

The Prayer of Jesus

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[0 : 00] So please have John 17 open in front of you. We're not going to look at all of it this morning, we're just going to look at the first few sentences! This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Amen. This is the prayer of Jesus. And we are privileged this morning to have an insight into the heart and mind of Jesus.

And as I was interested as Steve prayed, he used an expression pretty much like that. An insight into the heart of Jesus. I mention this because it's part of Christian speak nowadays to talk about God's heart.

And to say, you know, we know what God's heart is on something. I want to say that's quite a bold statement.

[1 : 36] To say we know God's heart. We only know God's heart if he shows us what's in his heart. We can't guess what's in his heart. It's a bit presumptuous to do that.

But here in this prayer, we do have an insight into the heart and mind of Jesus. And he is deliberately letting us get this insight because the prayer is there, presumably spoken out loud, and recorded for us.

So here is the heart of Jesus. And we should be humble to listen to what he says. This is what my heart is. Don't you go guessing what my heart is. I'm going to tell you what my heart is.

So we have a privileged insight into the heart and mind of Jesus. And it is a prayer for us. But I'm slightly hesitant as I put those dots.

Because we only get mentioned right at the end. So interestingly, Jesus' heart and mind, I don't say we're an afterthought.

[2 : 40] But he doesn't zoom straight in. Heavenly Father, I want to pray for those people at Calvary. Because his heart and mind actually doesn't zoom in on us.

There's other things on his heart and mind that we'll look at. So from which I point out that Jesus doesn't always feel or think about things the way we feel or think.

I think we need a certain amount of humility on this. And a certain amount of teachability. Jesus is showing us his heart and mind. And we are not at the centre of it.

Interesting, isn't it? He doesn't put us at the centre of everything. Although that's what we tend to do. We tend to think we're the centre of everything, don't we?

Each of us individually thinks that the world revolves around us. Children particularly think that, don't they? But we're a bit childish in that sense. We think the world revolves around us.

[3 : 47] But Jesus doesn't think the world revolves around us. His prayer is actually God-centred. And, if you like, Christ-centred. So here's a thought.

The world doesn't revolve around us. Jesus doesn't see it that way. And perhaps we need to remember that. Perhaps we need to readjust our thinking.

If we're to be in tune with this prayer. Now, what's going on in the prayer? There are many, many connections between the Father and the Son.

So Jesus, in his heart and mind, is thinking, first and foremost, about his relationship with his Heavenly Father. So, if you like, we're treading on holy ground.

We're allowed to come in and hear and overhear what Jesus is thinking and feeling. And we're entering into his world of things.

[4 : 53] And in his world of things, his relationship with his Heavenly Father sort of seems to overshadow everything. That's what it's all about. The Son and the Father. Perhaps we'll see a bit

more of that in a moment.

I mean, for example, verse 6. Connection. I have revealed you to those you gave me out of the world.

They were yours. You gave them to me. They have obeyed your word. Here's Jesus. And his vision is filled with his relationship to his Heavenly Father.

And he's saying, I revealed you to those you gave me out of the world. They were yours. But you gave them to me.

And they have obeyed your word. So, it's very interesting, isn't it? This is the world in which Jesus is thinking and living and speaking. And I reflect that we're talking about wonderful relationships.

[5 : 57] We're talking about something more real than climate change, if I dare say that. More fundamental than particle physics.

We're talking about what the world, our created world, is founded upon. Something that was there before our created world existed. Which is the relationship between the Father and the Son in the presence of the Spirit.

The prayer is, as we enter into this prayer, we enter into a world that's full of these relationships, which are so wonderful. You might not have been expecting that.

And as I was preparing, I was thinking, well, where's the application of this? What does it say to us?

And in a way, we have to stop. Because Jesus has got other things on his mind, other than us.

I mean, he doesn't exclude us, but Jesus isn't sort of looking at us and saying, I've got something for you. He's looking first of all to his Heavenly Father.

[6 : 59] And conversing with him. And we're allowed to overhear that. And then as I pointed out earlier, this prayer is full of giving. There's many givings.

And when I was reading it through, I went through and I put a little squiggle with my red pen every time the word giving was used. I don't know how many I've got, but it's something like a dozen of them.

Lots and lots of giving. And I don't think we can... Sorry. So verse 2, You gave him authority that he might give eternal life to those you have given him.

There's three givings in one verse there. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Lots about giving.

And without trying to track it down any further. There's the example. The Father gives to the Son and the Son gives to people, for example.

