

Gazing Upon Glory John 17:24

We have had the privilege of going through the High Priestly prayer of Jesus Christ. And we have seen that this prayer doesn't just take in the apostles and all that they would suffer in the world but also us. We saw that in verse 20, **"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."** "These only" are the disciples. He is not praying for these only. He is praying for those who would come after and believe on Christ, and he prays for this wonderful unity and oneness that speaks of the Oneness of Jesus with the Father, and the goal is to be a witness or testimony of the splendour of our God above.

We have seen the heart and greatness and the will of our Saviour for his own throughout this prayer. And as we listen in on this prayer we cannot help but be amazed at the love that our Lord has for his own, and to think he prays in this way as he approaches the Garden of Gethsemane. His mind is taken up for the apostles but also for us and our welfare. Now we come today to verse 24, which Arthur Pink calls the climax of the prayer of Jesus. Pink is amazed and awestruck at the magnitude of what Jesus prays for here that we would be found with him and behold his glory.

And it is amazing to look at life, because life could be described as moving up and then moving down. We enter into adulthood, and we might get married and start a family or purchase a house. We might start at a place of business or might start our own business and we progress up the ladder. But as we get older, and it happens to everyone, that upward mobility will cease. The body begins to suffer and deteriorate and then we start that slow steady decline downward. And many people try to hang onto their youth and they try to keep going, but we realize in many ways life is upward and then downward. And people fear old age and they even fear death as the loss of everything.

But for us as believer in Christ it is not up and then down. Life and the glory of being in Christ is so different. We are not losing but the closer we come to that time is actually not loss but gain in our life. Paul writes in Philippians 1:21, **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."** We are not traveling upward and then downward and the loss of everything, but we are constantly traveling toward the ultimate gain of our lives. Listen also to 2 Corinthians 5:8, **"Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."** Do you see the direction is constantly up? There is not a forward looking of loss but of ultimate gain. And the ultimate gain that we have in this verse is the glory of Christ.

And that is what life is in many ways, constantly seeking some kind of glory. We have that disposition in us to be glory seekers. We are made in the image of God, and realize that God is a glory seeker. He will not give his glory to another. He delights in his glory. And we as image bearers are constantly seeking glory. But the problem of our glory seeking is not that we are seeking it but we seek it in the creation rather than the Creator. We seek self-glory through so many means. It could be to have some experience or some relationships that bring that rush of joy in ourselves. It could be in sex and having it in abundance. It could be status where people look up to me or admire me or whatever. It could be in money and the thrill it gives in buying and the

illusion of power and security and arrival it gives. It could be in seeking to be the most attractive we can be and that we always look better than others. And here is why that glory is so intoxicating is that it really delivers. Glory seeking gives some momentary satisfaction and delight. It gives some sort of feeling of preeminence or you are better than others. It is self-glory. But here is the problem with self glory. It always comes down. It is that cycle we talked about earlier that goes up and then comes down. Your looks will go, you cannot hold onto your position or possessions. When you get older your money will be useless.

We were made for glory but it is not our glory that sets our feet on the upward delight and trajectory but it is Christ's and to be with him, and to see him — Oh that will be glory indeed! And let me ask you — what glory are you seeking after? You are a glory hunter. What or who are you living for today? What and who is your treasure? It is either Christ or something in creation. One will fail, and you know it is evening failing today. But there is one whose glory when we seek it will only become brighter until we behold his glory face to face. I want to challenge us today to live for and seek his coming glory. I want us to see a couple of things in verse 25 that I hope that will cause us to truly seek the glory of Christ and look with such anticipation at being with him and beholding all that Jesus is for us.

1. First I want us to see Jesus' desire for us to be with him. V.25a.

When someone shares their heart, we learn so much about them. We learn what motivates and what drives them. We learn about the inner person. And here we learn about the heart of our Lord and Saviour — what drove him to go to the cross, what drove him and truly the delight he looked forward to. Also, these verses and these petitions also cause us to not only hope and delight and cherish and love Jesus, but also show the certainty that if you are a believer in Christ that you will be with him.

As I studied this passage of Scripture, another prominent and unexpected evangelical pastor and preacher fell into moral compromise. He did not abandon the faith but shipwrecked his ministry. And when you see someone who so powerfully preached the gospel of Christ and for most of their lives go being used of God to bless others, you might wonder what hope have I to even continue to follow Christ? We might have had a good day of delighting in Christ and praising him with the people of God — but what will tomorrow bring? And as you look at the seedbed of sin in your heart, you see a wandering heart. There is lust, anger, pride, apathy and every sin imaginable in our thoughts. And you might conclude, it is only a matter of time before I not only fall but abandon Christ. In a weak individual like me, what hope have I of ever continuing with Christ? Have you ever thought that? Are you thinking that?

