God – they have been added in by Bible publishers. But this prayer is almost universally known as the High Priestly Prayer. And it has this title because of what we read earlier in **Leviticus and Hebrews**.
  + In OT times, the people of Israel had a temple and they were to offer animal sacrifices to the Lord. So priests were needed to offer the sacrifices. And the priests came from the tribe of Levi, which is why the Book of the Bible that gives all of the instructions about priests is called Levi-ticus. Well, the head priest was called the High Priest. And only he, on just one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, was allowed to go into the part of the temple called the Most Holy Place. And in there he presented an offering and prayed for himself and then he presented an offering and prayed for the people of Israel.
  + And as he did this, he was **interceding** for the people. And interceding means to pray on behalf of in order bring unreconciled parties together. Here in NZ at the moment, school principals want X$ pay rise and the government is offering Y$ pay rise. And that means that the principals and the government are unreconciled on this matter. Well, representatives of the principals and of the government meet together. And those representatives are intercessors; they work on behalf of their people to try and bring the two sides together. So it was the High Priest’s job to intercede or make intercession on behalf of the people.
  + Well, our **Hebrews** readings explained that the High Priest pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ; He would come and be the Great High Priest of God’s people. And as their High Priest, He would intercede or “*makes intercession*” on behalf of His people. And in this prayer of the Lord Jesus we see that just like the High Priest He prayed for Himself, in vv1-5, and then for His people, in vv6-26.
  + But our Hebrews readings also explained **the big difference** between Jesus and the OT High Priests. For unlike them, Jesus did not need to present a sin offering for His own sins, because He was sinless. And while the OT High Priests offered animal sacrifices and blood, year after year after year, Jesus offered just one sacrifice to the Father. And that sacrifice was His own body and blood on the cross. And that sacrifice was sufficient to secure the salvation of all His people.

So this is one of the most dearly loved chapters in the Bible because it really is the Lord’s prayer, because it is an example of effective prayer, and because this prayer and what Jesus is about to do on the cross are the very heart and core of our salvation.

Well, I am not sure yet how long we will spend in this chapter, but with the occasion of Janet’s profession of faith, today we will focus on just one theme of this prayer. And that theme is salvation. We are going to think about what theologians call the Covenant of Redemption and we will see how this great salvation truth is a powerful weapon against doubt. And we will see this as we consider what the Lord Jesus says about the **eternal source** of salvation and the **particular scope** of salvation.

