

John 17-1-5
Christ's high priestly prayer: Part 1
Jesus prays for himself

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Scripture reading: John 17:1-5

Preamble:

After a nearly six-month break, we are finally back in the gospel of John.

Where are we in John? Jesus has taught the masses, cast out demons, healed the sick, raised the dead, offended the religious leaders, and claimed to be God.

His public ministry is now officially over. John 13-16 is often called the farewell discourse, since Christ is saying farewell to his small band of disciples before he goes to the cross.

As he approaches the cross, he pauses to pray for himself and the disciples. This prayer is recorded in John chapter 17.

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

Listening in on a famous conversation....

John 17 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

This chapter has been called the "Holy of Holies in the Temple of Scripture." (John Knox)

Philip Melanchthon, a towering intellect of the protestant Reformation, said these words of John 17,

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 of God himself.

The Scottish Reformer John Knox insisted that this prayer be read to him every day during the final days of his life, while battling sickness.

The words of John 17 have been the inspiration of massive works.

Oliver Cromwell's chaplain, Thomas Manton, preached forty-five sermons on them.

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones preached 47 sermons on this chapter.

Marcus Rainsford, an Irish preacher, wrote over 500 pages of exposition on this one chapter.

Ok, I get it, people like this prayer, but why?

This prayer is a conversation between two members of the trinity, and we get to listen in!
Wow!!!

Furthermore, this prayer beautifully reveals the son's extravagant love for sinners.
In addition, this prayer is intended to be a model prayer for us.
Finally, this prayer reminds us that God will preserve his own until the end.

If you want to know how to pray for yourselves and others, pay attention to this prayer.

The prayer of chapter 17 can be divided into three sections-

Christ prays for himself (v. 1-5) this week.
Christ prays for the disciples (v. 6-19) next week.
Christ prays for the church (v. 20-26) the following week.

This morning we will focus on the first section (Christ prays for himself).

What does Christ pray for himself? Christ prays that he would glorify the father!

To help us understand this prayer for glory, we will look at three headings.

A prayer for glory (v. 1)
A plan for glory (v. 2-4)
A prospect of glory (v. 5)

First, a prayer for glory.

John 17:1 (ESV) – 1 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,

Jesus prays to be glorified so that the father would be glorified. This raises a few questions...

What does it mean to glorify God?

To glory of God is the shining forth of his attributes. In other words, it is the shining forth of his love, mercy, grace, power, compassion, justice, eternity, and his holiness.

To glorify God means to reflect, manifest, and celebrate his attributes.

Jesus came first and foremost to display God the father's glory to all of creation, including the angels.

But doesn't Christ pray for his own glory.

Isn't this a selfish way to pray?

No, because the son knows that when he is glorified, his heavenly father is glorified. How? When you see the son, you see the father, since they exist as one God in three distinct persons.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) – 3a He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...

John 1:18 (ESV) — 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) — 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We see the glory of God the father in the face of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus is glorified, God the father is glorified. Therefore, Jesus Christ prays that he would be glorified so that his father would be glorified. In other words, he has a burning, undivided, single minded, unquenchable passion to glorify his father.

Application:

Is this your burning passion?

Is bringing glory to the triune God through Christian virtue, your top priority and passion?

Or is your top priority making more money, or having the perfect body, or having perfect kids, or being loved and respected, or having more stuff, or taking longer vacations, or playing more golf, or...?

God created you for the sole purpose of magnifying his glory.

This means that every single detail of your life has potential to glorify God or dishonor God, which will it be?

We must strive to glorify God in our spending, our leisure, our entertainment, our parenting, our marriages, our hobbies, our internet consumption, our clothing options, and our driving.

Christian hedonism.

Jesus prays to be glorified because he wants his father to be glorified!

But what is Christ's specific plan to glorify the father? This brings us to the next part of his prayer...

First, a prayer for glory.

Second, a plan for glory!

What is Christ's plan to glorify the father? Notice, he does not simply pray, he also acts. We should do the same.

His plan to glorify his father is multifaceted. He describes a few of those facets in verses 2-4.

He plans to glorify his father through the cross!

John 17:1 (ESV) — 1 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,

The hour has finally come for the son to be glorified.

When Jesus performed his first miracle in John 2, he indicated that his "hour" had not yet come (2:4).

In John chapters 7 and 8 he mentions twice that his hour had not yet come (7:30; 8:20).

