

The Glory of God John 17:1-5

Well we go from the greatest Sermon ever preached to the greatest and most effectual prayer ever uttered. It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. Certainly there were longer prayers. In some cases Jesus prayed all night. But this is the longest recorded prayer we have of Jesus. It is often been called the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus, because he represents the apostles and also believers before God the Father. Some have challenged that notion and say it does not do justice to the full range of requests and petitions in this prayer, because he not only prays for his own but also for himself. Others have called this the true Lord's Prayer. When we think of the Lord's Prayer we usually think of Matthew 6:9-13, but that prayer is not Jesus praying but instructing those who were listening to him how to pray. It begins, "Pray then like this, Our Father in heaven." But this prayer begins with a direct address to the Father. It is Jesus pouring his heart out. It is also been called the Farewell Prayer of Jesus.

And let me give you a quick outline of this prayer. In verses 1-5 he prays for himself, in verses 6-19 he prays for the disciples, And in verses 20-26 he prays for those who would come after, in other words those who would make up what we call the church of Christ. He actually prays for us. And the subject matter of this prayer is not all gloom and doom but the subject matter includes joy, holiness, the mission we have, and of unity. And it is such a glorious prayer, and the scope and breadth of it we cannot fully take in or comprehend. And we are still recipients of this prayer. This prayer that Jesus offers for his own is still being answered today.

Listen to what some say about this prayer, A.W. Pink writes, **"In this wonderful prayer there is a solemnity and elevation of thought, a condensed power of expression, and a comprehensiveness of meaning, which have affected the minds and drawn out the hearts of the most devoted of God's children to a degree that few portions of Scripture have done."** Martin Luther wrote, **"This is truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it."** A contemporary of Luther, Philip Melancthon commented on this prayer, **"There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than the prayer offered up by the Son to God Himself."** John MacArthur writes, **"But of all the prayers of Jesus, the one recorded here in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel is the most profound and magnificent. Its words are plain, yet majestic; simple, yet mysterious. They plunge the reader into the unfathomable depths of the inter-Trinitarian communication between the Father and the Son, and their scope encompasses the entire sweep of redemptive history from election to glorification, including the themes of regeneration, revelation, illumination, sanctification, and preservation. The veil is drawn back and the reader is escorted by Jesus Christ into the Holy of Holies, to the very throne of God. The value of its infinite richness is heightened by its uniqueness. There is no other chapter in the Bible like it."**

You sort of get the idea that this prayer is important and it is important we know its content. The setting of this prayer as many see it as the conclusion of the Upper Room discourse and Jesus is about to leave the Upper Room. But we saw at the end of chapter 14 that Jesus told the disciples to rise, and they leave and make their way out of the city. As they looked back at Jerusalem they could see the Holy of Holies with the Vine decorated on it that gave rise to Jesus teaching that he is the true vine. This prayer would have been made before they get to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Studying the details of this prayer really help us know the heart of Christ because time is so short, and you do not waste that time thinking, speaking and praying about trivial things but only things of the highest order. And what he prays about first of all is the glory of the Son and the Father. And it begins at the highest and that is the point and the purpose and the focal of all things and all the actions of the Saviour and everything that our God does. It is all about his glory.

And I think one of the reasons we struggle so much is that we do not start where we need to start. Salvation and all of life is not about us. So often we want to make it about us, and the moment we go down that road there is bitterness and anger and a whole host of ungodly responses in our homes, churches and lives because we make life about us. Life is not about you. Your salvation is not primarily about you but about the glory of God. So what a place for Jesus to start. He knew the will of the Father and he prayed toward that end. So let's look at verse 1 and try to gain an understanding of the direction of this prayer and then see if we can apply it to our hearts and lives so that we can live for the same purpose of our Saviour. May God continue to change our hearts and lives through this prayer.

1. We need to see the particulars of prayer. V.1

Now as you look at this prayer you have to realize that it is tied to what has come before. It is tied to the Farewell Discourse. You can see that when John writes, **“When Jesus had spoke these words.”** And here is the incredible thing. After all the promises and challenges that he indicates in that sermon, he prays now that these things would come to pass. He prays that they would have the peace and assurance of salvation, and that their faith would not fail, that they would have the peace of Christ in the midst of all their tribulations. And I find that fascinating that Jesus prays for many of the things that he has just promised in the sermon. Certainly he is reliant on the Father. And he does realize that as our perfect representative the means God employs to bring to pass the things that he has ordained is through prayer. That is why we pray for the lost to come even though they have been chosen since the foundation of the world. Or we pray that Jesus would return even though the day is fixed. We pray because God has not only ordained these things but has chosen to use our prayers and does use them. So when God reveals something in his Word we can pray for that thing to come to pass, realizing he really does use our prayers. We can pray for the endurance and growth of our fellow believers in the church. So often we say we just do not know what to pray but all we have to do is pray the truths back that we learn in the word. God uses those prayers that are according to his will more than we could ever imagine.

