

# Speaking of Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter 17. We're still here on the night of Jesus' betrayal.

It's after the Last Supper. Judas has gone out to enact his betrayal, and Jesus has been teaching and warning and comforting the disciples.

As I suggested in an earlier message, Jesus and his disciples have likely left that upper room where they had the meal, and they have not yet crossed the Kidron Valley and entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

We don't know exactly where they are right now, but perhaps they found a vineyard along the way somewhere to stop at. And immediately following all this teaching and warning and comfort that Jesus has been giving, Jesus breaks into a prayer.

And it's quite a lengthy prayer. You may have heard of these words of Jesus referred to as his high priestly prayer. It makes up the entirety of chapter 17, after which Jesus and his disciples will enter the Garden of Gethsemane.

[ 1 : 25 ] And we'll see the betrayal that happens there. So let's come now to John 17, verses 1 to 5. We'll read the first few verses together.

And we'll see what we can hear and understand from these words of Jesus. After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people, that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing 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. These are very special words to have recorded for us in our Bibles.

[ 2 : 40 ] It's as though the cover's being pulled back and we're getting a glimpse of something so rare. Jesus, the Son of God, is now pouring out his heart to the Father.

And we've had glimpses of this special relationship between Jesus and his Father. But this here's an entire chapter of us being able to hear and see just how it is that Jesus relates with God, his Father.

We hear how he prays. So this is very special. I think of this chapter as almost just like a diamond mine within the Bible. There's so much in here, so rich, so beautiful, the things that we see here.

Already after these first five verses, we have heard some strange things. As we've seen all along, there's something wonderful and mysterious to this relationship that Jesus has with his Father.

It's not like anything that we know. And so we hear Jesus praying things that we would never pray to God. We may never in this life get to the bottom of what these things mean because they reflect a relationship that is truly beyond our comprehension.

[ 4 : 00 ] And so we'll be content this morning just to understand something, anything, about this mysterious and wonderful relationship between Jesus and his Father.

So you're going to hear me say a lot in this chapter and in some of the messages ahead here. I'm not sure. I don't know. It seems. We guess.

Because these are deep waters. So let's begin with what Jesus says here in verse 1. Jesus looks toward heaven and he prays, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. So here it is at last. The hour has come. If we've been listening carefully throughout the Gospel of John, there has been for Jesus this hour, this time that is getting closer and closer.

We heard something of this back in John chapter 7 verse 6 where Jesus said, My time is not yet here. And back then, the Festival of Tabernacles was about to happen in Jerusalem and Jesus' brothers were urging him to go down to Judea and do a miracle tour leading up to the festival. [ 5 : 13 ] They wanted him to go more public, to stop doing things so much in secret, to show himself to the world. And then Jesus, of course, he didn't follow their advice, but he did end up going down to the festival in Jerusalem.

And while he was there teaching in the temple court, something he said made some of the Jews there angry with him. And we read this.

They tried to seize Jesus. This in John 7 verse 30. But no one laid a hand on him. Why? Because his hour had not yet come.

So way back in chapter 7, we've had this sense that an hour is coming for Jesus when he will be seized. When they will get their hands on him.

And then, as the story continued on, Jesus made his last trip to Jerusalem. In John chapter 12, just after he made his triumphal entry, you'll recall that there were some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus.

[ 6 : 14 ] And Jesus, in response to them wanting to see him, made this curious statement on hearing the news. He said, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Very truly, I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

So this hour, Jesus talks about it as the hour when he will be glorified, and also hints at it as the hour of his death. Or at least that's a part of what this hour includes.

So this hour has been looming. It's been getting closer. It's the hour in which Jesus will show himself most fully to the world. It's the hour in which he will be seized and arrested by his opponents.

It's the hour in which he will die. And in Jesus' words, it's the hour in which he will be glorified. Jesus says, That hour is here.

[ 7 : 23 ] The time is now. Right after this prayer, he will lead his disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane. And it's there that Jesus' opponents will finally get their hands on him.

And all of it will begin. But notice what comes to mind for Jesus as he thinks about his imminent arrest and suffering. We might expect Jesus to pray something different.

Perhaps the hour has come. Father, help me endure this suffering. But no. He prays instead, Glorify your Son.

