

John 17:1-5

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[0:00] Let's pray briefly. Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you that your word gives life. In your name we pray. Amen. You can have a seat. I haven't had the chance to get to know you yet. My name is Ryan Spear. I serve as one of the ministers here. I get to work with Chelsea with youth and Jacob Vandiver with our young adults.

It's a great privilege to be with you this evening. If you came a little bit late and didn't get the explainer, this is our Youth Sunday. So if you're wondering why there's so many young people involved, that's what's going on today.

And we're in a sermon series in John. So for those of you who've been following along, it's the Upper Room Discourse. It's called that because of where Jesus is. And we have five verses of his final prayer as he's leaving this conversation with his disciples.

And we're going to talk about two things this evening across these five verses, 109 words, two things. The glory of God revealed and the gift of God given.

So if you're just now tuning in, this is kind of like jumping into a show that somebody else is watching and you're like, who is that? Why did he do that? What's that mean? So I'm going to try to give you like the recap. Where are we in this series?

[1:12] And this is like the first, you know, 15, 30 seconds in a show you're watching where they remind you of everything that just happened. So picture like a camera shows you Jerusalem, wide angle shot.

It's the Passover. It's nighttime. Maybe the camera pans across different families gathered in different homes, sharing a meal together. The camera comes into the Upper Room. We see Jesus gather around a table with at least his 12 disciples, most likely a number of other his followers around him.

We hear him saying things like, one of you will betray me. You will all scatter. The camera then cuts to Judas, who is left to betray Jesus. We see him conspiring with religious leaders.

The camera cuts back to Jesus, comforting his disciples, saying, I will not leave you alone. And I have overcome the world. All right, you got the picture.

It's a charged scene. This is a lot of big emotions happening here. And looking ahead just a few hours later, Jesus will be betrayed, abandoned, detained, accused, denied, tortured, mocked, rejected, and crucified.

[2:21] But right now, in these five verses at the beginning of his prayer, he asks for two things. Two things that summarize a prayer. That the glory of God would be revealed.

And that the gift of God would be given. So let's turn to verse 1 in our passage. If you're following along, this is on page 903 in your pew Bibles.

So we're going to talk about the glory of God first. I'm going to start with just a few notes to orient ourselves to what's going on. It begins with when Jesus had spoken these words.

These words mean everything he has said to them in the upper room. His teaching, his promises, his warnings, his comfort. And most immediately, he prayed that they would know and have peace, for he had overcome the world.

And with that being said, he now lifts up his eyes to heaven and prays, Father, the hour has come. All right, so first of all, why is he praying this out loud?

[3:22] What's going on here? What's up with that? Now, I think the clearest answer comes earlier in the book of John. He's doing this for the benefit of those listening. So in an earlier scene in John, he raises

Lazarus from the dead.

A man who had been in the grave for four days. And as he prays to raise him from the dead, he says to the Father, I knew that you always hear me.

But I said this on account of the people standing around. That they may believe that you sent me. So I think the same dynamic is at play here.

He's praying so that all who hear would believe. That includes those who were sitting around the table that evening. It includes us who are sitting here as well.

So he continues his first request. The hour has come. Glorify your Son. That the Son may glorify you. So what hour?

[4:21] What is he talking about? And this is a huge phrase in the Gospel of John. If you've been reading the Gospel of John, you've heard repeatedly Jesus saying, My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come.

But then suddenly there's a scene where some Gentiles come to him, some non-Jewish people, and they say, We want to meet Jesus. And he suddenly says, My hour has now come.

What hour is he talking about? Well, he's talking about his crucifixion. His hour to be delivered up to the Roman authorities and hung on a cross. And the next words out of his mouth after he says, My hour has come may be surprising.

He prays for himself, and he prays that he would be glorified. Now, glorified, glory isn't a word we use too much this day and age. Maybe we might call a sunset glorious.

Wasn't it a glorious sunset? Or maybe if you took a nap today because of daylight savings, you might have had a glorious nap, perhaps. I hope so. But we don't really use it all the time.

[5:21] But maybe the Olympics that just ended give us a bit of an example. You might have seen some of this language, athletes performing, performing for glory, things like that. It might make a little bit more sense what this is trying to communicate.

This is a big Bible word. It goes all the way back to the Old Testament. We heard it in our reading in Daniel. It's communicating something's worth, its radiance, its beauty, but also a sense of the identity, the substance of a thing.

So actually, the Olympics kind of gives us a good example. Hanging a gold medal around your neck. These are heavy, right? You see people biting them, you know, proving that it's actual gold. It's heavy.

