

A Parting Prayer for Glory

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and please do take a seat if you haven't already. I'd like to add my welcome to VJs, particularly to the 830 St. John's folk. It's great you could tune in to us this morning.
- Well, with everything happening and all this talk of an imminent lockdown, I wonder if people are praying more. And if so, what exactly for?
- For just this to end or for something more? And I wonder this because our prayers often reveal our hearts, our concerns, don't they? I like this child's prayer.
- I think I've shown you before on the next slide. It says, Dear God, thank you for the baby brother. But what I prayed for was a puppy choice. You see, her prayer shows her concern that she'd prefer a puppy to a brother.
- And I'm pretty sure she's not alone. Or this one I've not shown you before on the next slide. It says, Dear God, I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church.
- [1 : 0 6] Is that okay, Neil? Well, given the current situation with the virus, maybe it's not such a bad question after all. In fact, a minister rang me last Wednesday. He was marrying some people that night just before the law changed.
- And he asked me that very question. Yes, it's okay, by the way. But for Neil, his prayer showed his concern for right conduct before God.
- And that's quite an admirable concern, isn't it? But the point is, our prayers often reveal our concerns, don't they? And today, we see Jesus' parting prayer before he dies.
- It's Thursday night still, before the very first Good Friday when he dies. And he's been teaching his disciples all night, ever since chapter 13.
- But now he's finished teaching them and he's about to go to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray privately and then be arrested. But before he goes to the Garden, he prays publicly in front of his disciples in our chapter today.
- [2 : 1 0] And this prayer of his reveals his heart, what he is concerned for. So as we look at it, the question for us will be, are his concerns our concerns?
- You know, other things he prays for, the things that we strive for, pray for ourselves, do we reflect his heart? Well, the prayer breaks into three main parts.
- And I should say that it is quite a wordy prayer. I don't know if you've noticed that as Mark was reading it to us this morning. I've not found it particularly easy to teach. And so it might be a difficult one for the 8.30 St. John's folks to join us on.
- But do persevere. It will be a bit longer than usual in order to get our heads around it. But part one, Jesus prays for glory. It's on the slide is point one.
- But have a look in your Bibles at verse one. After Jesus said this, he looked upward to heaven and prayed, Father, the hour has come.
- [3 : 1 4] Glorify your son that your son may glorify you. He's finished teaching them that night. And he says the hour has come.

And he prays that his father would glorify him. And that sounds a bit self-centered, doesn't it? Until you read the rest of the verse, of course, which says, So that he can in turn glorify his father.

But what does this mean? And how does it work? Well, we need to remember two things we've seen before. Firstly, we've seen that the hour refers to his death.

We saw that back in chapter 12. I won't go over it now. But the second thing we need to remember is that glory can refer to three different things. And so it can refer to the greatness of someone's character.

And like we heard in our first reading, when Moses asked to see God's glory, and he proclaimed his character, the Lord, the Lord, the gracious and compassionate God.

[4 : 17] Glory refers to someone's greatness of character. And so to glorify someone can mean to reveal that greatness of character. So that's the first one.

The second one, I think I've got these on a slide as well. So the second reference to glory can mean to refer to someone's splendor or brilliance or radiance, like a glorious sunrise.

So to glorify someone in this case means to clothe them with splendor or brilliance. And third, glory can refer to someone's worthiness of honor.

So here to glorify someone can mean to praise or honor them. The last time I tried to illustrate this, I used Usain Bolt when he won gold at Rio.

So do you remember this next slide where he did it in style, smiling at the picture for the camera? And when he did that, he revealed his glory in terms of greatness at running.

[5 : 21] And then on the next slide, he was glorified in terms of being clothed with splendor, the brilliance of gold medals. And then on the next slide, he was glorified in terms of praise and honor, even by other athletes.

And this was actually 2017 when he didn't actually get gold. But such was his worthiness that other athletes still glorified or praised him.

So can you see how glory can mean these three related things? I'm going to assume that you're all nodding at your homes going, yes, Andrew, we've got it.

Well, we see all three in our verses today. But here in verse one, it's about the father revealing the son's greatness.

And given the reference to the hour of his death, it's about revealing Jesus's greatness as the king whose death brings life. For at the cross, Jesus took all God's judgment for all our sin upon himself.

[6 : 28] So that all who believe can have life eternal. Now, what other king or world leader would do that? Of course, plenty of world leaders want to be glorified themselves.

But Jesus asks God to reveal his greatness at the cross so that he can in turn glorify the father. How?

Well, by giving people eternal life where they know God's greatness and praise God's worthiness. So have a look at verse two and three.

It says, 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.

See, God gave Jesus all authority as the Christ, the king. But he gave it to Jesus so that he in turn would die and give life eternal to us.