That your Son may glorify you. Already Jesus is saying something that sounds pretty strange to us. What is this hour all about? It's about glory.

It's about glory coming to Jesus. It's about glory coming to the Father. And it's not coincidence that this will happen.

[ 8 : 28 ] This is personal. This is intentional. Where does Jesus get this glory from? He asks for it from the Father. It's the Father who will glorify the Son.

Where will the Father receive glory in this hour? Jesus says he will bring it to the Father. They will in this hour glorify one another.

Now we have to stop and talk about this word glorify because it's kind of a weird word for us. It's a biblical term and it's not one that we just use ordinarily in our language today. What does it mean? To glorify means to exalt. It means to lift up. It means to honor. It means to praise. It means to draw people's attention to something that is worthy.

To put the spotlight on someone or something. And so Jesus asks his Father to do that for him. To exalt him. To magnify his name.

[ 9 : 30 ] His worth. To bring attention and praise and honor to him. It's worth looking back here and remembering what Jesus said earlier in John chapter 8 verse 54.

Earlier Jesus said, If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

So Jesus has not been seeking glory from people. He's not been living just to draw the attention and praise of the crowds. Rather, his attitude, his prayer, all through this has been this.

Father, glorify your name. He's been seeking for his Father's glory. The glory of his name. He's been living so as to make much of his Father.

To get others' attention on to the Father. To get others to repent and turn back to the Father. All the teachings. It's been, What is the Father like?

[ 10 : 37 ] Talking about his grace and his love and his compassion. His generosity. His eagerness to answer prayer. All through Jesus' ministry, he's been seeking praise and honor and glory for his Father's name.

Yet Jesus, the Son, is worthy of praise and honor and glory as well. We heard this back in John chapter 5 verse 22. There Jesus said, The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

So God the Father desires all to honor his Son, to worship his Son, to give glory to his Son just as they worship and honor and praise and give glory to him.

And the Son is worthy of this, but he doesn't seek it from human beings. He seeks the glory that he is due from God, only from God.

And that's what we hear Jesus praying here. Glorify your Son. Basically, Father, bring glory to my name.

[ 11 : 56 ] This is a prayer that is only fitting for Jesus to pray because of who he is. Bring glory to me, says Jesus. But notice what follows.

So that I may bring glory to you. There's a mysterious relationship here. In the same breath as Jesus asks for glory, he prays for it with a reason.

So that I may glorify you. How can I say this? At the root, at the base of Jesus' desire for his own glory, at the bottom of this request, it's not self-seeking.

It's this desire to bring glory to his Father's name, to highlight the worthiness of the Father. There's a mysterious relationship here between Father and Son.

Again, we see it. There's a flow of love from one to the other. There's also this desire to exalt, to lift up, to magnify one to the other.

[ 13 : 09 ] We barely understand what's going on here between Jesus and the Father. And already, Jesus is moving on to say something else. Verse 2. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Have you ever found yourself just listening in on someone else's conversation and feeling like they know a lot about what they're talking about, but you have no idea what they're talking about?

That's kind of how I feel when I first hear these words. It's like I'm on the outside here. There is this concern, this plan, this purpose that Father and Son know about, that they're talking to each other about.

And what is it? It seems like Jesus just brings it up again, like this is an ongoing conversation they've been having. And somehow, this statement's all related to Jesus' request.

glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you for just as you gave to him authority. And Jesus goes on and says the whole thing. How does this all fit together?

[ 14 : 25 ] I'll be honest. I don't know the connection here. I don't understand the relationship here between these two statements. I could probably meditate on this for a good long while, years maybe.

Maybe after reading through my Bible another three, four, five times, some of it will come clearer. But what can we understand here in verse two?

Well, Jesus does make a statement. He says to his Father, you granted, or literally you gave him, the Son, authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

We'll just stop there with that first piece. You granted, you gave the Son authority over all people, literally over all flesh. Why?

For a specific reason. So that he, the Son, might give eternal life to them. We'll talk about who they are in a moment.

[ 15 : 35 ] The purpose of the authority that has been given to Jesus is for him to use it to give eternal life to people. And again, we're kind of swimming up to here, aren't we?

We might have assumed, well, Jesus is God. He's the Word who was with God and was God in the beginning, before anything has been made.

