

John 17:24-26 “The Glory of Love”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. Thank you, ladies. You know, we pick offertory songs each week not to entertain you, not to emotionally manipulate you, to give more while they're singing, but to prepare our hearts to hear God's Word.

This is our last week in Jesus' prayer in John 17. It's often called His High Priestly Prayer. You know why? Because Jesus here is praying for us.

He is a great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me. And we're seeing that here.

You know what the high priest does, right? Every year he would go into God's presence on behalf of all God's people. See, because we were made to be with God, to be near Him and in His presence, but our sin messed up that relationship.

[1 : 23] It separated us from God. It kept us at a distance from Him. We need to be near God, don't we? But because of sin, someone has to go in for us, on our behalf, to talk to God for us so that we can be brought back into God's presence.

Jesus does that, doesn't He? He's the great high priest going before God for us as He prays, as He pays our penalty on the cross.

The curtain is torn and now we are welcomed back into the presence of God through our great high priest. So as long as our perfect, spotless righteousness is there in heaven, no tongue can bid us depart from God's presence.

Amen? That's why you need a high priest. Even today, Jesus, the great high priest, is still praying for us, right? He ever lives and pleads for me.

That is such good news. So as we read John 17, we are listening in to the one who restores our relationship with God and we're marveling.

[2 : 41] Every week we've been marveling that He prays for us, for us. He started by praying for shared glory in His relationship with His Father that He invites us into.

He prayed for us to know eternal life by knowing Him. He's prayed God would keep us from the evil one even as He sends us into the world.

He prayed, we saw last week, for our unity in Him. And now He closes by returning to our inclusion in that most glorious relationship.

Listen in one more time to our great high priest whose name is love, who still prays these things for you now. John 17 at verse 24.

Jesus prays, Father, I desire that they also whom You have given me may be with me where I am, to see my glory that You have given me because You loved me before the foundation of the world.

[3 : 44] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known that the love with which You have loved me may be in them and I in them.

Let's pray together. Jesus, we hear Your words as You prayed them. Amen. We ask by Your Spirit that You would root them deep in our hearts, that we might know Your love, new and fresh, and be changed by it.

We ask in Your name. Amen. How does God feel about you? You personally, right now, today? I've asked that question a lot over the years, one of those weird pastor questions. I've heard a variety of responses to that question. He's embarrassed, ashamed, probably disappointed.

Or some say, pretty good, I think. Even, I've heard some say, well, I guess He loves me.

[5 : 18] And I want you to know, for everyone here who would trust in Jesus, that last answer is always the correct one. except more clearly and more passionately and more completely than you could ever imagine.

God loves you. That's what our hearts need to hear loud and clear in this prayer. As we listen into Jesus, I want you to marvel that we are on His heart hours before going to the cross.

Remember, Jesus starts this prayer. What's He longing for? He's longing to return to the glory that He had with the Father in that perfect relationship.

Remember verse 5? Now, Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed. That fully known, fully loved relationship.

And remember, we saw a few weeks ago that Jesus was going to die to include us in that glorious relationship. That shared glory that they have is shared love.

[6 : 37] This morning, as Jesus prays, He concludes by praying for us to get caught up into that glorious love of the Trinity.

It's what makes us glorious and beautiful. Love is our word for the day, okay? Jesus has actually been thinking about His love for His people this whole night.

Remember when we started earlier this fall, if you've been here that long, in the upper room, Jesus says He's showing us the full extent of His love.

To the very end, He washes His disciples' feet. As He speaks to them, He promises not to leave them alone. He invites them to abide in Him, to trust in His Spirit.

And now before they leave and head to His betrayal and arrest and crucifixion, what's His final request of His Father? Look at verse 24. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am.

[7 : 48] My disciples and all who will believe in Me through their word, I want them to be with Me. This is the Son's love expressed in no uncertain terms.

What I desire is for them to be with Me. That's love. That's why with the holidays approaching, mothers everywhere are trying to figure out how to get everyone together in the same place, right? You know this. Whatever we do, whatever we eat, I just want to be with those I love. That's why we're so hurt as we miss loved ones.

Because no matter what we do, what we eat, we aren't with them. That's why couples falling in love often drive their friends crazy.