But there is so much glorious hope right in this verse. There is so much confidence and assurance that not just some but all of Christ's lambs will make it hope to the sheepfold and be forever with the Chief Shepherd. Look at what Jesus prays for here, **“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am.”** It is amazing passage because the words here are even stronger in the Greek. Jesus says literally, “Father, I will,” rather than “I desire.” So if you ever want to know the will of the Son is — it is right here. All those who have been given to him, in other words, those who are truly born again believers — those who are the elect and chosen since the foundation of the world — that they may be with Jesus our Lord in

heaven. And think how strong these words are, because we might desire certain good things and even request certain things in prayer but God in his infinite wisdom might say “no.” But none of us say “I will” in prayer. It is speaking of a certainty of what Christ will accomplish. This is the saving will of Christ.

Richard Phillips quotes Benjamin Morgan Palmer as writing, **“When you see that High Priest coming up from the altar and standing before the throne, and in the very midst of that throne saying to His Father, “Father, I will,” are we not safe? Let the devil howl; let him come with all his retinue from the depths of hell, and rage and raven all over this earth ..., let the world enter into fatal conspiracy with the powers of darkness and rage around us ..., and in the midst of all this peril, in the power of intercession, in the royalty and in the grace of our ascending Head, we are safe.”**

And think of the glory and the certainty of the answer to this request made by Christ to his Father in heaven. Our minds many times argue against the text here because of our own lives and experiences. Every loving father who cares for his children, and truly loves them does not grant every request that is made. He knows that it will not be good for them. And even if they cannot see it, he functions as their loving father by saying “no.” What would make us conclude that God would grant the will of the Son?

And again, it is right there in the passage. He says, **“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am.”** Notice what he says that his will is that all of the elect may be where he is. Notice the disciples are with him right now, but the tense here is future. This looks beyond this very night, past his resurrection, and to his ascension into glory where he is at the right hand of God the Father. This is the basis of this request of the Son to the Father is none other than the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ which was validated by the Father through his resurrection of the Son. You see Jesus looks beyond the cross to the ultimate goal, and that is not just our believing on Christ but the fruition of our salvation, and that is being with Christ. And it is a certainty not only because Jesus prays for his own, but on the basis of what would take place that very night into the next day and after three days the resurrection of Christ.

There is so much hope and glory here. We have the absolute assurance that we will be with Christ. This is the will of Christ if you are a believer. You and I have the assurance we will be with Christ which really is the hope of this life, not the hanging on of life, not the loss but there is an upward trajectory of life no matter what we are going through. Believers so often struggle with assurance. They struggle whether they will make it through to the end. And the reason why is our hearts really are fickle. In this life we really are prone to wander — Lord I feel it. We are also susceptible to the calls of sin and idolatry to find satisfaction, life, meaning, joy or whatever in the creation. And the anguish of the soul is — who will deliver me from this body of sin and temptation? And here is the bedrock of security and joy. We are not left to ourselves. There is one who not only prays for us but who holds us and he is powerful enough to keep us. We aren't! We are in his hands and he will never let go. And the more we look at Christ and behold him, the more we have this assurance — where he is we shall be also. The more we have that assurance is the more we begin to look outside of ourselves for

glory, and worship and glory in the one who has forevermore purchased our redemption. We glory in Christ.

Imagine what we are assured of — place it clearly in your mind. Based on the finished work of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven — we will be with him! We shall behold the blessed one forevermore. We will be gather with all the loved ones we have loved in the Lord in this life to forevermore be with him. Our destiny of being with the Author and Finisher of our souls is guaranteed. Oh, if that does not get you up in the morning and say, I am one day closer to being with Christ. The reason why I have persevered this last day is not my greatness but his! The reason why I will persevere this day is not my greatness but according to his might and love, and oh, I shall be with Him! It is so different from the world — I am one day closer to having everything taken away. I am one day closer to having the One who will truly and forever satisfy my heart, never to wander or fret again, and therefore I am one day closer to having everything — Jesus is our everything!