[8 : 01] Let's just ponder that. What is at the bottom of our created universe? What is the uncreated scene behind...

From which creation comes? Relationships of giving. It's interesting, isn't it? The truth behind our universe is a Trinity God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Who is forever giving and giving and giving. Isn't that remarkable? It puts a little light on what being like God is.

Do you see what I mean? Givingness. It's a wonderful thing. I suppose it's saying that if we are to be like God, then we are not to be sort of taking people, but giving people.

That's a sort of oblique reflection, isn't it? You think, yeah, that's what God is like. He's always giving. So there were a couple of observations just sort of on the surface of it.

[9 : 23] So as we enter reverently into the world of Jesus' prayer, let's notice there are some sections to it. So verses 1 to 5.

Is Jesus praying about... Well, I think what he's praying about is his glory. And that crops up. That's Jesus and his Father, and there is this prayer about the glory, the honour that they give to one another.

And I point out again that a father-son relationship is about the son honouring the father. And we get a spillover of that into human relationships, don't we?

What, let me just think, what's the commandment to do with children and parents? Yeah, New Testament says obey your parents.

The Ten Commandments says honour your father and mother. It's interesting, isn't it? That idea of honouring... of children honouring their parents isn't just a cultural thing.

[10 : 42] It's actually an eternal thing. That has always been so. That the son seeks to glorify, or to honour, bring honour to the father. So moving on to the second section, just so we can get our bearings a little bit.

Verses 6 to 19. Long section there. Jesus is praying for some people. Verse 9.

Who is he not praying for? Verse 9. Who is he not praying for? The world. He is not praying for the world. God.

In some places Jesus prays more widely. Remember when he was crucified he says, Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

He wasn't praying for his disciples then, he was praying for his executioners. But in this particular prayer, he says I'm not praying for the world. Isn't that interesting?

[11 : 45] Because we would have thought God's heart is for the world. We would have thought if we're thinking about God's heart, he'd be thinking about everybody. But, and I'm sure in a sense there is truth in that, and a lot of truth in it.

But it's very interesting that when Jesus says, I'm going to allow you to overhear whom I'm praying for, he's quite specific. There is a prayer I'm praying, not for everybody, but for these people in particular.

I think in a way we find that rather shocking. But it's also very encouraging. Who, let's just see, not for the, wait a minute, not for the world.

Where are we? Lost my place. Verse 9. I'm praying not for the world, but for those you have given me. So, there are some who have been given by the Father to the Son, and he's praying for those. So I'm going to write up here on the screen, the given ones. And I put a reference to verse 12, which says, While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.

[13 : 01] None has been lost, except the one doomed to destruction, so that the scripture would be fulfilled. Any ideas who he's referring to, the one doomed to destruction? It's Judas, isn't it?

He's talking about his disciples. And again, we're perhaps a little bit taken aback by that, because we were looking forward to that whole section being about us. But it isn't about us.

It's about the first generation disciples. I don't know whether Jesus was just thinking of 12, or 11 in fact, or whether he's talking about a wider group, or, you know, there were 120, weren't there, in their upper room, or whether he's talking even wider than that.

But, he's not talking about us. Oh, I'll be a bit miffed about that, but no, Jesus says, I'm not praying for the world, but I'm praying for this particular, very important, foundational group, of the first generation Christians.

I'm praying for them. So, we just noticed that that's who he's praying for, in that section. And then, in verse 20, he says, my prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me, through their message.

[14 : 16] That's us. Finally. Finally, we're in there. It's a bit like, when there's a photograph taken of something, and you're in there, and you think, where am I?

Where am I? Where am I? Oh, there I am! Right at the back. Well, here we are. Jesus says, I'm not only praying for this, group of first generation Christians, this very important, foundational group, of first generation Christians, but, for the subsequent generations, these are the people who will believe, through the word, that the first generation, got, and passed on.

And if you wanted, a long word for it, you would say it is the, these people, are sort of like, the apostolic group, they're the sent group, they're the commissioned group, and the message that, is passed on, is the apostolic message.

The gospel, in other words, these are the people, who got the gospel, and speak the gospel, and then everybody else, who listens to that, and hears it, that's us, includes us, Jesus says, I'm going to pray for them as well.

It's interesting, isn't it? He doesn't zoom straight to us, but, he first of all, prays for his own glory, then he prays for his disciples, or apostles, and finally, he prays for the next generation believers.