Because they just want to be together all the time. Love longs for presence, for being together. Now think with me about that for just a minute.

[8 : 59] It is not hard to understand why we would want to be with Jesus. I mean really. He is so tender. So loving.

So patient. So wise. So forgiving. So powerful. His disciples have heard Him speak inspirationally. They have eaten food that He has made miraculously. They have watched Him heal powerfully. Of course they are grieved. They're crushed that He's leaving them.

But on the other hand, why would He want to be with us? His disciples are about to abandon Him in His hour of need.

They fall asleep at the switch like selfish friends. They're going to leave Him alone right when He is overwhelmed. Yet He has just washed their feet.

[9 : 58] Yet He is now praying, Father, I want them, these guys, to be with me forever. And it's not just them, right? We're a part of this prayer too.

I mean, you and me who have done what? We've chased after other gods? Relentlessly we've done that. We've disobeyed Jesus' commands. We've even been ashamed to acknowledge that we know Him before others.

Y'all, our wanting to be with Jesus is understandable. His wanting to be with us is unbelievable.

Yeah, I mean, He probably actually doesn't want...

He doesn't mean it, does He? Actually, unbelievably, He does. This verse tells us why.

Who are we to Jesus? Look at verse 24. We're the ones His Father has given Him.

[11 : 00] In the original language, it's even stronger. It reads, Father, the ones You have given me, I want them, those ones, the ones You've given me, I want them to be with me too.

The ones You've given me. Why does Jesus love you? Because the person that He loves most and longest gave you to Him.

I have some artwork in my office that you would never find in a museum. I have some cards saved that anyone else would throw away.

I've had drawings on my refrigerator that no one else can even make out what they're of. And yet they are precious to me. Why?

Because they're gifts from someone I love deeply. I even have some of my girls' art and notes on old Father's Day cards in this old fireproof safe in my closet that my family makes fun of because nobody even has one of those and how would it help anyway?

[12:12] I so value them that that's what I put in the fireproof safe. Because they're gifts from someone I love. Friends, Jesus loves you.

He doesn't want you to be far from Him ever. Not because your life is a picture that has been colored in the lines perfectly. No, that's not it.

But because before the foundation of the world, His Father gave Him a special gift of these people to be His.

He gave it to His Son. He sent His Son to redeem us. He came to bring us back home. That is the glory of His eternal love that we look forward to, that we look forward to sharing in with Him, being with Him.

That is glory. Nothing could be better than that, right? It's what He promises to the thief on the cross. Today you will be with me in paradise.

[13:22] That's what makes it paradise. It's our hope, even in death, that the moment we are absent from the body, we are where? Present with the Lord.

It's the highlight of heaven. When the Bible talks about heaven, it builds all the way up and says, so we will always be with the Lord.

Jesus loves us. The Bible tells us so in many places. But Jesus is driving at home on this final night when He's got to say the most important thing.

I mean, an hour ago, He said, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. That's a lot. Earlier in this prayer, He says, He won't lose a one of us.

We are so precious to Him, such a treasured gift. And now He prays, and we hear His love pouring from His heart, us to be with Him forever.

[14:24] It's actually more here about love, though. In this eternal relationship of perfect love, we now hear about the Father's love. Verse 24.

Jesus' glory given from the Father because you loved me before the foundation of the world. What was God full of before creation?

Father, Son, Spirit, and in perfect relationship, best we can understand it, so much by nature love, so full of love in that relationship that it overflowed into a world, into a people, into a love story.

To write the love of God above would drain the oceans dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

Certainly, the Father loves the Son. That's what He's saying here, and we don't doubt that, that fully known, fully loved relationship.

[15:37] And when God loves, what does God do? God gives. In this case, we see He gives glory to Jesus. The essence of love is that self-giving relationship.

Once again, it is actually the glory that Jesus is returning to and that He's bringing us into with Him. It's that loving relationship. See, we believe that the Father loves Jesus, don't we?

His only begotten, perfectly obedient, always loving Son. Of course He loves Him. You know what we struggle to believe? We struggle to believe the Father loves us adopted, often disobedient, inconsistently loving sons.

But verse 23 says this, I in them and you in me that they, that's us, may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Loved them, my people, even as, just as, in the same way as you loved me, Jesus says.

