

The Hour of Greatest Significance (2)

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[0 : 00] Another short reading, this time from John 17 and verses 1 to 5. 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. Thus you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 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. Now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

We've made a start on looking at this wonderful chapter and had looked just at the very first few words of it, where last time we saw the posture that Jesus adopted, where he lifted up his eyes to heaven, some of the spiritual significance of that, and also the significance of how he addressed God as his Father, taking us right into the very depth of the Trinity that our God is, and how important that is in the understanding we have of our redemption as matters worked between the Father and the Son, not excluding the Holy Spirit as well.

And now Jesus begins his requests. As we come to these verses at the beginning, verses 1 to 2, he begins to request certain things of God.

[1 : 26] But punctuating the requests, you have statements such as in this verse itself, and all the way through the prayer, you have wonderful statements that accompany the requests, and that help us to really understand something of what the requests are actually about.

What he says, first of all, here is by way of a statement. He says, Father, the hour has come. That's a statement before he goes on then to ask God, the Father, to glorify the Son.

So what does he mean by the hour has come? Now we think of an hour ourselves mostly in terms of hours of the clock. Well, that's not absent from here.

That's not the main emphasis in it. We think, for example, of the hour that was appointed for this particular worship to begin tonight, that hour beginning at 7.30.

And when the Lord here said, Father, the hour has come, it's more than just the hour of the day or the time of the day. It really amounts pretty much to saying, Father, things are now at the stage of fulfillment.

[2 : 34] This is, in fact, the very thing that has been looked forward to from eternity in God's plan of salvation, all the way through the Old Testament promises, all the way through the ways in which the coming of the Savior was anticipated and prophesied about and foretold and expected and believed in, all the way through these centuries.

And now that that's happened and the Savior is in the world, it has come to the very center, the very kernel of that plan of salvation, where the Son is going to die on the cross.

It is going to arise from the dead and go back to glory. So it's God's purpose and God's will in terms of his plan of salvation coming to reach its fruition in the way in which it's going to be completed in the sense in which Jesus' work is foundational to it.

Now you can contrast in chapter 7 and verse 30 where you find a contrast with this, where those who were coming to arrest him were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour was not yet come.

It was not that moment yet. And though he was in the world, he had come into the world, he had taken our nature to himself. He was obedient in that nature to the Father up to this moment.

[4 : 06] But the hour had not yet come where the crux of this matter, of his mission, had arrived. But it is now arrived. No one laid a hand on him then because his hour was not yet come.

Not that they understood that. But we are very much aware that Jesus knew and that Jesus himself was fully aware that God's theme of salvation had a process of development.

And now it was reaching its fruition. It was reaching the moment of fulfillment through his death on the cross. So that's what he means by the hour has come.

This stage of salvation is now at the point where what was anticipated in God's purpose, in God's plan, in God's prophecies is now here.

It has arrived. It's there. It's imminent. And from that statement, the Lord then moved on to a request. Father, glorify your son so that or that your son may also glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

[5 : 22] And we're going to confine our thoughts tonight to the remainder of those two verses. This is the request that Jesus is making of the Father. Father, glorify your son so that the son may glorify you in turn.

One thing leads on to the other. Now, in John's gospel, there are two aspects to this word glorify. Because as we see in John's gospel, as you see this word used in John's gospel, look at, for example, verse 4 of the same chapter.

I glorified you. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And if you then compare chapter 12 and verse 28, and he says, now is my soul troubled.

This is again Jesus speaking. But what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. It's a question. But for this purpose, I have come to this hour.

And he says, Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. That ties in with verse 4 of chapter 17 in the sense in which glorify is used there.

[6 : 36] And if you go to chapter 16 and verses 13 to 14, we read as follows. This is Jesus talking about telling the disciples about the spirit coming, the Holy Spirit coming.

And he said, when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. But he will not speak on his own authority. But whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, or he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

These three passages, here in verse 4, chapter 12, verse 28, and that one, chapter 16, glorify there has the sense of bringing honor to something or bringing honor to someone or bringing praise to someone.

So when Jesus is saying glorify your son, he is saying more than that to it. But that sense of glorify also is included, bring honor to.

[7 : 35] And that's what he means by glorifying the Father. And that's very much the same as when you and I speak about bringing glory to God. But when we pray that we may glorify God, whether it's at worship or in our service, that's what we actually set out to achieve.

