

### **The Jesus Prayer: Glorifying the Father**

We come now to one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible. We will spend three weeks here. It has been titled by some commentators as “The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus” because we hear Him pray for Himself, for the disciples, and for us. It’s the longest recorded prayer in the Bible though it will take you no more than three minutes to read. I believe, however, that it will take you a lifetime to absorb.

Many of the great Christian preachers and teachers of history have also held this chapter in high esteem. The reformer, Martin Luther, said:

This truly is beyond measure a warm and hearty prayer. (Jesus) opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out... It is so deep, so rich, so wide. No one can fathom it.

Matthew Henry, a Puritan minister and theologian who had great influence on George Whitefield and Charles Wesley, wrote:

It is the most remarkable prayer following the most full and consoling discourse (the previous chapters in John) ever uttered on earth.

When John Knox, the Scottish preacher and theologian, was dying, his wife asked him, “Where do you want me to read?” [meaning ‘where in the Bible.’] Knox said:

Read where I first put my anchor down, in the seventeenth chapter of John. <sup>1</sup>

The prayer in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, we call that prayer, ‘The Lord’s Prayer.’ But maybe we should call that ‘the Disciple’s Prayer’ or ‘Our Prayer’ because that prayer was intended for us to pray, not Him. For example, Jesus never needed to pray, “...forgive us our trespasses,” did He?

So, in reality, this prayer in John 17 is the REAL Lord’s Prayer! It’s the prayer He prayed before going to the cross, and parts of it He’s still praying today. I want us to notice four themes in just these first five verses – that’s how rich this prayer is! First, we see that:

#### **I. Jesus Acknowledges the Time.**

Verse one says:

**After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:**

**“Father, the time has come...” (John 17:1a)**

Throughout His whole life, Jesus was very, very aware of a ‘timing,’ an agenda, a schedule for life. Jesus, from the time he was 12 years old, was living by a spiritual calendar. Remember when His parents couldn’t find Him on the way back to Nazareth and when they retraced their steps back to the Temple and found Him with the Elders discussing theology? What did Jesus say to His mother? He said, “*Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?*”

Or when His mother asked Him to do a miracle at the wedding in Cana, He said to her, “*My time has not yet come.*” (Jn. 2:4) And twice during His ministry, Jesus escaped death at the hands of His enemies who wanted to stone Him. The explanation given was, “*...his time had not yet come*” (Jn. 7:30; 8:20). Jesus was living by a divine timetable. It was all moving to a central and defining moment – the cross. This was His purpose! Everything else - the healings, the

teaching, the miracles – everything would have been meaningless if the event of the Cross did not happen. Jesus knew what His mission in life was. We heard Him say it back in John 10:11:

**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”**

Jesus was THAT clear about His mission. Are we aware of there being a spiritual calendar for us? Jesus knew the Father’s specific schedule for Him. What time is it on God’s schedule for you? Or, put another way, the time has come for you to do what?

Theologians point out that the Bible says that there are sins of ‘commission,’ things that we do but shouldn’t; and sins of ‘omission,’ things we should have done, but didn’t do. What time is it on God’s calendar for you?

- Who is it that you know you should ask forgiveness from but haven’t yet?
- What is it that you promised to do for someone but never did?

The enemy comes and whispers in your ear, “Oh, come on! That was so long ago. Don’t dig that old thing up now. Just let it go!” But the Holy Spirit is also whispering. He’s saying, “The time has come. It’s never too late to do the right thing. Let’s do it now. I’ll help you.” What time is it for you? Secondly, we see here that...

