

Praying with Jesus — Part 1

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[0:00] In chapters 13 to 16 of the Gospel of John, Jesus has been talking to people about God. And now in chapter 17, it switches and Jesus starts talking to God about people.

And these two things always go together in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus teaching and Jesus praying. They should in ours too. And as we listen to Jesus pray, we see something that we thought we would never see before.

We catch a glimpse into the intimate relationship that exists between the Father and the Son and has existed for all eternity.

We catch a glimpse, a small yet tiny window into the inexhaustible life of the Holy Trinity, the one true God. And so it's an amazing thing to listen to Jesus pray in John chapter 17.

It's almost like stumbling across a burning bush as Moses did. We find ourselves in the presence of God and we, at the same time, recognize our unworthiness and we delight in our privilege.

[1:16] Because we are hearing Jesus, the eternal Son of God, talk to his Father. And so because of this, we're slowing down the pace of our sermon series a bit.

If you've been with us for the last four weeks, you know that we've covered one whole chapter per week, which is a bit ridiculous in any book, especially the Gospel of John.

So the next three weeks, we're going to focus on one chapter, John chapter 17. Tonight in particular, the first five verses. So let's take a moment once again to be still and listen to the word of the Lord read before we dig in.

John chapter 17. When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. Since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

[2:27] I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

This is the word of the Lord. If I were to summarize the first section of Jesus' prayer in a phrase, I would say, Glory gives life.

The glory of God gives life. And each one of those words just comes straight out of our text. And I could think of no niftier way of unpacking the passage than just simply taking each word in turn.

And trying to delve into some of the depths of it. Glory gives life. And so we begin with glory. Five times in our passage, does this word glory or glorify stare us in the face?

What is on Jesus' heart and mind as he approaches the dreadful hour of his trial and his crucifixion? It's glory. Verse one.

[3:37] Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son that the son may glorify you. Verse four. I have glorified you on earth.

Verse five. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence. As Jesus stares death in the face, because he knows it's coming. He knows the horrors that are about to come.

He does not pray, Father, protect me. Father, save me. Father, deliver me. But he says, Father, glorify me that I may glorify you.

You see, from beginning to end of the Gospel of John, the supreme passion of Jesus' life and ministry is the glory of God. And this is the central theme of the whole entire chapter of chapter 17 of Jesus' prayer.

And there are two things that we need to see about this glory. It's mutual and it's visual. It's mutual and it's visual. Notice how it's mutual. There's a two-directional movement of glory in Jesus' prayer.

[4 : 43] It's Jesus praying that the Father would glorify him and that he would glorify the Father. The Son and the Father seeking each other's mutual glory.

And so what we're shown in Jesus' prayer is that at the very heart of the glory of God is a living and dynamic relationship. The Father and the Son enjoying the mutual life and love and delight of one another for all eternity.

And what we see in every act of creation and redemption of God is that it flows from the fullness of this eternal relationship. That's what we see in John chapter 1.

Everything comes out of this. Every breath of life, every good and perfect gift, and every word and action of Jesus comes from the fullness of this relationship between the Father and the Son.

The desire to glorify one another is mutual. But it's also visual. Let me explain what I mean by visual. In the New Testament, the word glory can have two words.

[5 : 53] Hang on with me here. We're going to do a little bit of heavy lifting. It can mean two things, the word glory, in the New Testament. It can mean honor. It can mean visible splendor.

Honor, splendor. Now, the two shouldn't be pitted against one another because it's as Jesus seeks to honor the Father and live a life in total obedience and love to him that he actually ends up revealing the glorious splendor of the Father to the world.

So the two aren't antithetical. But in the Gospel of John, it's the latter, visible glory, that takes on major emphasis. And in order to understand this, we need to go back to John chapter 1.

And in order to understand John chapter 1, we have to go back to Exodus 34. So we're going to go on a little journey here. Exodus 34 is a tremendous passage where Moses says to God, right in the wake of the horrible idolatry of Israel, Moses says to God, God, show me your glory.