There he was. We might assume that Jesus always had authority over all flesh. Look back at what it says in John 1, verse 3. It says, Through him, the Word, that's the one that became flesh, it's Jesus, through him, all things were made.

Without him, nothing was made that has been made. And so we might assume that since Jesus had his hand in making everything that was made, including all flesh, all people, we might assume that he has always had authority over all flesh, over all people.

But now, Jesus is telling us that the authority he now has over all people has been given to him by his Father.

[16:51] What happened? Did he lose it when he took on human flesh and became one of us? Or is it only with regard to his humanity that he must be granted, given this authority, since no human being has ever had that authority?

If you're new or visiting with us this morning, don't worry. Not every sermon is like this. And if this sounds rather confusing, it's confusing even for some of us who have been Christians for decades. I'm going to bet that the disciples listening to this prayer were wondering, what are you talking about, Jesus? But we're pressing in to understand what we can of the depths of who Jesus is and of this relationship between Jesus and his Father.

These two persons who together with the Spirit make up one God. It is mysterious. It is confusing. But let's not just throw in the towel and wait for heaven.

Let's learn everything that we can about God through the words that Jesus has given us here. This idea that authority is given to the Son shows up in more places than just this.

[18:10] We heard about it back in John 5, verse 25. Jesus said, at that time, very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

These words of Jesus in John 5 blow my mind every time I read them. I scratch my head over them. Jesus just said that it has been granted to him.

It was given to him to have life in himself. There's a mysterious transaction going on here between Father and Son.

And again, we all just kind of assume, don't we, that Jesus, because he's God, he already has life in himself. That's what John chapter 1 verse 4 says. It says, in him was life.

[19:21] But somehow, in some mysterious way, it is granted to the Son to have life in himself before he then turns to speak, granting life to the dead who will hear his voice.

And again here in verse 27, Jesus says that the Father has given him authority authority to judge. Didn't he already have that authority?

Well, apparently, it seems that in some sense, he did not. We hear this in the Great Commission. A verse we're all familiar with. Matthew 28, verse 18.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, said Jesus. Therefore, go and make disciples. Here again, we see that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, but we notice his words.

It was given to him by his Father. So at some point, if we're honest with the words of Jesus, we have to acknowledge that there's some sense or some time in which he did not have all authority in heaven and on earth.

[20:31] It was given. There was some time or some sense in which he did not have the authority to judge. There was some time or some sense in which he did not have the authority to give eternal life to people.

That's what Jesus is implying here in this prayer in John 17. How could this be that this Jesus, who is God, had to be given authority in order to give eternal life?

Well, this is my best guess as to how and why. Let me say it right up front, clearly. Jesus is no less divine than we have believed.

He is truly and fully God. And at the same time, Jesus is perhaps much more human than we imagined.

When it comes to Jesus' humanness, that part of him had a beginning. I'll say that again.

[21:39] I'll give you some time to run it through the heresy checker. The human part of Jesus had a beginning. There was a time when the word had not yet become flesh.

But something awesome and wonderful happened in that moment when Jesus was conceived in his mother's womb by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

An eternal being was mingled with a new human life. So deeply, so mysteriously united that we can barely come to grips with just who it is staring back at us.

God, yes. And at the same time, a new man, a new human being, and not an old one.

A new human being was Jesus, and with regard to his humanity, he had no special authority. He wasn't born into special privilege or authority of any kind.

[ 22 : 51 ] With regard to his humanity, he had not life in himself. With regard to his humanity, he had no authority to judge the world or to call the dead out of their graves, giving them eternal life.

And so this authority had to be given to Jesus by his Father. Now we might wonder at what point in the story does Jesus receive it?

I don't know. Seems for sure that he had it at the Great Commission. even here, he speaks of it in the past tense. You granted him past tense, authority.

Even in John chapter 5, it's in the past tense. It seems he had it then. We could speculate. Was it at his baptism? Was it at his birth? Was it at conception? We don't know. Whenever it was, Jesus knows that at some point or in some sense, he received authority from God to do that which according to his human nature he could not otherwise do.

He received authority from the Father to give eternal life to people. How insane this must sound to an unbelieving world.

[ 24 : 08 ] Here's a man who prays to an unseen God in heaven and acknowledges in his prayer that God has given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to people.