Also we see the posture of prayer here by Jesus, **‘He lifted up his eyes to heaven.’** There is always a posture in prayer because we take communion with God and intercession for others seriously. We are approaching our august God. It might be

that people close their eyes and bow their heads. If they are sitting they may lean forward. Some may fall on their knees. There is no one posture given in the Scriptures of how to pray. But there is always a posture for those who love God. We are approaching our God, coming into his throne room. For the Jews in Jesus' day they did not bow their heads but actually opened their eyes and looked upward. And we see Jesus do that right here. He takes that posture and reverentially comes to his Father.

And then he addresses the first person of the Trinity as "**Father.**" And this is who we are told to pray to in the Model prayer in Matthew 6. We are to address our prayers to God the Father. Do you see that in the request because it is so important? This is his assurance that he will be heard. It is the relationship he has with God. He is his Father God. The Jews would many times say that God was the Father of the nation but never use this kind of language. It is just too familiar and personal. God was just too high and majestic to use such names. But we as believers are even instructed to pray to the Father, and there are many examples through the New Testament of believers using this title for God. It is the closeness and intimacy and care that God the Father has for us through Christ. So many people say they cannot rejoice in this term because they never had a good father. Their father might have not been present, or worse — abusive. But you know your father was not what he suppose to be. And therefore you know what a father is to be. And here is the thing, God the Father is everything a Father is suppose to be. He is the lover and provider for our souls. And we can be assured that when we come to him we will be heard.

Next, we read Jesus prays, "**the hour has come.**" The hour of course is talking about the cross. And it is amazing because we read throughout the gospels, Jesus say over and over again, "My hour has not yet come," and therefore his enemies cannot lay a finger on him even though they want to take him and manhandle him and murder him much earlier than this time frame. In John 7 Jesus teaching that he is the living water. And the Scribes and Pharisees send the temple guards to arrest Jesus but they come back empty handed, and listen to John 7:45-46, "**The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, 'Why did you not bring him?' The officers answered, 'No one ever spoke like this man!'**" No one could lay one finger on him before the appointed hour. Well, that hour has come for Jesus to be taken and beaten and crucified. But here is the thing, this is not a defeatist attitude here or one of resignation, but really throughout this prayer it has a ring of triumph, ultimately through this, Jesus is going to be glorified and the Father is going to be glorified.

And I am always amazed how often the perfect man prayed and saw the necessity for himself, and yet how often there is a barrenness among the people of God in prayer. Prayer meetings have often been canceled because people have just stopped coming out. And yet all the way through the gospels Jesus has an urgency to pray. It was vital to his life. And prayer is the language of dependency. The hour has come, but he realized his absolute dependence on the Father. Do we realize our need? Do we come to the throne of grace to find help in the time of need? Jesus did. How much more do we need to come and petition our Heavenly Father?

2. We come to the main petition. V. 1.

Think of it, when you pray what is the main goal? What do you hope will come to pass? Because so often when we pray, we never seem to get past our earthly comforts or asking God to remove the obstacles in our lives so that we can have a happy life. Even when we ask God to change other people it is usually to make our lives easier. It is all about us. But let me say again, salvation and even prayer is not about us but the magnification and the glorification of another. It is about Christ being seen and known and loved. It is about him. And I wonder if we would respond differently to all our trials and heartaches if we understood what Jesus requests of the Father here and how we can truly make that request to him in our own lives? We might get upset at our children because they have disturbed our peace, or our spouse because of this or that reason — you constantly battle and argue, we want our own glorification and comfort. Christ is not even in the picture. It is not about him. Let me say this is not your party. You are not at the centre of your own life. If you are trying to be let me say it has had a disastrous outcome. And you know it.