And God, as you guys know, responds to him and says, look, Moses, I can't do that. Because man, humanity cannot see my face and live.

[7 : 06] Cannot see my face and live. But God says, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'll put you in a cleft on a rock. I'll shield you from seeing the full weight of my glory. I'll pass by you and you'll basically see the afterburn of my glory.

And then I will proclaim to you who I am. And so that's exactly what happens. God goes by and the afterburn blaze of his glory, Moses catches a glimpse of.

And God says to Moses, I am the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger. And here it is. Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

So God's response to Moses wanting to see his glory is, Moses, you can't see it, but I will proclaim it to you audibly. And the glory that I'm proclaiming to you is the splendor of my character.

It's who I am as the one who is gracious and merciful and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. My glory is my character, Moses.

[8 : 15] A foot forward to John chapter one. John picks up on the theme of glory from that Exodus event. But what he tells us in John chapter one is that what Moses wanted to happen is actually happening now.

The audible glory of Exodus is now becoming visible in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. He says this in verse 14 of chapter one.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. You guys know it. And we have seen, note visible, we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is the glory of God made visible. It's what Moses asked for, but was never given. But notice how the glory of God is described. It says Jesus was full of grace and truth.

Now here's the really fascinating thing. That phrase, full of grace and truth, is the precise and exact Greek translation of the Hebrew words, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, that come from God's description of his character and glory in Exodus 34.

[9 : 33] The exact same thing. So what was proclaimed to Moses by word is now appearing in flesh and blood. What John wants us to see is that the glory of God's character, the visible splendor of who God is, is seen in a human person and a human life.

It says this man from Nazareth speaks. It's as he feels. It's as he thinks. It's as he relates.

It's as he talks. It's as he prays that we see the glory of God. That's why in verse 18 of chapter 1, John says, no one has ever seen God, but the only God who is at the Father's side, namely Jesus, he has made him known.

And this is the passion of Jesus' life and ministry. From beginning to end, is to make known the glory of God, the beauty of his character. And so it's no surprise that as he approaches the hour of

his death, he's saying, God, glorify me that I may glorify you.

The question is, how does this happen? How does Jesus do this? How do the Father and the Son reveal their splendor to the world? And this leads us to the second part of our phrase, glory gives. [11:05] Glory gives. The glorifying happens through the giving. God shows us his character as he generously gives to us.

And it's amazing to see this in the passage. The word glory shows up five times, but gift language is used four times in our passage. Three times in verse 2, listen to what he says.

Since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And then it shows up again in verse 4. I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Now, three out of four of these gift language terms are used in terms of the Father giving something to the Son. Look in verse 2. The Father gives authority over all flesh to his Son.

Meaning the right and the power to rule over all humanity. The authority to judge and say. He gives authority. Also in verse 2, the Father gives the Son a people.

[12:17] You pick up on that at the end of the verse 2. The Son gives eternal life to all whom you, the Father, have given him, the Son. Have you ever thought about that before?

Here, it's actually describing the fact that Christians and disciples of Jesus are a gift from the Father to the Son. Look at verse 6.

This shows up again. Jesus says, I have manifested your, the Father's name, to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me.

And they have kept your word. So, not only does the Father give the Son authority, he gives him a people. And finally, in verse 4, he gives them, he gives the Son a work to accomplish on behalf of this people.

Verse 4. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. Now, what is the work that God gave him to do?

[13:21] I think it's ultimately to go to the cross and take away the sins of the world. The reason why I think this is because that little word, accomplished, that Jesus uses in verse 4, is the exact same root word that shows up in John chapter 19, verse 30.

When Jesus is hanging on the cross, he's given his life away for the sake of the world, and he says, it is finished. It's the exact same root word as it is accomplished.

It is finished. So, what I think is happening on the cross as Jesus says to the Father, it is finished, is he is declaring, Father, I've done all the work that you've given me to do.

I've laid down my life fully and completely for you. I've glorified you. I've saved the ones that you gave me to save. And so we see that the Father gives the Son authority to accomplish a work for his people.

