

John 17:1-5 “Glimpses of Glory”

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Amen. I want to confess something to you all as we get started this morning. I don't sing like that.
- Nor do I play the piano like that. But you knew both of those things. I want to confess something else, which is that I oftentimes will walk around this building in the middle of the week.
- It's dark and quiet. And all of a sudden, coming out of the sanctuary will be the sound of this piano coming from a room that's otherwise empty.
- And I'll stop and listen in to DJ playing beautifully.
- [1 : 0 8] It's inspiring, isn't it, to sit there and listen in and even to worship. Especially to someone who plays the piano like that.
- Especially if you are one who does play the piano, but just like a couple of chords with a couple fingers at a time. Imagine for a minute that DJ was your piano teacher.
- And he'd been telling you how to play this song. Telling you that when you played it right, it was going to be so beautiful. But you just couldn't quite hear it when you sat practicing playing with a couple fingers at a time.
- It just didn't sound great. And then you walked by here one day and he happened to be playing your song. And you got to listen in and it was incredible and it was wonderful.
- And as you listened in, you thought, I just want to play like that. It would be beautiful. That's a little bit of what's going on in John 17.
- [2 : 1 9] It's a little bit of what I want us to experience with Jesus this morning. We're at the end of the upper room discourse. Jesus' final teachings to his disciples before heading to his betrayal and arrest and crucifixion.
- But here, Jesus stops talking to them. He's not talking to them anymore. He starts talking to his father.
- And they get and we get this morning to listen in to this amazing prayer, to this intimate time between son and father.
- Jesus has taught his disciples how to pray, right? We're going to hear some more echoes of that prayer that we prayed earlier this morning in this passage. Jesus has taught them how to love God, how to live in a relationship with him.
- But now he is enjoying that relationship himself. And he's letting us, if you will, listen in. What a glorious opportunity that is.
- [3 : 2 8] I tell you that because we're about to spend a few weeks listening in. Looking at this longest prayer of Jesus recorded in the whole Bible.
- Hearing what's on his heart to talk with his father about as he nears the end of his life on earth. And there is so much here. But it's really important that you're not listening for, you know, three easy things to do to make your life better.

Specific instructions for our lives. There will be some practical lessons that we can glean along the way for sure. But mostly that's not the point.

Imagine walking back there and hearing the piano music come out. We are listening in to the master playing. Right? To the teacher of prayer praying.

We are glimpsing the glory of this divine relationship between father and son. And we'll actually see that part of the glory of this relationship is that you and I are invited into it.

[4 : 39] So what should happen is our hearts should be inspired to awe, to wonder, to anticipation of enjoying such glory ourselves to playing like that.

Our hearts should be comforted by the reality that Jesus prays for us. That gets clearer through this prayer but we'll see it even here at the beginning. Our hearts should be fortified that we don't go on the mission Jesus sends us on without his divine presence and protection.

I'd encourage you over the next few weeks, sit down a few times, read all of John 17 at once. Meditate on that. We're going to move slowly to catch some glimpses of glory.

Today, just the beginning, John 17 at verse 1, God's holy word. 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.

[6 : 00] And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Thus far, God's word.

Let's pray together. Father, even reading these few words, such knowledge of who you are is too wonderful, too lofty for me to attain.

How high above us, we confess, are your thoughts and your ways. And so, Holy Spirit, we ask humbly and boldly that you would lift us to see a glimpse of your glory.

And we ask in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Before we dig into what Jesus prays for, let's not miss, as we've been talking this morning, the one to whom Jesus prays.

[7 : 23] Jesus says, Father. Now, maybe we're used to that. It's not surprising because Jesus teaches us to pray, our Father. But that was not at all the way good Jews addressed Yahweh in prayer in these days.

It is, however, the way Jesus almost always addresses his prayers. There's a personal warmth and intimacy there in the term of address.

Later on in this prayer, Jesus will add Holy Father and Righteous Father. But six times Father because, see, his Father is not some vague idea, some mystical force, but rather the unique personal king of all who's totally in control.

He is the only true God, verse 3, who therefore always hears. He's the judge who will unfailingly do what is right.

And so into the chambers of this glorious ruler, the Son comes boldly and personally. We're listening in, right?

[8 : 37] And what we hear is Jesus is talking to someone he knows, to someone he trusts, to someone he honors, his Father.