But look at what Jesus prays here, **“Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.”** Look at that word “glory” because it is one of the major themes through this gospel. The word “glory” or glorify” is used no less than 42 times in John. What does it mean? What does it mean when Jesus requests that the Father glorify the Son that the Son may ultimately glorify you? And the meaning of glorify is to manifest or to make known the worth and excellency of someone or something. You point to something or someone, or the worth of that affects the way you live. Now many see this as teaching that Jesus is looking beyond the cross and the humiliation and shame to his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. And certainly that is a glorification of the Son. It is the vindication of all the words and works of Christ. And it is an absolute display of his worth, majesty and excellency. And it is certainly his resurrection and exaltation but this request is so much more than that.

The way “glory” is used throughout the gospels is to display the glory of God through suffering and sacrifice. And what is in view here is the cross of Christ. Think of it, men and women throughout the centuries have praised the Son for his sacrifice and humiliation, and they have praised the Father for his plan to send Jesus to the cross to pay the debt of our sin. We sing and extoll and celebrate the sacrifice of Christ. And what it displays most fully through this loving sacrifice is the love and worth and the excellency of our great God. We cannot walk away as believers but praise and glorify Him. D.A. Carson writes, **“The very event by which the Son was being ‘lifted up’ in horrible ignominy and shame was that for which he would be praised around the world by men and women whose sins he had borne.”** That’s glorification! He goes on and says, **“The hideous profanity of Golgotha means nothing less than the Son’s glorification. That Jesus should pray that the Father might glorify the Son is therefore also a moving expression of his own willingness to obey the Father even unto death.”**

I mean it is incredible, again, think of it. The hour is come, but Jesus is not a fatalist. He is not resigned to whatever will be — will be. But he prays to the Father that the Son might be glorified. That he might endure all the agony of that bitter cup. “Father give me the strength that I might do your will and accomplish this task of redemption.” Again, here is Jesus knowing something of the burden and weight of

what lies ahead, but here is the Saviour willingly going through that valley and suffering for us. This is the ultimate glorification of the Son.

But again, this is not just the Son's doing but through the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Jesus the Father is glorified. This is his plan and his will. He is not just looking on as a spectator but as the Sovereign Lord above who sent Jesus with a predetermined plan to offer the perfect one-time sacrifice for the sins of all who would come and trust in the Son. So the ultimate purpose of the cross work of Jesus Christ is the glorification, the praise and honour that is brought to Christ through the salvation of any and all that would come to him. That is the chief end of all. It is the display of God's character. He is glorious. It is the reason why he created the world. Psalm 19:1 says, "**The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**" You look at all the beauty and intricacies in our world and it all sings out to the wisdom and power and awesomeness of the One true Creator God. Well, think of redemption that is the pinnacle of God's plan. Think of the willingness of Christ, the love of the Father, the wisdom and strength of all that took place that we might have life and life eternal.

The scene we get heaven is glory to our God, glory to Christ for this redemption. Listen to the scene in Revelation 5:11-14, "**Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, '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!' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped.**" And think of it because we are a glorification of Jesus because we are recipients of this great work. We are praising him for his character and his glory.

And this is what life is all about. This is what our salvation is all about. So think of it because we need a radical shift in our thinking. We are going through difficulty with your spouse, or your children are rebelling, or there is so much drama or opposition at work, or there is even difficulties and division in the church. What is our primary objective? Here it is — that Jesus Christ might be seen in me. That his character might shine through his people. Even if we have to sacrifice our wants and desires, even if we have to suffer, our primary object is the glory of our great God. How many times do we ever pray - Father glorify yourself through this trial by helping me show the character and love of Christ? Help me to make known and display your character and not mine. Help me to know that my life and my trials do not belong to me to use them anyway I see fit but are a stewardship that has been given to me by you in your sovereign love to display you. Now think of it, because the apostles after they are arrested, released and threatened prayed to God in Acts 4, and we are familiar with verses 27-28, but listen to those verses along with verse 29, that is the petition, Acts 4:27-30, "**for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**"

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

They pray to God the Father, not for ease but the glorification of the Son. We are to use whatever trial God has ordained to point to the glory of the Son.

Do you think if we prayed that Jesus might be known and truly meant it, forgiveness would come more easily, or bitterness and vengeful attitudes would suddenly disappear? Look at the beauty of the Son! So often we are more interested in our comfort and our will rather than the will of God. And the will and pleasure of God is found in his glory — in the manifestation of who he is. And who he is should be seen in his people. Let us use every opportunity God gives us to shine the glorious light on Christ. May Jesus be seen in each one of us for his eternal glory.