Then, in chapter 12, he proclaims that his hour is coming (12:27).

Finally, in chapter 17 the long-anticipated hour has arrived.

It is the hour that was promised in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:16).

It is the hour that Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah longed for.

It is the hour that will put in motion the salvation of the entire cosmos.

It is the hour that will lead to the forgiveness of sins and the destruction of all the evil and darkness in the universe.

It is the climax of the grand drama of redemption.

What is this hour? It is the hour of the cross.

The cross is not only the event that reconciles God and man, defeats the powers of sin and darkness, and brings about the adoptions of billions of souls. The cross is also the place where God is most glorified.

How? The cross is the greatest display of all of God's attributes. Explain!

As Christ hangs on the cross, suspended between heaven and hell we see-

His love and justice.

His mercy and wrath.

His grace and his righteousness.

His patience and power.

His omniscience and his omnibenevolence.

Puritan William Bates called the cross a harmony of divine attributes.

Illustration:

God's glory is revealed in many places.

The human eye.

The sheer size of Mount Everest.

The depth of the marinas trench.

A sunset at golden gardens in Ballard Wa.

The engineering of a dragon fly.

The amount of information stored in human DNA.

The fine tuning of the universe.

The stars in the night sky revealing the largeness of creation.

Yet, the greatest display of God's glory is the murder of God's son. Wow!!!

Application:

How is the father glorified in Christ's cross? We must never forget that the whole thing was his idea!

In eternity past, the father devised a plan to send his son!

Furthermore, if the cross is the place where Christ is most glorified, then we can never exhaust its riches.

Which is why the apostle Paul said that his only boast was in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6) and that he preached nothing but the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1-2).

I hope and pray that you and I never ever cease to be amazed by the cross of Christ.

But we often are, aren't we?

What is the solution? Prayer and study, prayer and study, prayer and more study.

Make understanding the cross your number one educational priority. So many good books in the bookstore on this subject... Dive in!

Christ plans to glorify his father through his cross! In addition...

He plans to glorify his father through his gift!

John 17:2-3 (ESV) — 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **3** And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Jesus prays...

"Father, you have given me authority to give eternal life to all whom you have given me."

Jesus gives the gift of eternal life to all those whom the father has given to him. How does this glorify the father? The father gave sinners to Jesus, so that Jesus could give them eternal life.

What is eternal life?

According to verse 3, "eternal life is knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom God the father has sent."

What makes heaven so amazing is not being with friends and loved ones, dwelling in glorified bodies, eating amazing foods, playing that perfect round of golf, sitting on that amazing beach, or writing that mesmerizing piano concerto.

What makes heaven so amazing is relationship with God. God is the ultimate source of joy, life, fulfillment, serenity, and peace.

Is your heart restless, always active, but never satisfied? Our hearts will only find rest when they are enjoying eternal life.

St. Augustine was not always a saint. Before he was a Christian, he lived a very immoral lifestyle. He sought pleasure in theft, philosophy, morality, woman, wine, and song, but nothing satisfied him.

When he finally discovered God, he famously prayed, "God, you have created us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee."

Eternal life, relationship with the triune God, brings rest and joy to weary hearts. And we don't have to wait for heaven to receive it. We can receive it right now! Our souls can be satisfied right now!

Do you have eternal life?

Eternal life is not knowing facts about God, it is knowing God.

Furthermore, it is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ. Do you know him? Do you hear his voice in the Scriptures, do you commune with him in prayer, are you sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings?

Illustration:

Steve Largent poster...

I knew his height and weight.

His 40-yard dash time.

His records

His age

His hometown

His college

Etc...

I knew all about Steve Largent, but I did not actually know him.

Maybe that describes some of you? You know all the facts about Jesus, but do you know him. Do you have eternal life?

How do we get eternal life? It is a gift.

John 17:2 (ESV) — 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Christ glorifies the father by giving us eternal life, free of charge!!!

It can't be earned through religious devotion.
It can't be earned through good works.
It can't be earned through avoiding bad works.

It must simply be received.

Christ plans to glorify his father through his cross!

He plans to glorify his father through his gift!

He plans to glorify his father through his achievement!

John 17:4 (ESV) — 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus is speaking prophetically in verse 4. He has already accomplished much for this father in his earthly mission. Yet, his greatest achievement or accomplishment is still in his future. His greatest work is the cross.