[17:01] God delights in us, how? With an everlasting love, with a faithful, covenant, steadfast love that endures forever.

Even when we break His covenant, He loves us like that. It's a forgiving love that restores failures because of the Father's love that gives.

In our case, He gives us who? Jesus. You sent me, Jesus says. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called sons of God, loved even as He loves His Son.

See, His love is not based on perfection. It is based on His perfect character, His perfect love.

[18 : 05] It doesn't demand that the object of His love perform perfectly, color within the lines, keep life straight. It is as Sally Lloyd-Jones memorably describes it, a never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

You know this part of the love story well. Father and Son having covenanted together before the foundation of the world to pour out their love on undeserving sinners now enact their plan in human history.

In order to bring these many sons home to glory, God sends His only begotten Son to earth, to the cross, to demonstrate His own love for us in dying for us.

And Jesus, as He prepares to do that, as He sees the cross coming from His loving heart, pleads with His Father to bring us home to share in the delight of being loved by the Father.

It's what He wants us to experience because He knows how great it is. That His glorious relationship to which the Son knows He's returning soon, that's where we are headed. You and I, we're going to that same place.

[19 : 20] We can taste that future hope, that coming glory, even now, as we revel in God's love for us. I so love the picture of God's love that Ruth Graham shared at the funeral of her father, famous preacher, Billy Graham.

Ruth was newly divorced, already devastated, when she found herself in another relationship that her parents and her children told her was not good for her.

But she was far away from them and didn't want to listen. In her words, now, this is the rest of her story. Being stubborn, willful, and sinful, I married this man on New Year's Eve and within 24 hours, I knew I'd made a terrible mistake.

After five weeks, I fled. I was afraid of him. What was I going to do? I wanted to go talk to my mother and my father. Understandable, she would want that, right?

But would they want her? It was a two-day drive. Questions swirled in my mind. What was I going to say to daddy? What was I going to say to mother?

[20 : 41] What was I going to say to my children? I'd been such a failure. What were they going to say to me? We're tired of fooling with you. We told you not to do it.

You've embarrassed us. You don't want to embarrass your father, but you really don't want to embarrass Billy Graham, she said. And as I rounded the last bend in my father's driveway, my father was standing there waiting for me.

As I got out of the car, he wrapped his arms around me and he said, welcome home. There was no shame. There was no blame.

There was no condemnation. There was just unconditional love. And you know, my father was not God, but he showed me what God was like that day.

when we come to God with our sin, our brokenness, our failure, our pain, and our hurt, God says, welcome home.

[21 : 54] Unconditional love. Maybe Billy's love for Ruth is not that big of a stretch for you because you know you love your own kids.

So, yeah, God loves Jesus. How could he not? But will you believe on the authority of God's word and the prayer of Jesus that God loves you like that too?

Adopted child covered in the perfect spotless righteousness of the son? you don't want to embarrass your father.

You really don't want to embarrass Billy Graham. But you mostly don't want to embarrass God, do you? Have you felt that anybody else when you've failed again?

When you've tried it your own way? When you've failed to share his love? God knows it all.

Everything in my heart what will he say?

[23 : 10] Except God is not embarrassed. He's not ashamed to be called your God, your father because your real home where you will be perfect forever and he knows it because he's making it so is with him.

We don't need to doubt that he loves us because of what we feel. we don't need to search for love somewhere else. We don't need to fear that he's quit loving us because of our circumstances or our failures.

Fully known, fully loved. That is our story. The one who knows us best loves us most.

The father himself loves you. Jesus says the father himself loves you.

Jesus' prayer closes by bringing our love into this glorious divine love. Jesus has revealed the father that the fullness of his love for us in fact he will by his spirit especially keep making the father known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

[24 : 37] What does it look like when the love of God the very love that he has for his son Jesus is in us? It means we too welcome home people deserving to be pushed away.

It means as Jesus has already told his disciples to love one another as he has loved them that we give sacrificially washing one another's feet.

It means that we're present with others as we long to be present with Jesus to abide in him and in fact he says not just his love in us but his very self in us by his spirit producing what?

What fruit will the spirit produce? Where does it start? Do you know the first one? Love. Just a few minutes ago Jesus has said to them abide in my love as the father has loved me so have I loved you abide in my love.