And perhaps the greatness of the Father makes what the Son prays for even more remarkable. What's on Jesus' heart in this moment of all moments is glory.

Actually, it's shared glory. Notice verse 1. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

Again, verse 5. Now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

This may be the 396th time in the Gospel of John where we've seen evidence Jesus understood himself to be God, that he was aware of his own deity.

[9 : 47] I'm going to point it out again. No other good person, good teacher would ask to share God's glory. In fact, by definition, the God of the Hebrew Bible will not give his glory to another, Isaiah 42.

Jesus knows something significant. He's already told us. He and the Father are one. That therefore praying for the Father to give him glory doesn't subtract from the Father's glory because they are one and the same.

In fact, they have hatched this eternal plan of salvation together that as the Son accomplishes it, here shortly will bring glory to both Father and Son, who like the only true God says, he gives eternal life.

No one else does that. But eternal life, that's where we're going to be next week. I can't wait to peer into the glory of that eternal life. We'll come back.

But for now, just notice that to pray for God's glory doesn't mean that we're not also praying for ourselves.

[11 : 02] God's glory is inextricably connected to our good. Sometimes we forget that. Jesus is praying for us by praying for God's glory because he knows that they're tied together.

Boy, if I really grasped that reality, how my prayers might change. Jesus starts here the way he taught us, right? He taught us, Father, hallowed be thy name.

Holy, set apart, glorious. Remember, glory is weighty, that it matters, that he's worthy, that he carries ultimate significance.

Jesus is saying, Father, show me to be worthy so that in so doing, it will show you as worthy, and in so doing, it will bless these people I love with life, eternal life.

They're good in my glory. At the same time, when you come to pray for yourself or for someone you love, do you start by praying for God's glory?

[12 : 17] I'll be honest, I've prayed a lot more prayers for my own comfort or success or fame than I have for God's glory.

I was praying recently for a vacation to go just the way I wanted, right? It was good. There were good desires that I had, and I wanted it all to go that way.

The problem was it wasn't going that way. And as I prayed, God helped me realize that he knew better what we really needed.

I could pray for us to see him as glorious together rather than for the weather and my health and my schedule being controlled my way. That was actually okay for me.

It was good. Father, forgive me for my short-sightedness. Father, help us remember you are so good. You love us so much that praying for your glory is praying for our good, for our heart to be directed toward the highest good, for our eyes to be fixed on what really matters, for our lives to be lived with true purpose.

[13 : 33] Father, help us. But when you pray that way, it doesn't mean that it will immediately involve your success and comfort, that kind of it being good for us.

It's not what Jesus is experiencing. He clearly has in mind glory for himself that is shared with his Father in two different ways here. The first is in the first verse.

It appears to be actually, if we think about what we think about his glory, it appears to be the opposite of that. It's the glory of the cross. Where instead of being lifted up, it appears he'll be beaten down.

Where instead of being crowned with worthy jewels, it appears he'll be crowned with shameful thorns. Where instead of being praised for his victory, it appears he'll be scorned for his defeat.

Somehow that's glory? How do we know that Jesus is talking about the cross here at first other than Jeremy told us earlier and we believe him? Well, we've been reading John long enough to recognize that that word hour, right?

[14 : 52] We've seen it so many times now, haven't we? The hour has come. On so many occasions, it was not yet Jesus' hour. His hour had not yet come, but now it has.

Remember back to chapter 12, just a few days ago in Jesus' life where we'll see Jesus' hour and his glory connected again.

John 12 at verse 23, Jesus says to him, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And he explains that for that to happen, he's actually going to have to die.

For the hour of his glory to come, it's gonna mean death. He's gonna lose his life. And as troubling as the thought of that is to Jesus, he reaffirms his commitment to his Father's purpose in sending him for this very hour.

It's why he's here. What does he say? Father, glorify your name. Right? All the way through this upside down idea of the cross being the way to glory is repeated from the lips of Jesus.

[16 : 11] It's so important to him. It is at the heart of Christianity. So I just want us to glimpse the glory of the cross for just a couple minutes. We can't see it all, but just a few ways we see glory in the cross of Jesus.

For instance, glory in that on the cross, God's sacrificial love is on display. There is no other deity in any other religion that offers to humanity life from his own death, blessing through his own cursing.

And notice how that costly sacrifice is shared glory for Father and Son. The Son endures the excruciating agony.