This is why people have come to surmise that Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic or the Lord that he claimed to be. This is a wild and lofty claim.

And amazingly, Jesus doesn't even seem to care about who's listening. It's as if he's simply talking with God the Father the way he always does. He seems to have this absolute confidence in just who he is and this amazing understanding of the kind of authority that he possesses and where and whom he got it from.

He's claiming to have authority from God to give eternal life to people. Think about that. He's claiming to be able to give life that lasts forever to people who ordinarily die.

Do you hear this? But then who are these people that Jesus gives eternal life to? Let's finish off the verse here. Jesus says, You granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

[ 25 : 40 ] That's interesting. There's another dimension to all this. Another way in which the Father and the Son are relating to each other in all this. Jesus says, It's the Father who is giving people to his Son.

Even though it's all flesh, all people that Jesus has authority over, it's for the purpose of giving eternal life to those that the Father has given to him that he has this authority.

imagine for a moment that you're one of the disciples just sitting there listening to this prayer of Jesus. And now Jesus is referring to you as someone who has been given to Jesus by the Father. I've said this before in this series. There's just something much bigger, much greater going on here than just some guys that just all of a sudden figured it out for themselves and discovered, Oh, look, this is the Messiah.

Here he is. Actually, according to Jesus, there's an eternal God who is both Father and Son. The Son is walking around here in human flesh as one of us and Jesus says that these guys, these followers of his are the gift of his Father to him.

[ 27 : 03 ] It's like there's a higher level story going on here and we're not the main actors. We're the present being given from one main actor to the other.

And Jesus has said things like this before. John chapter 6, verse 37, All those the Father gives me will come to me. Again, in verse 39 of the same chapter, And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raised them up at the last day.

This is the higher reality. We hear about Jesus, we repent, we believe in him, but above all that and beneath all that, God is at work to give people to his Son.

And Jesus knows that. That's what's in his mind as these men are right here with him listening to his prayer. Father, Father, you have given them to me.

And I have authority to give them eternal life. Let's move on to verse 3. This is one of my favorite sayings of Jesus in the whole Bible.

[ 28 : 21 ] Jesus says, Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Another strange, full, wonderful saying of Jesus. It's as though Jesus here defines eternal life. He has authority to give eternal life to all those who have been given to him, but now it's like he steps aside for a moment and says, and this is what it's all about, this eternal life.

It's about them knowing you, the only true God. It's about them knowing me, Jesus Christ.

It's about this everlasting relationship between them and you and them and me. Verse 4.

Jesus prays, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. This verse is loaded too. I could preach a whole message just on this one statement, but I won't do it.

[ 29 : 36 ] It's the son's desire, as we saw in verse 2, to bring glory to the father so that I might glorify you, said Jesus. That's what Jesus wants to do.

He wants to magnify the worth of his father, to put the spotlight on his glory. And Jesus says, I have been doing that right up until now.

How? By finishing the work you have given me to do. This has been the aim of Jesus all along in everything he does, in all the teaching, in all the discipling, in all the miracles.

But now Jesus is so aware that the pinnacle of his work is about to be accomplished. The work that he must do to save those who have been given to him.

This is the difficult work of going to the cross and dying for them. It's as though Jesus is saying, I've finished all the work that you've given me to do up till this point, bringing glory to your name, Father.

[ 30 : 46 ] But now what is before me is that final stretch, this hour in which I must suffer and die for the sins of the world. Let these words be firmly fixed in your mind it's no coincidence that this is the gospel account in which we hear Jesus say from the cross, it is finished.

Mission accomplished. It is finished is not just the cry of a man who has suffered a long while to save sinners. It's the cry of a man who has been at work for decades to bring glory to his Father for years up until this point here and finally culminating at the cross.

Verse 5. Last one. Jesus says, And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

I could preach three sermons on this verse. I love this verse. Jesus asked the Father to give him the glory that he had with the Father before the world began.

Like, do you hear this? Who prays like this? Who says things like this? This verse highlights both the humanity and the deity of Jesus.

[ 32 : 21 ] Jesus. Jesus has awareness of being with the Father before the world was. He knows about the glory that he had with the Father before the world existed.