[15 : 46] So that's the way the prayer goes, that's Jesus' heart, in this matter. So, did that, was that clear? Mark usually says it's clear, but Mark isn't here, so.

So we're going to look, as best we can, and as God helps us, and meditate on, the first five verses, for the next little while. And, it's in my nature, to try and make things, simple and neat.

And I realise, that that's, not always, a helpful approach, because things aren't always, simple and neat, but that's my, way I tend to, see things. And I think, it would, be a true statement, to say, that in these, first five verses, there is one request, there is one request, which is repeated, and it's repeated, with different connections.

And the request, is, glorify your son. Verse one, glorify your son.

Father, glorify your son. Verse five, now father, glorify me. That's the request of Jesus. Isn't that wonderful?

[17:06] Isn't that interesting? That Jesus can say, my first concern, is that I should be glorified. If we were to say that, we would be, committing blasphemy, because we would be, making ourselves, into the centre of the universe.

But Jesus can say that, quite rightly. Father, this is my, primary concern. This is the first thing, I want to mention. that I should be glorified.

Let's look at the connections, that he says it. I want you to notice, very much, that this is a, time, critical, request. Now I hadn't noticed this, until I looked at it, more carefully.

But it is definitely, a time, critical, request. Please notice, how he begins. Father, the time, has, come.

He didn't pray this prayer, all the way through. He prays this prayer, at this particular moment. And the particular moment, is, that they've had, the last supper.

[18:16] That Jesus is soon, to be arrested. Then he will go to trial. And he will go to the cross. And this is what he has in mind. He's saying, all the, there have been some, months and years of preparation.

Do you remember that at the, wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, and his, mother said to him, they have no more wine. Well, they have no wine.

And Jesus said, why are you, why do you trouble me? My hour has not yet come. And he said things like that, all the way through. But at this, time, critical point, he says, the hour has come. time. And I'm sure, that Jesus is referring to, what will take place, in, mere hours from now, where he goes to the cross.

And he says, right, this is the time, to pray this prayer. It is time, critical. He refers to the past. Verse 2, is a past tense.

[19:16] You gave him authority. Those you have given him. Verse 4, is a past tense. I have brought you glory on earth, by finishing the work you gave me to do.

Completing. But the glorify, is the time critical, well, no, there is a present, aspect. And that's what he's saying. This is what I, is needed, now.

Please notice, there is, the word, now. Verse 5, and now, glorify me, in your presence. Now, we use the word, now, in English, to just mean, I can't think of anything else to say, at this particular moment.

So, Yorkshire people, when they can't think of anything to say, they say, now then. Now then, young Chris. I don't get called young Chris, very often either.

It's just, it doesn't mean anything, just, just a word, to fill in the gap. And, in fact, the translators have done this, in verse 3.

[20:28] They put, now, this is eternal life. And, I have, looked, and to the best of my recollection, that word, now, is just the word, and.

And, the translators have put, now, in as if, because they can't think of anything else to put in. So, ignore that one, but don't ignore, the one in verse 5.

Now. This is important, now. The hour has come, now. Right. The hour has come. Not the now in verse 3, but the now in verse 5.

Now, glorify me. And the now that he's thinking of, is the time, and the hour, of his death on the cross. Just think of that. What's on Jesus' heart and mind, as he stands before his father?

He thinks about, the timetable, which is leading to the cross, and he says, now isn't, now there needs to be a prayer prayed. Now, something is, needed to ask of the heavenly father.

[21:38] So, let's look at these, connections. And I've, I've, for better or worse, I've put them as little, little pictures.

Sometimes it helps me, to put little pictures, and I don't know whether it helps you or not. But, verse 1, the time has come, something, to do with the son, and something, to do with the father.

So, I put two arrows, on those diagrams. Something the son does, to the father, and something the father, does to the son. Anybody like to suggest, what I had in mind, for those two arrows.

Something that the father, does to the son, something the son, does to the father.

From that verse. Glorify. Yes. Glorify your son, so he's asking the father, to glorify the son. So that your son, may glorify you.

I suppose it's, it's showing that Jesus, even the Lord Jesus, isn't asking a self-centered way, to be glorified. But so that this glory, will be reflect on his father. If you glorify me, then you will be glorified.

[22 : 54] And that the Lord Jesus cares, about the glory of God. That's his first prayer, isn't it? That the father, may be glorified. That the son, may bring honour, to his father.