That's what our aim is. That's what we are burdened to do above everything else. To glorify God, to bring honor to God's name, to bring praise to his name, to have his name exalted.

That's the sense in which glorify is used in the first aspect of it there in these chapters and these verses. But then we need to add verse 5 of this chapter 17, because you notice what it's saying there.

Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. So there is obviously another aspect to glorify than just to bring glory or praise to God.

What he's asking for here is for God the Father to reestablish him back, if you like, to reestablish him where he has been or was from all eternity with the Father.

[8 : 48] In other words, it's really taking us back there to chapter 1 and verse 1 of this very gospel. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, the closest possible fellowship, and the Word was God.

And it speaks, as you know, about how all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made that was made. So what he's now saying is glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

Now that is the glory that belongs to God as God. That's the glory that Jesus had before he came into the world. That is the status that he had before he became human, before he entered into our nature, before he began the work of redemption in this world as the servant of God.

And that second aspect of glorify is what he's now asking God the Father to bring about. Father, glorify your Son. And glorify your Son in your own presence, Father, with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

That is quite an amazing thing, that Jesus, conscious of who he was, conscious of where he was, conscious of what he was doing, there he is in the upper room with the disciples, having taught them what you find in chapters 13, 14, 15.

[10:14] Now coming to this prayer, and the disciples listening in to this great prayer of Jesus as he intercedes for them, and then proceeds in the chapter to intercede for the whole of his believing people.

It's an amazing thing for them. It's an amazing thing for them and for us to read it now, that here it is in anticipation of his death on the cross, knowing that that is imminent, knowing that the hour has come, knowing what that is going to involve.

Now he's saying, Father, glorify your Son. Glorify me in your own presence. There is a clear end in view.

And the clear end in view is the glory he had with the Father before anything was created. But you see, there's an additional factor we must take into account.

It is the glory of God, the glory he had with the Father before the world was. But he's not leaving humanity behind. He's not leaving his human nature behind. He's not leaving that which he took and joined to his divine nature.

[11:19] He is going to be glorified as the God-man. He's going to be glorified after he has finished the work on earth. But nevertheless, it is as the God-man, as this mediator, as the saviour in the entirety of his person and of his two natures together, he is going to be glorified at the Father's side, in the Father's presence, with the glory that he had before the world was.

Now, I can't explain that to you. If you can explain it to me, I'd be very grateful. But it's got such dimensions to it. How can the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, how can he enter and bring our humanity into that status and into that glory?

But we're thankful that he did. We're thankful that it means that what we see in the glorification of Jesus is far more than just giving him honor and giving him a status that becomes him in consequence of his work.

It also is, in a sense, an anticipation for ourselves of where human nature is going to end up in its glorified state.

Not joined as it is in Jesus to the person of the Son of God. But nevertheless, that is the terminus for God's redeemed people, made like unto their saviour.

[12:48] And in the presence of God, with the glory that is shown forth in the glorified humanity of Jesus.

They shall be like him. They shall see him as he is. And as Paul put it in Romans, they are going to be glorified, exalted to the status to bear the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Part of the meaning of brotherhood means that we come to occupy nothing less than glory that mirrors the glory of Christ's glorified humanity.

So there's the addition of glorify me in your own presence. He'll be glorified as the God man, as the mediator, as the saviour.

He is praying that God will take him and will glorify him in that status with the glory he had before the world was. Glory which was prophesied of, the honor which was prophesied of in the Old Testament as well.

[14:04] But then you see, it must actually include the events towards that glory, towards that exaltation to glory in what Jesus is actually praying for here.

In other words, we can't actually leave out the cross and the death of the cross and the resurrection. And then his exaltation in when he's when he's praying, Father, glorify me, glorify your son, glorify me with the glory that I had with you.

It's not as if he's taking a hop from where he is now and just hopping over the things that are ahead of him immediately and asking the Father to take him into that glory.

He's including the death and the terrible suffering that that involves spiritually as well as physically or so than physically.

So we can say that his prayer really amounts to something like we could put it in these words, I think. Father, take your son through these various stages.

[15:13] Take your son through the cross, through death, through the grave, through resurrection, through exaltation, to the glory I had with you before the world was.