And the next question is, why? Why does God do this? It's simply so that people may receive life. Eternal life is our last word.

[14:36] Glory gives life. And we see that in verse 2. The purpose is to give eternal life to all people. This is the one gift that the Son offers to the world.

This is the one purpose of the Father giving everything to the Son. It's to give eternal life to people. And in verse 3, Jesus explains what eternal life is.

Verse 3. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Notice what eternal life is not. It's not living forever. It's not about quantity, it's about quality here. Eternal life is also not just a future reward that has nothing to do with the present. I think Jesus is talking about something that can be experienced right here and now. rather eternal life is intimate knowing.

[15:44] It's intimate knowing. And everything that goes into knowing, it entails friendship and fellowship and trust and personal relationship and faith.

And it's something that grows. But notice here how it's knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. You know how at the beginning of our prayer, the Father and the Son were mutually trying to glorify one another.

And now the eternal life that is given to human beings who receive Jesus is that they get brought into, they get swept up in that mutual relationship between the Father and the Son.

That's why it says knowing the one true God, the Father, and Jesus Christ who you have sent. Look at verse 26.

The very end of Jesus' prayer. He makes this explicit. He says, I made known to them your disciples your name, Father. And I will continue to make it known.

[16:52] Why? That the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them. And friends, I wish I had illustrations for this.

I wish I had stories for this. Maybe adoption is one of the best that we have. But what is happening here is so utterly breathtaking. The living God who for all eternity has been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect unity of love and joy and fellowship and glory who doesn't need creation for anything has created a world that rebelled against him for who knows why some ridiculous reason. And he has reached out in love sending his son into the world to lay down his life for rebellious humanity. So the very human beings that hate him could be redeemed and brought into the eternal joy and love and fellowship that God has had for all eternity.

It's all grace. It's all blessing. It's all love. And it completely points us to the inestimable gift of God's glory.

It shows us how wonderful and how beautiful he is that he is a God who didn't have to do this but he would do it and he has done. And how do you see the connection between God's glory and our life?

[18:31] God is glorified as his character is made known to the world and people are blessed with life as they come to know God's character. God's glory and our good converge perfectly.

And so I have to end by asking a really simple but probing question to all of us. Do you know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent?

do you really and intimately know him? Because he alone is where true life is found. And friends I don't have to tell you this but we human beings have a tenacious tendency to wander and look for life in all the wrong places.

some of you have spent your life trying to be moral and religious trying to obey all the rules do all the right things and be a good person and think that that's what's going to bring you life.

But it doesn't necessarily mean that you know God. You may have an orderly life but you may not have a life that's alive with God's grace and goodness. Some of you have spent your life trying to be smart and studious thinking that life is going to be found in writing lots of papers completing lots of degrees and gaining a lot of knowledge about a whole bunch of things.

[20:06] And sometimes for us Christians it's easy for this pursuit to actually be masked by the fact that maybe we're studying theology. So we're seeking to learn about God.

that all too often even our studies to learn about God can be tinged and ruined by our sinfulness so that we actually don't want to deal with God himself.

Some of us have spent our lives trying to be purposeful and successful. Working for accomplishments. Trying to rake in the paychecks and build up a reputation.

We're looking for life in all the wrong places. And some of us we just look for any experience or any adventure that will bring us some sense of emotional pleasure into life.

So we consume and consume experience after experience after experience looking for life in all the wrong places. I thought of this mere Christianity with C.S. Lewis he has this beautiful image of this.

[21:15] He says we are like children whose desires are not too grand and too high but too low and too tiny. He says we're like children who are making mud pies making pies in the mud when what is being offered to us is a glorious holiday at sea.

And then he says we are far too easily pleased. Pleased. And what God is offering to us is he is offering us an eternal life. An intimate knowing of the one true God and Jesus Christ that will bring us deep and lasting life that we can find in no other place.

The best thing for us to do is simply respond to Jesus' call. Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden because you've looked for life in all the wrong places and I will give you rest.

I speak these things to you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.