[7 : 39] Which again is a pretty extraordinary thing to do. I mean, if I had all authority over all people, I'm not sure that's what I would do. Would you? But notice in verse three, this eternal life is described as a relationship.

It's described in terms of knowing God. Both knowing about God, where we see the greatness, his glory in that sense, the greatness of his character.

But also knowing God personally, relationally as our loving father, whom we seek to glorify or honor both with our lips and our lives.

And so to flow chart it, if you like, on the next slide, Jesus is praying that God would glorify, that is, reveal his son's glory or greatness at the cross.

So that people would come to him for eternal life, which then leads to knowing and glorifying God himself.

[8 : 47] Hopefully you can see what Jesus is saying, although he says it much more briefly, doesn't he? Father, glorify your son so that your son can glorify you.

But you see, Jesus' prayer for glory is ultimately for his father's glory. After all, this is what Jesus did on earth. Have a look at verse four. He says, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

He, Jesus, brought glory to God by revealing his greatness of character through his words and his works. It's why Jesus could say to Philip on the next slide. It says, anyone who has seen me, says Jesus, has seen the father.

Because I've revealed him to you by my words and work. And this work included his death. And because he's just about to die.

So his work is as good as finished. And it's at the cross that Jesus supremely reveals God's glory. Is it not? I mean, can you think of anywhere else where we see the depth of God's love for us more than the cross?

[9 : 57] Where we see his justice and faithfulness more than at the cross? His mercy and grace more than at the cross?

We can't. Can we? It's the cross of Christ, the finished work of Jesus that reveals God's greatness, that glorifies God supremely.

And also brings us to know and then glorify God in terms of praising him with our lips and lives. And so having finished the work, he then prays in verse five.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the creation of the world. Here is the third type of glory.

The clothing of splendor. It's the gold medal one, if you remember. Jesus is saying now that he's finished his work, he asked the Father to clothe him with the splendor he had before the creation of the world.

[11 : 03] The splendor and radiance he took off in order to come to earth and die for us. And again, this is not self-centered. He's only praying for what rightly belongs to him.

And what's more, he's only praying this after he's finished the work needed to be done to glorify his Father. And so this part of Jesus' prayer shows us Jesus' heart, that he is concerned to bring his Father glory, do you see?

And so I guess the first application for us this morning on the next slide is, are we concerned to bring God glory? Glory.

When we pray about the coronavirus, it's right to pray for a vaccine. It is right to pray for people's protection. It is right to pray for an end.

But do we also pray that God's name might be glorified through it? And that is, since God is glorified through his Son, do we pray that God would use this fear of death as a chance to reveal Christ's greatness at the cross?

[12 : 17] That he is the Savior King who offers life eternal, no matter what virus is out there. That people might come to him and know and glorify his Father.

Are we praying those sorts of things as well as for toilet paper? We still have some, by the way. Or whether we can just have the end to this virus so we can go back to our comfortable lives.

You see, is Jesus' concern for his Father's glory our concern? Well, Jesus now prays for the 11 disciples, which is part 2 or point 2 in verses 6 to 8.

And as I read these verses, I notice the repetition of the word gave or given. So verse 6. He says, I pray for them.

I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

[13 : 49] Did you notice the repetition of how Father has given everything to Jesus? Including these 11 disciples, actually. And this is why the Father deserves to be glorified.

For everything we have is given by him. But this also means that we can trust the New Testament, because the apostles who wrote it were the real deal.

They were chosen and given by God himself, you see. And they kept God's word about God's Son.

Not perfectly. I mean, Jesus is about to be arrested in an hour's time or so, and they're about to desert him. But they did believe Jesus really is the Savior King sent from God.

And they did glorify or honor Jesus while he was with them on earth. But how do we know these 11 didn't then just go off track once Jesus left?

[14 : 51] Well, because God would keep them on track in answer to Jesus' prayer. You see how Jesus continues to pray for them, for their protection? Verse 11.

He says, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world. And I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction. That is Judas the betrayer.

So that scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now. But I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them. For they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

[16 : 00] They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Do you notice here, Jesus' prayer is essentially for protection.

Because as he leaves, he's not going to be there with them any longer. He's not praying that God would take them out of the world, because as we'll see, they've got a job to do in the world. And so while they remain in the world, while they are hated by the world, Jesus prays that they might be protected.

And not protected from any physical harm they might endure from the world. After all, we know that many of them did suffer. In fact, the Apostle John, who is writing this book, that early church fathers think that he was boiled in a cauldron of oil.

He didn't die, because as we know, he was then sent or exiled to the island of Patmos. Legend has it that James, not legend, the Bible actually says that James, John's brother, was killed by the sword because of the order of Herod.

We read about that in Acts. And tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down. It's all rather cheery, isn't it? And so the prayer is not about physical protection.

[17 : 15] Rather, verse 15, it is for spiritual protection from the evil one, do you see? So that they don't give in to the temptation of changing the word to save their lives.