Yet, his achievement on the cross is so sure, that Christ speaks of it as already happening. This happens often in the NT.

In just a few hours, while hanging on the cross, he would cry out with a loud voice "It is finished." (John 19:30).

What was finished? Jesus assignment.

The father chose billions of people to be saved. And on the cross Jesus died for every single one of them, making atonement for every single sinner given to him by the father.

Not one of them would be lost.

Not one of them will ever be punished for their sins.

Not one of them would ever have to fear the wrath of God.

The salvation he accomplished would be applied.

The father planned it, the son accomplished it, and the Spirit would apply it to every single person chosen by the father.

On the cross, Jesus achieved exactly what his father had planned. Thus, glorifying the father and completing his salvific mission.

Application:

What does this mean for us?

On the cross Jesus did not say, "I started the work... now the saints need to finish it..."

He said, "it is finished."
He accomplished everything to save us.

This means that we don't have to do anything but believe and receive!!! That's it!
I already know that pastor...
Let me ask you a few questions.

Why do you read the bible and pray?
Why do you come to church?
What happened when you sin the 36th time last week?

Christ not only prayed to glorify the father, but he also devised a plan to glorify his father, and he fulfilled it perfectly.

Which means that Christ also has the prospect of glory, which leads to our final heading.

*First, a prayer for glory.
Second, a plan for glory.*

Third, a prospect of glory.

John 17:5 (ESV) — 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

In light of Christ's cross and resurrection, Jesus very specifically asks God the father to restore him to his former glory, that is the glory that he had before the world began.

This implies that Christ has a past, present, and future glory. Let's examine each aspect of Christ's glory.

Christ's past glory.

John 17:5 (ESV) — 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

The implications of the last phrase are mindboggling.

This phrase implies that Jesus is coeternal with the father.

In John 8:58 Jesus says, "before Abraham was I am."

This implies that before creation there was nothing but the triune God. No time, space, or matter, just God in the happy community of the trinity.

Jesus says that he had glory with the father, implying that they shared glory in this triune community.

Speaking of the trinity, one scholar writes,

"The Father... Son... and Holy Spirit glorify each other... At the center of the universe, self-giving love is the dynamic currency of the Trinitarian life of God. The persons within God exalt, commune with, and defer to one another... each divine person harbors the others at the center

of his being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance each person envelops and circles the others.” (Plantinga, Quoted by Keller in RFG, 215)

“In Christianity God is not an impersonal thing nor a static thing—not even just one person—but a dynamic pulsating activity, a life, a kind of drama, almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance.... (The) pattern of this three-personal life is... the great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at eh very center of reality.” (C. S. Lewis, quoted by Keller in RFG, 215)

In eternity past, before the creation of all things, Jesus Christ was far more glorious. So, what happened?

Christ's past glory....

Christ's present glory.

John 17:5 (ESV) – 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Christ's current or present glory is not what it once was or what it will be. In the incarnation, Jesus stepped unimaginably far down, down, down to the lowest place. He set aside the display of his glory to serve us.

Philippians 2:5–8 (ESV) – 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The incarnation was the greatest act of humility in the history of the cosmos!

Christ hid his glory in the manger, the carpenter's workshop, the poverty of Palestine, and the cross.

But because Christ humbled himself on the cross, Christ will be glorified, bringing us to his future glory.

Christ's past glory.

Christ's present glory.

Christ's future glory.

John 17:5 (ESV) – 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Christ can pray that the father would glorify him, because his death and resurrection will make him worthy of all honor glory and praise.

Philippians 2:8–11 (ESV) – 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly

exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 5:11–14 (ESV) – 11 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, **12** 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!” **13** 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!” **14** And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Application:

The path to glory is the path of the cross!
There is no other way.
The cross always comes before the crown. Just like it did for Jesus.

Because Jesus humbled himself, he will be exalted. The same holds true for us. When we humble ourselves and take up our crosses, we too will be exalted.

How can you take up your cross this week?

Conclusion:

As Christ begins his beautiful high priestly prayer in John 17, we see...

A prayer for glory
A plan for glory
A prospect of glory

Remember this prayer was written down for our edification and our example. It is a model prayer. This means that we too..

We must petition God to be glorified in our lives.
We too must have a plan to glorify him through cross bearing.
We too must not forget that when we humble ourselves, we will be exalted.

Let's pray...