And what's it connected with? Well, it is connected, in, in a, um, a way that's worth, looking at. For, verse two, for, there are some things, that have been given.

Not that easy, to draw a picture, I don't know whether, the picture's any help at all. You, gave him, authority, over all people, that he might, give eternal life, to all those, you have given him.

I think Jesus is talking about, two different groups of people. He says, so I've done here, the people in blue, so that's all people. And I've done people in red, which are a smaller group of people.

And I think that what Jesus is saying is, you heavenly father, have given me authority, over all people. Every man and woman, and boy and girl, I have authority, over all of them.

[24 : 10] And the purpose of that authority, is, that that, smaller group, whom you have given me, that I will give eternal life, to them.

There's sort of quite a network of, of things going on, isn't there? What has the father given the son? He's given him authority. The father has given him authority, over everybody.

And what else has the father given? He's given this group of people, that Jesus has in his mind. He's given him these people. And now the son, has sufficient authority, to give to these people, eternal life.

That's the situation, that Jesus envisages. He's saying, that's the way it is, heavenly father. You've given me, to be lord of all. And I use that, supreme authority, to give, to this group of people, I'm going to give them, eternal life.

And they're people, that you have already given to me. So I'm going to give, these people, eternal life. It's rather breathtaking, isn't it? It's saying, that there is a plan, and an arrangement, and, deep, deep, counsel, between the father, and the son, regarding, people, gaining eternal life.

[25 : 42] And I think perhaps, we could look at it this way, that if, if you have eternal life, it gives you cause, to stop and think a moment, that, you, were the subject, of the father's, pre-arrangement, with the son, which goes back, goodness knows how long, before the world was made.

That, the father had you in mind, and, in some arrangement, that you never knew anything about, gave you to the son. And the son, in time and space, at a certain point, in your personal history, gave you eternal life.

It's almost, mind-blowing, isn't it? That's, that's what, to the Lord Jesus, this is, I mean, he knows all about these things, but to us, this has become very strange.

I give them eternal life, and Jesus also connects this, with what eternal life is. This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

So I'll try to put that, into a little picture. Again, we're talking, about the gift of eternal life, and we're saying, what is it? Jesus says, this is eternal life, to know, for them, heavenly father, to know you, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you have sent, to know the father, and the son, and to know in some real sense.

[27 : 21] It doesn't explain, what the real sense of it is, but I'm thinking, that this is, some sort of, genuine relationship, whereby, if you, or I, are in this group, we can call, out to God, and say, heavenly father, and, the father, doesn't put us in, his spam folder, do you know what a spam folder is?

And you get, you get emails, from all sorts of people, offering you, all sorts of things, many of which you, really would rather, you didn't know even existed. But, and, from all these requests, you put them in your spam folder, or your email, puts them automatically, don't want to know anything about that, don't want to know that, really don't want to know that, goes in the rubbish.

God gets lots of, God gets lots of requests, from all over the place, I expect. But when it's from his people, whom he knows, and who knows him, he doesn't put them in the spam folder, he puts them in his inbox, and he deals with them, one by one, and he reads them all the way through, from the top to the bottom, and he gives a proper answer, to each one.

That's a, Jesus didn't say that, did he? He didn't use an email, as an example. But I'm just thinking, this is the sort of, thing he's talking about. That, we should not be strangers, to God.

We should not be, rejected by God. That we should know God. This is what it is, to have eternal life. That you should know, the Father, and to know, the Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

[29 : 08] And I think, if we ponder that, it shows us the privilege, for which we're to give thanks. It shows us that, we're, Christian people, we're, we're, immensely privileged.

We're, we're immensely privileged. And if you're not a Christian, in a sense, you're an outsider to this, aren't you? Jesus says, I'm not praying for this, for everybody.

I'm not, this isn't to do with everybody. This is to do with this group of people, that belong to me. Makes you think, doesn't it? Am I one of those, one of that group? Could I become one of that group?

Would I like to be one of that group? What would it take to become one of that group? What would it involve? And from these verses here, what it says is, it would involve Jesus deciding to do that.

I give them eternal life. So we could say more about that, but here's the point that it comes to. If he doesn't give it, you don't get it.

[30 : 12] You don't have it by natural birth, you don't decide yourself, I'm having eternal life, and to sign up for it. It's in the gift of Jesus. It means that you need to ask Jesus, very really, and say to him, Lord, I'm overhearing this.

