

John 17:1-5
(Psalm 96; 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, 16-18)
“Glorify the Son, that the Son May Glorify You”

Introduction

One of the simplest ways to describe what has gone wrong in our relationship with God is that we have sought for ourselves the glory that belongs only to God. So a theme of the Scripture is God saying that he will give his glory to no one who seeks glory for himself, and yet, that we on whom he has placed his love are destined for nothing less than glory.

Paul describes the nature of human rebellion in these words: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:22-23). The author of Hebrews describes our salvation in this way: “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2:10).

“In bringing many sons to glory”! Do we have any conception of what God has prepared for us? Glory describes the weightiness of the reality of God’s presence, the splendor of his holiness shining forth, and his fame, the honor that is due to him alone. The plea for glory is the thread that weaves its way through this prayer and binds all things together in the mercy and grace of God. There is a kind of seeking after glory that separates us from God and another kind of seeking after glory that binds us to God’s heart, and knowing the difference between the two is crucial.

This prayer should be studied and understood by everyone interested in Jesus Christ, because here we hear the cry of his heart to God as he prepares to face the cross. Here is the true Lord’s Prayer. The prayer known by that name is actually the disciples’ prayer, an outline of how we are to approach God and make our requests known. But here we have Jesus’ own prayer, and it is in three parts: First he prays for himself (17:1-5), then he prays for the disciples with him in the upper room (17:6-19), and finally he prays for us – for all of us down through the ages who would believe in Jesus through the testimony of those first disciples there with him on the final night before his arrest and passion (17:20-26).

This morning we look at the first part of this prayer, Jesus’ prayer for himself. To the degree that we begin to grasp something of the nature of this prayer, we too will learn more deeply how to “pray and not lose heart.” Three things stand out as I read these first five verses: Jesus’ radical and complete submission to his Father, his understanding of the heart of his mission, and his prayer for himself expressive of his heart’s longing to complete his mission and return to the place of authority at his Father’s right hand.

Body

1. Note, first, Jesus' submission to the Father in all things:

With regard to timing: "the hour has come" (17:1).

With regard to authority: "you have given him authority over all flesh" (17:2).

2. Note, secondly, Jesus' understanding of his mission:

His ministry to his heavenly Father: Giving his father the glory he alone deserves. "That the Son may glorify you" (17:1); "I glorified you on earth" (17:4).

His ministry to his people: Giving us the glory that we do not deserve. "To give eternal life to all whom you have give him" (17:2). This gift of life Jesus later in this prayer describes as containing at its heart the gift of glory: "The glory that you have given me I have given them" (17:22).

3. Note, finally, Jesus' prayer for himself:

The prayer itself: "glorify me in your own presence" (17:5).

The basis of the prayer: "with the glory I had with you before the world existed" (17:5).

Conclusion

The key to understanding these first verses, and all that follows, is that Jesus sought glory for himself so that through his radical obedience and suffering *his Father who alone deserves glory* might get glory, and so that *we who do not deserve glory* might also get glory, the glory due only to God. What wondrous love is this?

The hymns we sing to God's glory have at their heart this message of the incredible grace of God in giving his best – his Son – to redeem sinners like you and me, and the incredible grace of the Son in laying aside his glory and giving himself as a sin offering in our place, in order to bring us to nothing less than the glory of the sons and daughters of God. We share in his glory.

How should we respond? What shall we do? Paul's describes our response in this way: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18). May God work such glory into us, who have been brought by grace from death to life!

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