But rather, that they be united in the truth, just as the Father and the Son are united in the truth. And we know that this prayer was answered because they did die rather than change the truth.

And so the second application for us this morning is on the next slide, which is similar to last week, have confidence that we have the word of truth. As I said last week, we're not wasting our time tuning into this string to hear it read and taught, even if it's a bit longer today.

Nor are we wasting our time putting it into practice. For the ones who wrote it were not only the first eyewitnesses, but they were chosen by God, given by God, and kept by God, even unto death.

So we know we can have the truth. What's more, God also set them apart to share his word with the world, including us.

[18 : 34] Do you see verse 17? He says, Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

For them, I have sanctified myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. Now to sanctify can mean two things. First, it can mean to make someone holy or godly in character.

And second, it can mean to set them apart for a particular purpose. Here it's the second. Jesus prays that God would set them apart for a particular purpose.

That he might send them, or Jesus might send them into the world with the truth. For that purpose. They set apart, in other words, to preach the word about Jesus.

You see, before Jesus prayed that God would glorify him at the cross, reveal his greatness at the cross, so that Jesus in turn might bring people to know and glorify God. But now that the cross has passed, now that Christ has returned to the Father, then the way God would glorify Jesus is through his chosen apostles, as they preach the word of truth.

[19 : 51] And so on the next slide, we have an extra step to our flow chart, at the first bit. And so now the apostles are set apart to speak the word about Christ.

Christ, then God reveals God's or Jesus's glory or greatness through that word at the cross, so that people come to him for eternal life, and then know and glorify God.

You see, Jesus prays for the 11, not just because he is concerned for them personally, but also because he is concerned for their job of taking the word out into the world, that Christ's glory might be revealed, so that people could trust in him, and know and glorify the Father.

And so the third application for us, then on the next slide is, are we concerned the apostles' word about Jesus goes out into all the world?

Is this our concern? Is this something we pray about? Next week is our Kingdom Growth Prayer Night. We have once a month here at Doncaster.

[21 : 06] And while we cannot meet physically, Mark is going to disseminate the prayer points. I think it will be a PDF on the website, but we'll also have hard copies available for pickup at the church office Thursday mornings.

Why not use those prayer points and pray for our mission partners who are seeking to take this word out into the world?

That Christ's glory at the cross might be revealed so that people can come and know and glorify the Father. In fact, if we are concerned for the Father's glory like Jesus is, that's the first application, and we know that this word is the truth, the second application, then we must do what we can to see the apostles' word go out into all the world, the third application.

Because this is how God is ultimately glorified. One of the encouraging things I've found over the last week and a half, I can't believe it's only been a week and a half since all this kind of happened, the letters and messages and emails that I've received from people concerned about the church's finances.

People have been concerned that the church still has money to do ministry of the word and to support our mission partners who do ministry of the word.

[22 : 36] You see, they are concerned not just for us personally, as Jesus was for his disciples, but that the word about Jesus would continue to go out into all the world.

And so some people have come to church and they've dropped off money, they've written me letters, because they want to see that still happen. They are reflecting, you see, Christ's heart in his prayer. Well, Jesus now prays for all of us.

Point three, verse 20 in your Bibles. So have a look there at verse 20. He says, My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, through the apostles' message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. Here Jesus prays for us who will believe the word of the apostles.

And he prays that we might be united as one. Growing up, my younger brother, Matthew, and I looked similar. On the next slide is a photo of us.

[23 : 48] I think you can probably tell who we are, the two on the left. In fact, Michelle, my wife, first met me at church, but on the second visit, she started talking to my brother and thought it was me and wasn't sure why I wasn't very interested in her.

Either way, she's married me and that's all good. And in fact, we even sounded similar on the phone growing up. So the reverse happened. This time, his girlfriend rang the house and I picked up and answered and she just started pouring out her heart to me.

And I was just kind of going, all right, and I couldn't get a word in to say it's not me. In fact, I thought about having some fun, like saying, I'm not really sure this relationship is working, but I thought I better not.

I just said, I'm Andrew. I assume you want to talk to Matthew and handed the phone over. She was so embarrassed that she avoided me the next time she came over to the house. You could say that we were like twins, one in appearance, one in voice.

We even shared one room. Well, Jesus prays that we might be one, not in appearance or voice or accommodation, but one like he and the father are one.

[24 : 59] That is one where we are united, but in the truth, just as the father and the son are united in the truth. And so we cannot say, as some people say, oh, let's just forget our different beliefs and just come together and be united, because that's not how the father and the son are united.

They are united in the truth of the Bible. And so we are to be united in the truth of the Bible and in love for one another as the father and the son are united in love for one another and united in mind and mission as the father and the son are united in mind and mission.