I want this eternal life, and I understand that if you don't give it to me, I don't have it. Please will you give this to me? Please explain to me how the gift operates, how I might have this.

because I really need this. I don't want to be messing about on the paddling about in Christian things, on the edge, I want to be in there. How can I be in there?

Apparently, Lord, you give it. Will you give it to me? I want to know about this. Let's move on. This is eternal life, that you, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

And there's another connection here, which works something like this. I have brought you glory on earth, by completing the work you gave me to do.

[31 : 35] Let's just look at that in the form of a picture. So there's the Father, Father, and, so here is, the things, on, a, something, something, something, something, on, earth.

So please notice that. This is not to do with, how things have always been from eternity. It's how, what the, the particular things that Jesus did on earth. And I presume it's coming to earth, it's doing his teaching, ministry, and his, sign ministry, and in particular, his cross.

Because Jesus says, I have completed the work. Same word as finished, so I, I put the word finish here.

Finished. I've finished the work. And he's, he's thinking ahead, isn't he? He's thinking of what will happen, when he goes to the cross. But this is, these are the things on earth.

This is the work that he's, done on earth. And, the Father gave him this work to do, and, there's one bit of the, picture left to fill in.

[32 : 54] What does Jesus say, about his finishing, this work, how it affects the Father? What does the verse say? How does this affect the Father?

Glory. Yes, I have brought you glory. I, if you like, I've glorified you, on earth. So, Jesus is saying, I've, you gave me work to do, on earth, and I've finished that work.

And I've brought you glory by doing it. And then, that request is repeated. And, now, Father, please notice the now.

Now, at this point, at the point of the cross, it seems to me, glorify me, with the glory I had with you, before the world began.

Let me just, point out, a thing, about the, excuse me, about the, translation here.

[34 : 08] The word, in your presence. I'm not quite sure, that in your presence, is right. The word, that's translated, in, can mean, with, or from.

And the, I thought I understood this verse, until I came to think about it, a little bit. Because, notice the now. He's not saying, glorify me, in the future, when I go back, to your presence.

He's saying, glorify me now. And I think, it would make more sense, and some of the translations, say this actually, glorify me, with your presence, presence.

Or glorify me, from your presence, now. In this particular now, when I go to the cross, and glorify me, with the glory, I had with you.

So I put the Father, and the Son together, as, things were, before the coming of Jesus. And I think he's saying, and I, sort of tremble to say it, he's saying, take that glory, and put it, whoops, on me,

now, when I go to the cross.

[35 : 28] may that cross, which looks like, a place, of humiliation, and failure, and horror, and gruesomeness, may that cross, and all that goes with it, but this, is what's happening now, may that cross, be the place, where the glory of God, rests.

May that cross, be the place, where God, is glorified, as he was, in the beginning of things, where the Son, is glorified, as he was, when he was with the glory, way back.

May this cross, now Father, the hour has come, may this event, be glorious. glorious. See, that's an amazing thought, isn't it? Glorify me, with your, with your own, personal glory, on that cross.

What a thought, that is. And yet, for the Christian, it's not, a completely, new thought, is it?

What is the most, glorious thing, for us? There is a song, which says, my glory, all the cross. The thing, that was most, horrible for Jesus, is most, wonderful for us.

[37 : 06] Where would we be, if Jesus, hadn't died, on the cross, for us? Is that not, the most glorious thing? Is that not, the most, wonderful thing?

Is that, not the most, deep, and, exquisite, revelation, of who God is, when his son, dies on the cross?

Isn't it so? God shows his glory, in creation, we praise God for it. God shows his glory, in, sustaining us, in providence, and we praise God for it.

But when he shows his glory, in the cross, we think, wow, what a God he is. Who is a God like this?

A God of grace, a God of sacrifice, a God of, well, who loves sinners, like us. I think, that prayer was answered, when Jesus said, when I go to the cross, glorify me, now, glorify me, the hour, has come, glorify, Father, glorify your son, that your son, may bring glory to you.

[38 : 22] I think that happened. So, we finish our, meditation, I think, by admiring, the relationship, between the father, and the son.

Isn't it all amazing? We're amazed, at the glory, that Jesus aspired to, regarding the cross. That's how he saw the cross. That was what, was in his heart, about the cross.

And I think, perhaps, in a little bit of a way, our hearts say, amen to that. That is a glorious place.

And we humble ourselves, before him, at this gift, of what it is, to know God.

And if we don't have that, we humble ourselves, asking him, for that gift. What it is, to know God. To know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Let's sing together. Thank you.