1. So let’s look, first of all, at what Jesus says about the **eternal source** of salvation.
   1. In v3, Jesus mentions “eternal life.” So we know that salvation is about eternal life *in the future*. All those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins will spend eternity in heaven with the Lord Jesus. But in this prayer, Jesus repeatedly points to eternity *past* as the source or origin or beginning point of what He is describing.
      1. Look at **verse 5**: Jesus said, “*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*.” And look also at **verse 24**: Jesus said, “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*.”
      2. So in eternity *past*, which means *before* Genesis 1:1; *before* the universe came into existence, Jesus existed and shared glory and love with the Father. And Jesus is locating everything He is praying about the glory and love that He and the Father enjoyed in eternity past.
      3. We find the same language in **Ephesians 1:4**: “*Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”* The source or origin of everything that Jesus will pray about is eternity past.
      4. Let me illustrate it in this way: Imagine that I have bought you a birthday present. And you have unwrapped it and you love it. And I tell you that Mrs Holtslag and myself bought your present last Tuesday. So who is your present from? Mrs H and me. When did we get it? Last Tuesday. You now know that you have this gift because of a decision Mrs H and I made last Tuesday. Well, that is what Jesus is explaining in these verses – a decision of the Father and the Son before the creation of the world is the source or origin or beginning of what He is describing.
      5. Now, we don’t have time today to explain how the Bible reveals this, but I just want to say here the Holy Spirit was part of this eternal decision also. Jesus does not explicitly mention the Spirit in this prayer, but He is also eternal God; He was a part of what was decided in eternity past.
      6. But the focus of this prayer is the Father and the Son. And the key truth is that what Jesus describes has its source in eternity past.
   2. So, what is it that has its source in eternity past? What is Jesus talking about here?
      1. Well, look at the end of v2. And the “you” in this verse is the Father and the “Him” is Jesus, the Son. We read, “S*ince you have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given Him*.” Do you see what Jesus is saying? In eternity past, before the creation of the world, the Father gave a group of people to the Son that He would give them eternal life.
      2. And again, this same language is in **Ephesians 1:4-5**, “*Even as [the Father] chose us in [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ*.” So before creation, the Father chose a group of people to adopt into His family, through the work that Christ would one day do on earth.
      3. And Jesus speaks about this work in v4. He had not yet gone to the cross but knowing that this prayer would become part of the Bible, He speaks about it as though it is already done. He says, “*I accomplished the work that you gave me to do*.”
      4. So have you followed all this? In eternity past, the Father chose a group of people and He gave them to the Son to save or redeem. That is why we call this the Covenant of Redemption. And it was decided that one day in world history the Son would be born as a human being and that He would go to the cross and die and rise again so that the group given to Him could receive eternal life.
2. Now, before we come to the so what of this incredible truth, we need to say a few words about the **Particular Scope** of salvation. And this is our second and last point. And by particular scope what is meant is not just anyone and everyone, but a particular or definite or limited group. If I look at you like this (eyes move over everyone) that is a general view of everyone here but if I took out some binoculars or a telescope and held it one position I would see just one or two people out of the whole group.
   1. And we need to think about the particular scope of salvation because many professing Christians disagree with what we are about to hear. The popular idea of many today is that Jesus came to die on the cross for everyone. This is the theology known as Arminianism. They are not saying that everyone will go to heaven. No, only those who choose to believe will go to heaven. But just the other day I was reading the words of someone arguing against what we are about to hear and they said, “Jesus came and died for all humanity.” But this is not what the Bible teaches, as we shall see.
   2. Look again at vv1-2 (And you have to read this with me!). “*When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all*…” Is that how the verse ends? No. Does it end, “*to give eternal life to all*…” who might choose to believe; is that what it says? No. It says, “…*to give eternal* life *to all whom you have given Him*.”
      1. So Jesus was given authority over all of humanity. That is certain. But He came to give eternal life only to those the Father had given him – the chosen group.
      2. Drop down to **v6**: “*I have manifested your name* *to the people whom you gave me out of the world*. *Yours they were, and you gave them to me*, *and they have kept your word*.” So all of humanity belongs to the Father but He has given a particular subgroup of them to Jesus to manifest or reveal His name to.
      3. Look at **v9**; and this one really makes the case: “*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours*.” Jesus is not praying this prayer for all of humanity; He is praying this prayer only for the chosen group that the Father has given Him.
      4. **V24** says this also: “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am*.” Who does Jesus want in heaven with Him? Not everyone but only those the Father gave Him in eternity past.
      5. Do you see what Jesus is saying? He did not come to die for all of humanity; He came to die for those the Father gave Him; His elect; His chosen ones; His sheep, as He calls them in ch. 10.

So now we are ready to see how these incredible Covenant of Redemption truthes add power and certainty and amazement to salvation. What we have seen about the *eternal* *source* of our salvation and the *particular* *scope* of our salvation is tremendously comforting!

* Janet, believer, where does your salvation begin? Well, it does not begin with a decision you made. It does not begin with your profession of faith or baptism or a prayer you prayed. It doesn’t even begin with God’s love for you. It begins with the Father's love for the Son. And the Father’s love for the Son has no beginning; it is eternal. And the Father will never stop loving the Son, because He is unchangeable. And your salvation and my salvation is a part of the love gift that the Father gave to the Son. And what this means is that because your salvation is rooted and grounded in the Father’s love for the Son, your salvation is as secure as God! It is as likely that your salvation can crumble as the Father’s love for the Son could crumble. It cannot!
* Back in ch. **6:39**, Jesus said, “*And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day*.” Believer, you will be brought to heaven not because of you and your efforts, but because of the glory and love that the Father and Son share!
* So do you see why this prayer adds power and certainty and amazement to your salvation? Do you see why this prayer is a beautiful and solid foundation for hope and comfort?

Well, let me conclude with these few words: We have considered something pretty mind-blowing and wonderfully mysterious today. But you must not walk out of here trying to work out if you are among those the Father gave to the Son. What you need to focus on is this: You are a sinner in need of a Saviour and God has provided a Saviour in Jesus Christ. And if you repent of your sins and believe that He is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins, eternal life is yours! Amen.