He is conscious of coming to face these issues, coming to have to go through these issues. And it's not that Jesus was carried through them as if he did not himself exercise and exert his own obedience, his own willingness, his own actions.

But what he is asking is, Father, take me there, glorify me with your own self, glorify me, despite or through the cross and the death and the resurrection on into glory.

You see, for John, this really is pretty much one process. John never thinks of Christ's obedience prior to the cross or the cross itself or the resurrection or the subsequent exaltation as if they're actually separate from each other.

They are so closely tied that for John, there is, in fact, almost, you could say, a glorifying of the son and honoring of the son in that sense of it. Through all of these events and these stages and these experiences that he goes through.

[16:40] And for John, the whole process really is summed up in he came from the father and he was going back to the father. It's an indivisible process. Although it contains these various stages, they are not to be extracted, each of them, and taken and looked at as if they were just isolated in themselves.

They belong to this one wonderful unity and unit of God's purpose and God's plan in Christ for us. And that's such a wonderful emphasis in itself.

But then what he's asking is not merely for his own sake. He doesn't just say glorify your son.

With the glory I had with you before the world was. He goes further and says glorify your son that the son also may glorify you. You see, that's the next thing that he has to ask for or state.

It's with this purpose, with this end in view. Because God, the son, is not seeking of God the father. That merely that he will be glorified with the father with the glory he had before the world was.

[17:55] There's a certain end in view in addition to that. And it is the glorifying of the father.

Because the father's honor and the father's praise, the father's name being exalted is so precious to Jesus the son.

And everything he does is with a view to exalting the father's name, to glorifying the father. Glorify your son that the son also may glorify you.

But even that's not an end in itself. Because he goes on in verse 2, since you have given him authority over all flesh, that's over all human life, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. In other words, the son is conscious of the fact at this stage, at this very end stage, if you like, as it comes towards the cross. At this climax of his obedience in this world, he is conscious here as he prays that God the father has given him authority over all flesh, so that the son will give eternal life to all that the father has given him.

There's just so much built into this. And it's one of the reasons we're really taking it slowly. Surely, I hope you're, I'm sure you agree, this is one of the chapters in scripture that you simply have to take slowly.

[19:20] Because every single verse is just packed with meaningful and precious truths about the Lord himself, his person, his work of redemption, his relationship with the father.

And later in the chapter, his relation with his church. There's so much crammed into even one verse, as we're seeing tonight. What he's saying is, Father, glorify your son, that your son may glorify you, even as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he, the son, may give eternal life to as many as you have given him.

In other words, he is conscious that God the father has given him a people to save, that they were given to him before he came into the world. Of course, you find that elsewhere in the Bible as well. I'll quote it in a minute from Ephesians chapter one and verses three to six. But what he's saying here, if we confine it to that meantime, is that as Jesus seeks to be glorified by the father, to return to the glory, to be exalted to that status.

He is doing that seeking that the father will be glorified in that, but only because it's connected with the son giving eternal life to those that the father has given him.

[20:32] In other words, the glorifying of the father, the honoring of the father is not simply in the exalting of the son to the status that he had before he came into the world. But with a view as the mediator to then give eternal life to those that the father has given him.

You see how many precious truths there are in that. God the father gave to the son his own elect people in order that he might come into this world on their behalf and for them and in their place and die for them on the cross.

And again, rise from the dead and return to the glory he had with the father before the world was. That's what he says in verse 11. Holy father, keep them in your name.

Those whom you have given me that they may be one even as we are one. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am.

Father, in verse 24, that to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. From this, you can see that God gave the son a people to save.

[21 : 47] As Jesus came into the world, they were already given to him as their surety, as their guarantor, as the one in whom they would be secured.

We said the last time when we began studying the chapter that one of the great things to remember about it is how it bears upon our own assurance of salvation.

Because our assurance of salvation is far more to do with what we are in Christ than what we do for Christ. It is as we are found in him that we come to the foundation of our assurance.

Really, that's what it's saying, isn't it? They were in him as he came into the world. They had been given to him as he came into the world from all eternity. He was acting for them when he came into the world.

It was for them that he obeyed what the father had given him to obey. It's for them that he went to the cross willingly. It's for them that he died. It's for them that he rose again.