2. We also see the fruition of the will and desire of Jesus. V.24.

One of the great frustrations of life is our will and desires do not come to fruition. We cannot accomplish all that we want, and even the good things and desires in our life do not always come to fruition. And certainly, one of the lessons this teaches us is we are not God. We are not sovereign. God's will is always accomplished, and he will do all his good pleasure. And although that does lead to frustration because there are things we cannot control and things that are out of our hand, if we think about it Biblically we would not want it any other way. Because God is sovereign and he is good, and his will is given in his Word, we realize that his will for our lives — will come to pass. That means all of his promises are yea and amen in him. And we realize that means we will be with Christ. And the will of God the Father and the will of the Son is not just that we would be with Christ but that we would behold and delight and see the glory of the Son. It is not I have a mansion in the sweet by and by, but the splendour of the One we call our Saviour and Lord.

So look at the end of this because it is purposeful, **“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.”** Now think the purpose here is to to what? It is **“to see.”** There is something to behold, there is someone too gaze upon. This is when we are no longer walking by faith but walking by sight. And think of it because if we thought of why God created the world, created the stars in heaven, created you and me, it is for one reason and one reason alone, and that is to display the worth, splendour and excellency of another. And you can see that in the text. There is this great love that each member of the One Triune God have for one another. And here before the foundation of the world we read God the Father had and has always had this perfect and highest love for the Son because in the holiness and perfect nature of the Father he realizes the worth of the Son.

And so we have the whole coming of Christ, the passion of Christ, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the salvation of sinners, and then the scene in heaven where all believers are gathered before the throne of God — to behold the glory of the Son, in others words, the splendour of the person and character of the One who has come and given his life as that perfect sacrifice for sin and is alive forevermore.

Now think of the glory of Christ. There are three aspects of glory Christ's glory. One is that his glory or greatness and power and wisdom is known through creation. We can see it all around us. The heavens truly proclaim the glory of the Lord. We can see this glory in Colossians 1:16-17, **"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** The common bird that flies over gives evidence to the glory of the One who made him and sustains that very flight plan. There is so much around us that should cause us to glory in Christ. But secondly, there is a glory of Christ in being fully God. All the fullness of God dwells in the Son. You see something of this glory on the mount of transfiguration that led the three disciples to praise him. We will behold the glory of our God in the Son. We shall be before Jesus, and look on his beauty and the splendour of all that he is. The glory of God shall shine from him like never before.

But there is a particular glory in the Son that is not the glory of the Father and that of the Spirit, and that is the glory of the One who became man and gave his life as that perfect sacrifice of for sinners. And this is the mission that God the Father has for the Son — to ransom sinners that would magnify the Son. On the basis of the finished work of the Son, we read in Philippians 2:9-11, **"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** Think of it — every tongue confessing Jesus as Lord. Every tongue seeing the glory of the One we call Saviour! And you see this glory when the curtain of heaven is pulled back. Listen to the song in heaven and the reason the throng is praising Christ - it is because of this particular glory in Revelation 5:12-13, **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"**

This is the glory that we will gaze on. This is the glory that captivated Stephen when heaven was opened up at his stoning in Acts 7:56 **"And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."** When Stephen says, "I see," that is what we will say, "Oh I see the glory of my Lord!"

And let me end with a challenge because we are all living for some glory, some hope, something to give us satisfaction or significance. Everything in this world is temporary and cannot satisfy. We go up and down. But we were made for another glory. Here is the question: whose glory are you living for? And it is easy to deny that you are not living for the passing pleasures of this life but living for his glory — that you have an expectation and longing to be with him, but how do you know you are living for him and longing for him? Well listen to 1 John 3:2-3 because it indicates how we can know we have this hope and longing for Christ, **"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone**

who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” Oh, to think we shall share in his glory in some way. We are so bonded and related to his glory that we will be with him in glory, see his glory and be changed by his glory and partake of his glory. But here is how we know. John says everyone that has this hope in him, in other words, in our hearts, purifies himself just as Christ is pure or holy.

Sin becomes more repulsive and God's holiness becomes the attraction of our hearts. The things of this world fade and the brightness of Christ shines through. It would be a contradiction to say I long to be with Christ but live an unholy life or living for some fleeting present glory, as if this is all that there is. No, we get a taste of that glory by living, dwelling in that fellowship with him, delighting in him with his people. Oh, it is a small taste compared to the glory to be revealed in us but it is a taste. There is so much joy, contentment and expectation to fill our hearts as we contemplate all that awaits us in Christ and the certainty of that hope. Whatever you are going through realize the glory of Christ. Seek him and his kingdom — your heart and life will be changed. He truly is the satisfaction of our hearts.