## **II. Jesus Asked for the Father’s Glory.**

After letting the Father know that He’s aware of what time it is, Jesus makes a request. The Hebrew and Greek words for ‘glory,’ mean, “Worthiness, splendor or honor.” So, how would the Father ‘honor’ the Son so that the Son could ‘honor’ the Father? Well, the Father did honor Jesus by giving Him the wisdom to teach God’s Word accurately and by giving Him the power to obey Him perfectly. But ultimately, the Father ‘honored’ the Son by resurrecting Him from the dead. Jesus knew that this was always part of the Father’s plan because He predicted it. In John 2, after Jesus cleared the Temple, it says:

**Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.” (John 2:18, 19)**

He was referring, of course, to the temple of His body. So, the resurrection was the ultimate fulfillment of this request by Jesus of His Father but His other actions of teaching and healing and obedience were also fulfillments. That’s why Jesus prays in verse 4:

**“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” (Jn.17:4)**

Now, are you aware that you can (and SHOULD) make this same request of God the Father? Yes, we can all make this same request of God. We can ask that He ‘glorify’ us, ‘honor’ us by giving us the wisdom and power to accomplish the work that He’s given us to do on earth. And much of that work, though different in magnitude, is the same in principle as Jesus’ work. Think about it:

- Jesus taught God’s truth. We can teach His truth.
- Jesus obeyed God’s Word. We can obey God’s Word.
- Jesus cared for the needs of people. We can care for the needs of people.
- Ultimately, God raised Jesus from the dead. Ultimately, He will raise us from the dead!

This is why Jesus said back in chapter 14:12-13:

**“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”**

Do you see this? Watch this now – when you obey Jesus: when you teach Sunday School, when you pray, when you help your neighbor shovel their driveway, when you visit someone in the hospital, when you bring a meal to a sick friend, when you tell the truth about the product you’re trying to sell someone rather than hide the truth to get the sale – when you do any of these seemingly small things in life, you are allowing the Spirit of Jesus Christ to bring glory to the Father through you! Do you get that!?!? Do you see that!?!?

This is what the apostle Paul was talking about when he said:

**And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (II Cor. 3:18)**

This isn’t talking about your body shining like a lightbulb or your raising someone from the dead. No, it’s talking about when you do what may seem to you like a very small thing; like when you do any of the actions of our B.L.E.S.S. individual ministries. When you pray for someone, when you take the time to Listen to them, or Eat a meal with them, or Serve by meeting even the smallest of needs they have. Or, of course, when you share your Story of how you’re a follower of Jesus Christ. When you do any of these, in God the Father’s eyes, you ARE shining like a lightbulb. And in the spiritual dimension of this world, you’re moving mountains. Through you, the resurrected Christ is continuing His ministry of bringing glory to the Father. Activating this B.L.E.S.S. initiative isn’t some duty you must do or God will zap you. No, it’s the greatest opportunity on earth – the opportunity to be used by the Spirit to bring glory to the Father. With that in mind, I can’t wait for another chance to bless someone this week. How about you?

Thirdly, we see in the first five sentences in the Jesus Prayer that...

### **III. Jesus Will Use His Authority to Give Eternal Life.**

In verse 2, Jesus prays:

**For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. (John 17:2)**

Jesus has been granted authority over all people. He had that authority before He came to earth, while He was on the earth and He has it now. So think about it: He had authority over the people who criticized Him, who badgered Him, who persecuted Him, who arrested Him, convicted Him, beat Him, tortured Him, nailed Him to the cross and killed Him. He had the power AND the authority to stop the madness at any point. But He didn’t use it.

If it were you, if you were being tortured and you had the power and authority to stop it, wouldn’t you? How long would you let it go on? Can you put yourself in this story? Why didn’t Jesus stop it? It’s because of you.

This is the oldest love story on the planet and the one which every other love story is based on. How many movies, TV shows, Broadway plays or books have you read where someone is free and clear of danger but they put themselves in grave danger, even in danger of death, for one reason. They do it because by doing so, they will set the one they love free of danger. How many stories have you seen where this is the plot? All of them are based on this story. And who are the lovers in this story? The one in grave danger is you! The one who risks

everything is Jesus. He didn't need to do it. He had the authority to destroy those who were killing Him, but He refused to use it because the only way you could be set free was if He died. He could not rescue you and stay alive Himself. He had to die because it was the only way your sin could be paid for. The only way! And here, in this prayer, we hear Jesus thank His Father for the 'privilege' of using His authority to suffer and die for you and me. Can you even begin to imagine this? Listen again. What Jesus essentially says is this: (verse 2)

*For you granted me authority over all people that I might suffer so that I might give them eternal life.*

There's an incredibly powerful new worship song that we sometimes sing, that describes this scene. The words are these:

*Oh to see the dawn, of the darkest day, Christ on the road to Calvary.  
Tried by sinful men, Torn and beaten, then, nailed to a cross of wood...  
Oh to see the pain, written on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin.  
Every bitter thought, every evil deed, crowning your bloodstained brow.*

*This the pow'r of the cross, Christ became sin for us  
Took the blame, bore the wrath – we stand forgiven at the cross.*

*Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath, quakes as its Maker bows His head.  
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life, "Finished!" the vict'ry cry.  
Oh to see my name, written in the wounds, For through your suffering I am free.  
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live, won through your selfless love.*

*This, the pow'r of the cross, Son of God – slain for us, What a love! What a cost!  
We stand forgiven at the cross. <sup>2</sup>*

And Jesus then concludes this opening thought with His mission statement:

**Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)**

The Greek word for *eternal* is *aionis*. This word has to do, not so much with duration of life, but with the quality of life. It is, therefore, a one-word description of the lifestyle of God. When we hear the term 'eternal life,' we tend to think of life lasting forever. But if you don't particularly like the quality of your life here, what kind of a reward is that? But that isn't what this word means. It means that because Jesus went to the cross, you are granted the privilege of experiencing life as it was always meant to be. A life that is full of the splendor, the joy, the majesty, the peace, the glory of God's life. You will share in life as God lives it.

And the greatest premium of all about this God-life is that you will know and be known by God Himself. Jesus summarizes God-life with these words, "...they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." No other religion offers this reality. None.

It's not just intellectual knowledge. No, it's knowledge of the heart. Full acceptance, complete loyalty, ultimate respect, oneness like the oneness of the most perfect marriage. What a glorious promise: *that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*. This will be your life forever. Jesus used His authority to make it available to you. And there is one more request that Jesus makes in these first five verses. In it...

#### IV. Jesus Longs for Home.

Have you ever been homesick? In order to be homesick, you have to have a warm, safe, fun and loving home. Jesus is about to be arrested, beaten and sent to His death and this is all happening far from His home. The New Living Translates verse 5 this way:

**Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.** (John 17:5 NLT)

Have you ever thought about where home was for Jesus? None of us know what heaven is like because we haven't been there, but Jesus had lived there forever! The whole time He was here, dealing with all our foolishness, He had a memory of the warmest, finest, friendliest home that ever existed. So, His last request for Himself was to ask His Father to bring Him home.

Of all the evidence that theologians offer to prove that Jesus was both God and Man, for me, is the best of all. Jesus had tremendous love for us, that's why He came and died. But He loved His Abba, His 'Daddy,' more and couldn't wait to get back home.

In the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Frodo and Sam are nearing the completion of their mission to destroy the ring in the fires of Mount Doom. But they are exhausted and collapse halfway up the mountain. As they lie on their backs, trying to regain their strength, their thoughts turn to home.

Frodo says, looking up at the smoke-filled sky: *I can see the Shire. The Brandywine River, Bag End, Gandalf's fireworks, the lights in the party tree.*

Sam says: *...and Rosie Cotton dancing. She had ribbons in her hair. If ever I was to marry someone, it would have been her. It would have been her!*

Frodo turns his head, looks at Sam and says: *I'm glad to be with you, Samwise Gamgee, here at the end of all things.*<sup>3</sup>

When Jesus was at the end of all things, He looked at His Father and said, "Dad, just bring me home when this is all over." If you miss your home, there's nothing wrong with you. In fact, there's a whole lot that is right. And if your world is looking more like Mount Doom than the Shire, then hear again these words from your traveling companion, Jesus Christ, who knows what you're feeling. He turns His head, looks at you and says:

**In my Father's house are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.** (John 14:2, 3)

When Jesus comes again, He's going to set things right and He's going to destroy evil and He's going to set up His Kingdom, but most of all, He's coming to take you home. I can't think of a better reward than that. Can you? Let's pray...

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes from Dr. J. Vernon McGee's commentary, "Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Vol. IV," (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), p. 477

<sup>2</sup> Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend, *The Power of the Cross*, 2005, Thankyou Music

<sup>3</sup> Scene from "Return of the King" segment of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, New Line Cinema, 2003