[22 : 48] It's for them that he went back to glory. It's all about those that the father has given him, had given him. Here he is praying that God the father will glorify him.

That he may be glorified in return. So that those who were given to Jesus may be given eternal life and consequence of his return to glory.

Who would have thought that one verse would actually have from eternity to eternity in it? And so much that's packed into that for our spiritual well-being and for our assurance.

It's really remarkable how often the Bible brings us the greatest truths for the most practical ends. It's not simply for an intellectual study or exercise.

So that's part of it. And there's nothing wrong with that. But there is something wrong with that if that's where it ends. Because every single aspect of this is towards our practical living as Christians.

[23 : 59] Towards our serving God as Christians. Towards our being those people for whom he died and rose again and went back to glory. For us to demonstrate that we are the people that were given to him in order that he would carry us throughout all his work on into eternity.

And go on interceding for us. As indeed this chapter is a pattern of as well. The intercession of Jesus. As we mentioned Ephesians 1 verse 3 to 6.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

That we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. According to the purpose of his will. To the praise of his glorious grace.

With which he has blessed us in the beloved. Let's just recap. Because there's a lot in that. And I've skipped over it fairly quickly. Although I did say we would be going through it slowly.

[25 : 11] I hope it's been slow enough for you to follow the various points and the various steps. That are so wonderfully arranged together in the prayer itself. The way Jesus prayed it.

So first of all he's saying glorify your son. As we said that's also amounts to take the son through to glory. Through death, resurrection, exaltation.

And take him through to the glory that he had with the father in before the world was. And that's with a view to or so that the son will give eternal life to all that the father has given him.

And the father may be glorified himself in that as well. Two things in conclusion. I'm not going to spend too long while we're still under restrictions.

I know it's difficult wearing face masks. I appreciate that it's not easy to spend any length of time in that. So two points in conclusion.

[26 : 15] Firstly, here is something that helps us to appreciate. Something we must seek to grow in appreciation of. To appreciate as far as we can. What has gone towards our salvation.

What has gone towards our being here tonight even. That God the son came into the world. And took by taking our nature. That God the son in our nature died the death of the cross.

That God the son was conscious. That in doing so he was anticipating returning to the glory he had with the father. But involving himself humanly as well as in his deity.

As the God man. As the mediator. To the reward that was promised him. As God's savior. And I hope it helps us to appreciate that that's the basis on which our salvation rests.

And that the more we understand of these great truths. And I appreciate their very big theological points. And that's what we want to try. And I was talking to somebody the other day.

[27 : 21] How we must try. And I'm not saying we do it anything like successfully. Me especially. And I mean that sincerely. But we must try and get across to our young people.

How important foundational doctrines are for them. Because they can't really move on meaningfully. To think about Christian service. And about the practicalities of the Christian life.

Without seeing that on which they rest. Without seeing the foundation from which they grow. As well as on which they rest. And that's really what we're trying to do ourselves. However experienced we may be.

And most of you are so. And some more experienced than I am. In your understanding of scripture. However experienced we are. We are never beyond the point. Where we cannot learn more meaningfully.

Of where our salvation rests. And on why it's important. To understand what God in Christ. Has done. And is doing.

[28 : 20] And you know all of that. At the end of the day. Will lead to a greater appreciation and love. For your Savior. For the Father. For the Holy Spirit.

For this great and glorious. And holy God. That has done all of this. For the likes of you and I. That's the first point.

The first point. Matter of our appreciation. But it's also. For our imitation. Because you see here is Jesus. Facing.

The suffering that will be entailed. In the cross. The death that he must die on the cross. Everything that's going to be packed into. The remainder of his life. Up to the point of his death.

What is his concern? His concern is to bring glory to the Father. And his concern is to be exalted by the Father. So that it will result in.

[29 : 20] Eternal life for his people. What a great. Challenge that is to myself. And to yourself tonight. How do we face such things as this pandemic?

In what spirit do we go on facing it? Frustrating as it is. Difficult as it is to be patient under it. Hard though it is to continue. With these things.

And with these restrictions. Here is Jesus giving us. This basis. In himself of imitation. And our concern. Primarily.

Is to bring glory to God. To exalt his name. That he will be glorified. And in consequence too. That we. Will actually.

Benefit further. From what he has done. For us. We pray that God will bless to us these thoughts. Tonight.