It's also shiny. It reflects the light around it. And it communicates what about that person? If you knew nothing about someone walking around with a gold medal around their neck, you would know that person's a pretty big deal, right?

It tells you something about their identity, something about what they can do, their worth and their reputation. But here's the thing for Jesus. This is why it's so surprising that he prayed this.

[6:25] For Jesus, his glory wasn't going to be a gold medal hanging on his neck. It was going to be himself hanging on a cross. And we know this because earlier in John, chapter 12, verse 23, he said, The hour has come for the Son of Man, his favorite phrase for referring to himself, the Son of Man to be glorified.

Nearly the same expression here. And then immediately he talks about death leading to life. And in John 8, 28, even earlier, he said, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he.

Lifted up is both this sort of double-meaning phrase, lifted up on the cross, but also lifted up to be glorified. He said, You will know that I am he.

A phrase meaning that I am God. So what he's saying here is that you will see God's glory when you see him on the cross. And he's saying this to prepare his disciples so that they'll know about what's about to happen, the darkest moment of their lives, the deepest despair as they cower in fear, as their savior, the one they hoped would redeem Israel, is brutalized on a cross, is actually the revelation of his glory, the nature of who he is and what he came to do.

Now, I was sitting in the pews maybe about a year ago here as the service was ending, and one of our acolytes, probably one of our youth here, was carrying the cross out of the service that day.

[8:04] And I was looking at the cross as it was being carried out, and I was just noticing it's gold. It's shiny. And I wondered for just a moment, like, no, is that right?

You know, have we made the cross too much of a decorative thing? Shouldn't it be, you know, brutal? Shouldn't it be wood? It reminds us of the horror of what it was.

It's of course. We need to remember that. But then I realized in that moment, that's not how the cross stayed after Jesus hung on it.

I realized that one of the most fitting things you can see is a cross turned to gold. Are you familiar with the Japanese art of, I'm going to pronounce this wrong, kintsugi?

Have you heard of this before? It's where they take a broken vessel, like a bowl or something, but then they put it back together with gold. And it becomes something even more beautiful than it was before.

[9:01] And I believe when we see the cross in its glorified sense, in one way we're seeing what Jesus has done to something that should be terrible and horrible. He makes it into something glorious. The whole cross now infused with his glory.

Now the main point of this prayer for glory for him is for the world to see the heart of God. And the heart of God is seen in Christ on the cross.

Dying a death he didn't deserve so that we can have a life we don't deserve. And you'll notice that glory continues in the final two verses of our passage.

He's saying in these final two verses, I showed the world what you were like on earth. And now I'm ready to come home, to be back where it all started.

And Jesus' homecoming means that we have the hope of a new home. So that's our first reflection. The glory of God revealed in Jesus on the cross.

[10:00] Now I think there's at least two important implications here. First is an invitation. To hold this image of who God is up. Like we hold up the cross.

Like a piece of kintsugi might be prominently displayed in a home or a gallery. And actually during Holy Week at the Good Friday service, there's often a part of it called the stripping of the altar.

It's the removal of everything on stage, the covering of everything, until only the cross remains. It reminds us of what the center of the gospel is, what the center of the story is.

And secondly, after we remember this is who God is, this is what he does, this prayer also serves as a model for us to follow in our own prayer life. I wonder how our prayer life might change if we were to approach different situations with the same starting spot as Jesus.

God, what will glorify you in this situation? What will glorify you as I think about a college to pick next year? What will glorify you as I think about how I connect with my relatives at this gathering?

[11:14] What will glorify you as I think about this particular challenge in my life? How might I reframe the trials that you face as opportunities for the glory of God to shine through in you?

So that's the glory of God. That's the first part of this prayer Jesus prays, to be revealed, to show the world who he really is and what he has come to do. The second part is the gift, the gift of God. So let's turn to this part. We see it in verses 2 and 3. Look with me. It's in the middle of these five verses. And actually, it's quite fitting that this gift, this present, is wrapped in glory. Glory in the first few verses.

Glory in the final verses. Just as the glory of God was wrapped in the human body of Christ, the mystery of his being fully God and fully human. Jesus prays in these two verses here, Since you have given him authority over all flesh, he's referring to himself here, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

He continues, One author put this passage this way, Eternal life is simply the knowledge of God.

[12:41] So what does that mean? What does that mean that eternal life, this gift, is the knowledge of God? Well, I think it means at least three things. First of all, eternal life is a gift. It's not something we inherit.