Stay there beloved make your home here delight in the voice of your father singing you to sleep rest in the loving embrace of the son only then will love like this overflow from you to lots of other people even more to the point of Jesus' prayer here only then will you start to taste the glory that's to come it's the thing he most wants for you Jesus is continuing even now even in moments like this to make the love of God known to you so that you become a part of the relationship of love that he prayed for you to know forever he's praying it because he and his father planned this from all eternity this is the relationship that you were made for it's the relationship you were redeemed for you don't need to leave here this morning thinking of how much you must love you need to leave here this morning thinking of how much you are loved that's where it starts that's where it comes from his spirit because see no matter what's going on in your life right now no matter how good it is no matter how hard it is it's another part of the great love story that's been going on since before the foundation of the world this is the part where

[26 : 59] God is continuing the good work that he began in you in terms of the great love story he has redeemed you and now he is remaking you into a perfectly pure radiant bride to give you to his son forever so that he can keep loving you perfectly and forever Jesus prays that you will be with him to see his glory the glory of love that we get a glimpse of here and then we get a more glistening picture of in revelation I want to read you just a few verses I want you to listen with longing and with joy for what's to come and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their

God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and he who was seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new and an angel says come I will show you the bride the wife of the lamb and he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God its radiance like a most rare jewel like a jasper clear as crystal you know who he's talking about that's you that's you and me shining sparkling as we never have before as we can't imagine feeling see the picture here is of the father overflowing with love as he brings the bride down the aisle to give her to his son in his eyes the son's eyes are overflowing with tears because his heart is overflowing with love for his bride for us for us the ones he redeemed the greatest gift of love ever and he's received and he's overwhelmed one more section and I saw no temple in the city for its temple that's our temple we're the city the bride its temple is the

Lord God the almighty and the lamb and the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the lamb do you hear that do you know why you're sparkling there why you're shining so brilliantly it's because the God of glory and of love is shining on you bringing you into this glorious relationship because he wants to be with you forever just as Wesley looked down the aisle last week and with tears of joy and love in his eyes as his bride Emma came down to him that's how Jesus feels about you having you being given to be with him it's the love story of the whole

Bible it's the whole thing and then not just does Jesus feel that way but the father having given his bride to his son runs away while the ceremony is still going on if you will to welcome us home to

prepare the fatted calf so that he can celebrate with us and pour out his love upon us too that's how excited he is God goes and prepares a feast of love for us revelation calls that feast of love the marriage supper of the lamb at that supper the bridegroom who loves us is also the one sacrificed to bring us home he makes everything new for his bride he wipes away our tears he clothes us in white he loves us so deeply so passionately that we never want to leave each other's side forever so this morning with a marriage supper of the lamb in the future what we're doing is we're rehearsing okay it's a wedding theme we're rehearsing for the marriage supper here right here at this table the great high priest whose name is love is also the great sacrificial lamb and though we get only a taste here of the feast of love though we see him only through a glass dimly we look forward to the day when we see him face to face and we become like him because we see him in his glory as he is we become fully known and fully loved then even as he now fully knows us and fully loves us that's where we're headed beloved what glory

Jesus told us to do this to celebrate this feast in remembrance of him the same night he prayed for us he took bread and broke it and he gave it to his disciples as I ministering in his name give this bread to you he said take and eat this is my body given for you because I love you in the same manner after supper he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes you proclaim he loves me so much that he gave his life for me if you are his beloved your heart is pounding right now according to your own personality in very different ways your heart should be pounding with his love for you so come and eat and rehearse for the feast of love that you will share with him forever if this all sounds nice to you but that's not really how you feel you're not sure at all that you need

[34 : 33] Jesus love or that Jesus could really love you then don't come and take these elements this morning we don't want to pretend that just this little taste of it would be what would fulfill you we want you to know Jesus first you're welcome to come and observe to come and pray with us or to sit where you are and just consider the love of Jesus shown in its full extent right here laid out before you and a father who sent his son to say to you welcome home let's pray and then we'll celebrate together Jesus thank you for this reminder of your love would it be a taste of glory to us because there's nothing better than sitting with you and soaking up your love use common elements for that for doing something very eternal in our hearts that we would actually believe that you love us like this and that we would look forward to seeing that and knowing that fully one day we ask in your name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org