He's the one who suffers death itself. What a sacrifice. While the Father endures the grief of sending his Son to suffer, of turning his face away from the one he has always loved and most longs to rescue.

What a sacrifice. Most of us can't even imagine making either of those sacrifices. And yet in the moment, when he is lifted up, when the eyes of the world are on the King of creation, he sacrifices himself to stand in their place.

[17 : 38] It is glorious because he is so far beyond us that somehow he's not too good for us. It boggles our minds. It is God's glory.

It makes him wonderfully worthy of all honor and praise. Love, so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

It makes us want to sing, not just think about it. And at the very same time, the cross also displays the glory of God's justice, doesn't it?

Sin must be punished. Evil, oppression, and abuse will be dealt with, not overlooked. Anyone who can guarantee that for me is surely glorious, right?

Do you feel that? But again, it's shared. The Son sees sin as so requiring just punishment that he becomes sin for us on the cross, that he bears our sin in his body on the tree.

[18 : 44] It would seem so much easier to just make light of sin, right? But no way, says Jesus. And the Father, I mean, come on, certainly there is some other way, a way that would spare your Son, the agony.

But we see his perfect justice gloriously displayed, even as it's his Son who takes the sin on himself. It is the Father's will to crush him, to put him to grief for our iniquities, for my sin, for your sin.

No way. If the Son's not getting out of that, will you or me or the one who has mistreated us get away with it before this just God.

But when the Son takes our punishment, justice smiles and asks no more.

He has brought us home to God and we could just keep going without even leaving the cross, the glorious wisdom of God to plan this way of restoring our relationship, right?

[19 : 55] The glorious presence of God that he's right there in the midst of the brokenness of his people. The glorious grace of God and the forgiveness and life that are purchased through Jesus' death.

On and on. This is what Jesus is praying for. It is the first thing on his heart when he prays, Father, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

To paraphrase it, he's saying, Father, sustain me too and strengthen me through the cross. Can you believe this?

Are you getting a glimpse into the glory? This is what's coming out of Jesus' heart. Father, help me go to that cross where I'll be lifted up to show the wonder of our love even as I bear the weight of sin and lay down my life to give life to others.

That's what he's praying. Do you glory in that? My sin held him there but his dying breath has brought me life.

[21 : 08] I won't boast in anything else except the cross of Jesus Christ. And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, how do you feel?

I scarce can take it in. How great thou art. Does that well up in your heart? God, how great you are. I want you to know if you came here wondering this morning, does God love me?

And maybe some of you did. If you came here wondering if God was worthy of your worship, if you came here wondering if he was able to meet you in the mess of your life and love you and change your life, look no further than the cross.

How great he is. His glory is there. His love and justice meet. He comes to meet you in the cross and he wants you to see his glory and feel his embrace there.

He loves you. That wasn't in the notes. I got lost. Since we've seen the Father gloriously answer that prayer of his Son, we can trust that he answers this next one too.

[22 : 25] Jesus says in verse 4, I am finishing all that you sent me here to do. Verse 5, and now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

There's that shared glory again, isn't it? You see it there? Let me paraphrase this prayer too because it's a little bit different even though some of the words are the same. Father, all I have done and said has put your majestic greatness and your pure goodness on display.

So now bring me home to the perfect life with you that I have known since eternity past. Now I think we can all understand Jesus' longing for that, can't we?

Doesn't it sound much more comfortable than the cross to wear the crown? This that he's talking about is his resurrection, his ascension, his return to the glory of heaven as the prince of heaven is crowned in glory for all time over all things and that is all true but let me make sure we catch what part of that is especially on Jesus' heart here in verse 5.

It sticks out even more in the original Greek that the glorifying that Jesus is asking for here is all about his relationship with the father himself.

[24 : 01] The words just pile up. He's saying glorify me alongside you, with you. The glory God, you know, the one before the world alongside you, with you, he keeps saying.

He's not asking merely for resumption of his divine powers and riches, comforts and control. That's not the primary thing on his heart. Rather, it's the most glorious of all of heaven's glories.

It is the restoration of the eternal relationship between father and son. It's more about that relationship than it is his location.

Now talk about peeking into something that we can only glimpse. I mean, you could daydream on this relationship all afternoon.

We're never going to plumb the depths. Martin Lloyd-Jones writes, Jesus shared in full the ineffable, indescribable glory of the eternal Godhead.