It's not something we earn. It's expensive, but it's freely given. And it's not something we deserve either. A pure gift, given in grace.

Secondly, this gift means that eternal life is a quality of living more than a quantity of living. What do I mean? Now, I love stories where people have given their life over to Jesus.

I am a huge sucker for them. I just love hearing when God has gotten a hold of somebody's life, the way it changes their whole outlook. And one of the most consistent themes you often hear in these stories is a transformation of meaning.

Going to a place where the things they were going through might not have felt connected to anything, just sort of stuff that was happening. Or challenges that seem to have no clear purpose or solution.

[13:49] But when their life is taken over by God, they find that there's an overwhelming sense of meaning and a deeper sense of purpose. It's a quality change in their life. Does it mean that this life will be easy?

High after high, win after win? Well, of course not. Actually, Jesus has just told his disciples in the few verses before, in this world, you will have trouble.

But he continues. And this is where the transformation takes part. But take heart. I have overcome the world. And this eternal life, this new quality of living, doesn't begin when we die.

It begins the moment you believe. If you've believed, you have already entered into eternal life. C.S. Lewis puts it really memorably.

He's an author who's written a lot of wonderful things. Chronicles of Narnia, Space Trilogy, and some maybe more academic things, of course, here and there. Those are my favorites. But he says, if we get to the point where we might look back on life as believers, we will see that our eternal life began from the moment we believe.

[14:59] All of it will have been heaven from that moment of belief. And finally, and most importantly, it's found in a relationship.

So it's found in a gift. This gift is freely given. This eternal life is given. This eternal life is a quality more than quantity. And finally, it's in a relationship. So this eternal life, this gift of a transformed quality of living, comes in the relationship to a person.

and its participation in the life of that person. I mean, the classic example of knowing about someone versus knowing someone.

So what might this be like? Well, to know someone, first of all, they have to let themselves be known. Which is what God the Father did for us through sending us His Son to take on our flesh to walk amongst us.

Secondly, we know God as the only true God as this verse says. It's exclusive. C.S. Lewis again put it this way.

[16:03] He says, the one who has God and everything else has no more than someone who has God only. And third, this relationship is founded in Jesus Christ.

To know God is to know God in Jesus. And this is the mystery of the triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit brought into the loving eternal relationship through Jesus' work on the cross.

That's what we're folded into when we believe. We participate in this life flowing in us, flowing through us. This might raise two questions for you. For those of you who already believe, you might know, well, how do I know God better?

Well, to know someone better is pretty simple. You need to spend time with them. This is also pretty simple, the Sunday school answer. And the best way to spend time with God is starting with His Word.

His Word to us. And if you don't already have a regular practice, I'd encourage you to start with the Psalms. Just one a day. And once you start there, pray, God, show me how you are inviting me to know you better.

[17:14] And God will answer that prayer for you. He wants you to know Him better. He wants you to know yourself through Him better. And remember, you're not trying to know more about God, but to know God.

Not facts, not information. But to have God become a part of your imagination. For how you understand yourself as securely loved, and then reaching out to others in this world from that place of secure love.

Another great way to start if you're already a believer and walking with Jesus is to get to know other believers. To be here like you are today. To ask them, what is God doing in their life? To hear them

testify. It's incredibly encouraging and powerful to know how God is working in someone else's life. And for those of you who are on the road to belief, maybe you're here, you're not quite sure what you think about this Christianity stuff. Well, how do you first begin to believe God? You could pray just one word to start. Just one word. Just a word, yes. Just a word, yes. God wants to make himself known to you.

[18:20] He stands at the door and knocks. He waits only for you to say yes. Now, if you want a few more words than yes, you could pray this way.

Lord, I want to know you. I want to be known by you. Grant me the gift of faith so that I know you as the way, the truth, and the life.

And once you've done that, would you let another Christian know? Come and talk to me, talk to any of the ministers here. We'd love to hear this about you and pray with you and find ways to equip you and walk with you on your journey.

So this is the gift, eternal life, found in knowing the only true God in Jesus. Jesus. And I'd like to close these thoughts with the glory of God and the gift of God with a quote from a wonderful book by a man some of you might have had the chance to know here who worshiped with you.

His name was J.I. Packer. And he wrote this wonderful book called Knowing God. So if you're looking for a third way, if you're looking to know God, pick up a book titled Knowing God.

[19:25] It's a great place to start. J.I. Packer writes this. What are we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life?

To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. What is the best thing in life?

Bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God. What of all the states God ever sees us in gives God most pleasure, knowledge of himself.

To God be the glory. Amen.