This is what Jesus prays for us, that we might be one with one another and with them, the father and the son, sharing the same love and godliness, the same truth, mind and mission.

Why? Well, verse 21 again, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. You see, we are to be united as one so the world might believe Jesus is the one from God, the savior king.

who brings life eternal. And so important is this idea that Jesus repeats it in verse 22 and 23. He says, I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity.

[26 : 28] Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as I have loved you. Here, glory refers to the greatness of Christ as savior king whose death brings life.

This is the glory that the father gave his son to have and this is the glory the son has now revealed to us through the apostle's word. And now he prays that we might be united as one family.

And at one level, this is who we are already, isn't it? Because that's what happens when we believe in Jesus. We are brought into his family. And that's why it's right that we say the apostle's creed together, even if you're in your homes and we are here because we are spiritually united in Christ already.

But now Jesus prays that we might live out this unity, that we might grow to complete oneness so that the world might see and believe.

And it does work. A friend of mine called Mike, who I'm pretty sure I haven't told you about before, he was 17 years old when he was invited to a church in Sydney.

[27 : 45] And what struck him was that these people loved one another. And what's more, they all believed the same thing. They even all stood up and said this creed thing together and believed it and meant it.

And what's more, they all were on about the same thing, caring for him and wanting to share with him the good news about Jesus. And it was this unity of these Christians that caused Mike to investigate further, to ask questions and to hear of Jesus.

And Mike came to believe that God really does love us, that God really did send his only son to die for us. And in fact, today Mike is now a minister in Sydney, helping his church live out their oneness, that more might believe like he did.

It works. You see, Jesus' parting prayer and his concern for us is that we might live out this unity, that we might bear witness to the world.

And so the fourth application on the next slide is, do we have this same concern? Are we concerned to be one in truth, love, mind, and mission so that the world may believe?

[29 : 03] of course, it's hard to do at the moment, isn't it? And so if you're missing the fact that we cannot gather together physically, then that's actually a good thing because we are built to gather together physically.

We are built to express who we are as one family in Christ. And so now that we can't gather together physically, then can I encourage you to keep doing what you can virtually, online, with the phone and so on.

There's things like FaceTime, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and if you've still got no idea what I'm talking about, there's the good old phone. Pick it up and let's encourage one another.

Ask after one another. Let's see if we can use our unity to not just care for one another but also bear witness to the world. And so to that end, on the website where you are streaming from now, there are some cards that you can print off after the sermon.

The link to it is just above the 9am sermon title and when you click it, it will come up and look like this on the screen. And the idea of it is that you give it to a few neighbours around you or across the street from you.

[30 : 26] It's a way of reaching out together to people in our world. And notice the language in the second paragraph there. It says, I'm part of a church and we help one another.

There's the idea of unity and love and so on. And we're concerned to help others. So let me know if we can help.

You see, here is a way for us to work together as one to bear witness to the world and perhaps even have an opportunity to share with them the word about Jesus.

So the idea is put your name and number on it, slip it under the door of your neighbours and so on and if they ring you with a concern or a need, you can give it to them direct. And if you can't have that or you don't have that thing that they need, then you can use our website and I'll show you how it works towards the end of the service.

The point is, this is a way we can work together as one, we, to bear witness to the world that they in turn might ask about Christ, come to eternal life and come to know and glorify the Father.

[31 : 35] If this is Jesus' concern for us and the world, it should be ours too, shouldn't it? But it's not always easy, is it? And it does require effort, doesn't it?

And so Jesus ends the prayer with assurance it will be worth it. Have a look at 24 to 26. He says, Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known to them in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

Here Jesus says that he prays and says that he will continue to make himself known to us just as he did for the eleven. That is, he will continue to help us grow as Christians so that we might continue to know his love and his presence.

Why? Well, verse 24, because he wants us to see his glory, his splendor in heaven, the splendor he had with God before the creation of the world, back in verse 5.

[33 : 01] and not just to see it, but since we are united with him to share it and enjoy it forever. And that will be worth it, won't it?

Well, let me finish. On the next slide, one kid writes, Dear God, why is Sunday school on Sunday? I thought it was supposed to be our day of rest, Tom.

Clearly, Tom doesn't like doing work. And I've certainly made you work hard today, but so that you can see the heart of Christ. For his prayer reveals his concerns, doesn't it?

And Jesus is concerned for God's glory, for God's word to go out into the world, and for people to be one and bear witness to the world, that many more might believe and share in his glory with us.

Let me pray that God would help us to do those things. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this prayer of our Lord and Savior Christ.

[34 : 13] We thank you that it reveals his concerns for us and the world. And so we pray, our Heavenly Father, that you would help us to have those same concerns, that same heart, a heart that seeks your glory, a heart that seeks the word to go out into the world, a heart that seeks to be one, that we might bear witness to the world, so that more and more might share in Christ's glory.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.