This reveals Jesus' divine nature that he is truly God. While his humanity had a beginning, his divinity, his godness did not.

He longs out of that divine nature with those eternal memories to be lifted up to the glorious kind of existence that he enjoyed with the Father before the world even began because Jesus is God.

Only God could speak this way. humanity. But now this verse, these words of Jesus also highlight his humanity. This is perhaps one of the verses we point to most often as we try to understand this mystery that the word became flesh and lived among us.

We wonder what happened when Jesus, though he was in very nature, very form God, what happened when he emptied himself or made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant and becoming one of us, a human being.

[ 33 : 46 ] What changed for him when he came down from heaven to earth? These words of Jesus give us something of an answer. He lost something of his glory.

Not all of it. As we see in John 2, verse 11, after he did his first miracle, the disciples said that it was one of the signs through which he revealed his glory.

So he still possessed some of his glory, but it's as though much of his glory was veiled. It was hidden by his humanity.

Some would say that he laid aside his glory when he became a man. And yet even here it's difficult to describe, well what exactly did he lay aside? We could speak of position and privilege for sure.

We could probably speak of authority as well as we've just heard since Jesus acknowledged he had to be given authority from the Father. Again, this is mysterious.

[ 34 : 46 ] This is beyond what we can fathom. But here's Jesus who knew glory, who had the glory with the Father in his presence.

Here he is now praying to have it back again, longing for it. This is how far down Jesus has come to rescue us. he has stooped down to becoming one of his creatures.

He exchanged the heights of heaven for the lowly dusty streets of Israel. And we could go on. I love this verse but let's draw this to a close.

Four truths that come out of Jesus' prayer, these five verses. What do we learn about God from this prayer? Well, first we see that Jesus desires to glorify his Father by finishing the work that God gave him to do.

Next, we see that Jesus desires to be restored to the glory he had with his Father before the world began. And both of these, in both of these, and through both of these, we see that Jesus is truly God and that Jesus is truly human, truly one of us.

[ 36 : 11 ] So let's just draw some quick lines of application here. If you're not a believer in Jesus today, do you hear what Jesus is saying? He has authority to give eternal life to people.

We all know that death is coming for each one of us at some point. Yet here's the one who claims to be able to undo that, to help you beat that and live forever, to raise you up at the last day.

And this is, he says, is a free gift. It's a gift of God's grace for all who believe in him. Have you put your faith, have you put your trust in Jesus?

For the rest of us, those who already believe, I want to take us down a different line. If Jesus desires to glorify his father so deeply and has lived to do so, so fully, what should we do?

If the father's desire is to glorify his son and works to do that, to put the spotlight on him, what should we do? How should we live?

[ 37 : 36 ] Let me put it this way, what's the purpose of life? The Westminster Shorter Catechism says it this way, the chief end of man, the highest purpose of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Jesus isn't just setting us an example here of how we should pray on Sunday mornings. He's setting us an example here of how we should live our entire lives from start to finish.

What our aim should be. Our worship should be more than just four or five songs that we sing on Sunday morning. It should be the offering of our entire lives to this great and glorious God and his son, Jesus Christ.

And so if you're a believer, I want to encourage you to ask yourself this question. Is that the main focus of my life? To bring glory to this God and to his son, Jesus?

To know him. Is that my main priority? the thing for which all other things in life must make way and submit to.

[ 38 : 59 ] Have I got my priorities straight? The good news of the gospel is that Jesus had his priorities straight. And he was willing to lay down his life in order to finish the work that God gave him to do.

He glorified the Father completely with his whole earthly life and in so doing he saved the rest of us who have failed to do so. And amazingly Jesus offers us this gift, this eternal life as a gift freely of God's grace.

And so let's not shrink back. Let's offer ourselves completely to him. To bring glory to him. Let's live as Paul says, as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God.

God for this is our true and proper worship. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you so much that you have given us a glimpse of that sweet relationship you have with your son.

And I pray that it would change us. I pray that it would transform our hearts. That we would realize that this story that we're caught up into is so much bigger than just some of the things that we often get distracted with in our lives.

[ 40 : 24 ] Speak to our hearts again about eternity, about your glory. Reveal yourself to us and lead us, we pray, in bringing glory to your name. Thank you for Jesus.

Amen.