[25 : 09] As a result, Sinclair Ferguson says that, of course, he's homesick for his father's house. He misses that perfection of relationship.

I don't want to pretend that our minds can comprehend this, but perhaps if we acknowledge we're just scratching the surface, Christy and I enjoyed a great day together on Friday.

Sitting together, hiking together, learning new things about one another because after 20 years, there is still so much that we don't know. But even that wonderful day, one of the best we've had in a while, there were moments of disagreement, misunderstanding, even disappointment.

And of course, the greatest disappointment that after just a few hours, we eventually had to go our separate ways. Here, however, is a relationship of perfect love with complete knowledge, fully known, fully loved, yet simultaneously, somehow it's infinitely rich in things to learn about one another.

And all those things are shared together with absolute unity of mind and heart, total delight together in ultimate goodness. And all of those things without any of the earthly things Jesus is experiencing here.

[26 : 43] Can you imagine a relationship with no time limits outside of time? No jealousy.

No weariness. No storms. No betrayal. No separation. Ever. Oh.

Can't you feel that must have been the most grievous part for both father and son about that plan of salvation that they hatched together in eternity past?

Can you feel what it must have felt like? That separation of the inseparable? The break in the unbroken relationship?

The father turns his face away from the apple of his eye. It's what Jesus knows he's walking toward at the cross.

[27 : 46] And he longs for that return home to glory to his father. He prays for it here. He is longing to return to the one who loves him perfectly.

To the one who shares with him all glory all power all grace together with him. To the one who will never cease to enjoy walking and talking with him upholding creation with him forgiving and redeeming people with him governing the rulers of the earth with him righting wrongs with him raising the dead to life with him forming people into his glorious image with him that's what they do together I mean as you think about that is there any way that Jesus resists this ultimate crown of glory for one more moment?

It's on his heart it's right there before him won't he just head straight home? Would you blame him if he did? What a glorious relationship awaits him there he can have it Jesus understandably longs and prays for that glory but he refuses to return to that glory without you did you hear that?

he refuses to return to that glory without you which is why his glory involves the cross too he indicates this in verses 2 and 3 we're going to soak in the glory of them next week but notice how even already as he prays for glory he prays for us it's how he shares glory with the father at the cross as he gives eternal life to his people it will come up again at the end of the prayer when he prays for us to be with him and share the glory the father shared with him before the world began that glory I told you all this relationship that we've been just peering into wondering at is a relationship that somehow gloriously we ourselves get caught up in we have to be a part of it we get brought into the family to call the God of glory our father we get that because of the one time in the whole bible that Jesus prays and does not call

God father my God my God why have you forsaken me Jesus cries on the cross as the father turns his face away from the sin bearing savior and wounds which mar the chosen one bring many sons to glory to glory to a glorious relationship where we are fully known and fully loved forever because the father glorified the son and the son glorified the father and they shared with us their glory glory this sacrament is a holy sign that Jesus gives to us so that we'll taste just a little bit of that he wants to remind us this morning of the glory of the cross that nothing else matters more or is more worthy of shaping your life today and this week and forever than his cross

[31 : 40] Jesus gave it to his followers for that purpose the same night that he prayed about the cross he was then betrayed to the cross and he took bread and he broke it and he gave it to his disciples as I ministering in his name give this bread to you he said take eat this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me and in the same way 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 proclaiming the Lord's death means that you see God's glory in the cross his unbending justice his sacrificial love for you and you say his glory is my grace

Jesus is my only hope of knowing this God and enjoying this glory if that's your profession this morning if you are a baptized member of any church that preaches salvation relationship with God by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone then you come and glory in the cross again as Jesus invites you to come and eat if you don't trust in Jesus if you're not yet sure what you believe about Jesus if maybe you have said what you think about Jesus and you love him but right now you're unwilling to let go of sin in your life or to reconcile with a brother or sister for Jesus' sake then don't come take these elements this morning pray where you are come up here with us we'd love to pray with you consider the gracious offer of Jesus consider coming to him for the first time or coming back to him and sharing his glory he invites you into that through his cross let's pray and we'll celebrate it together holy spirit who meets with us here so that we know the grace of Jesus and the love of our father so use these common elements for a holy purpose in our hearts that we can't manufacture but you do because you love us meet us here that we might know you more and worship you more amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org