



John 17:1-5
So That You May Believe: John
“Jesus’ Prayer: Glorify”

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This morning we continue in our series in the gospel of John. And as we get into chapter 17, we step into a chapter that flows right out of the previous few chapters, where Jesus gives his final directives and words of encouragement to his disciples. In fact, in John 18, Jesus is arrested. So, this 17th chapter is crucial. It’s the last words his disciples hear from him before Judas comes with the authorities to arrest him. So, what does Jesus say? What does he do? What would *you* do if you knew you were down to your last hour or less and you wanted to do one final thing that would bless those who are closest to you? Would you want to just be with your family and closest friends? Would you want to look at photo albums from your life? Have people share their memories of you and what they appreciated about you? You share what you appreciated about them? Watch the Super Bowl? Mow the lawn or do the laundry?

Let’s turn to **John 17:1-5** and see how Jesus spends his last few minutes with his disciples before the mob comes to take him away. This is God’s Word to you and me this morning...

So: In his hour of need, as the last thing he does with his disciples before he is arrested: Jesus prays. In many ways, *this* prayer is the Lord’s prayer. It’s the prayer that Jesus prays in his hour of tension and even crisis, as a fully human man, the word made flesh. What we call the Lord’s prayer is his teaching on *how* to pray. That doesn’t make it less of a prayer, obviously, and far be it from me to try and change what we call the Lord’s prayer.

Regardless, this prayer in John 17 is born more out of Jesus’ own human need at this moment, knowing that Judas will be coming soon with the authorities, to arrest him. So: **The fact that Jesus prays is instructive in and of itself.** In his greatest hour of need, when things are getting tense, when a dark night of the soul is upon him, he turns to his heavenly Father and prays. This certainly is not the only time Jesus prayed. We see him doing it throughout his ministry, sometimes getting away from the crowds to spend time in prayer, sometimes in the midst of the crowds. But here, in this crucial

moment in time, where every second counts, we should take note of the fact that Jesus prays.

I'll be honest, if I'd been in Jesus' shoes, I probably would have continued the line of teaching from John 16. I would have continued to give them words of encouragement, directives, admonitions...anything to make sure that they carried on with the mission and vision and didn't chicken out, give up, and mess the whole thing up. Jesus has spent three years equipping them to live into the vision he's instilled in them, and they haven't always shown themselves to be the sharpest tools in the shed or the most courageous of leaders. I mean, as we looked at last week at the end of chapter 16: even though they now believe in him, Jesus tells them that they're very shortly going to abandon him and leave him without human company.

So, I would have talked more about this "overcoming the world" that Jesus says he's going to do, so as to encourage them, because they clearly need more direction. More encouragement. More instructions on what to do and how to do it and simply to have the courage to do it. Maybe I'm just a control freak and don't trust them to do that right thing. Either way, you should be glad I'm just your pastor and not the Messiah. Amen?

But that's not what Jesus does. He prays. Now, he does pray for the disciples, as we'll see next week. But given that he prays, we see that: **When we are in times of uncertainty, or when our life is on a collision course, when things are tense, certainly when the end is in sight, when our adversaries are about to get their way, turning to God in prayer is the most important thing we can do.** It's exactly what Jesus does in that situation. What would Jesus do (WWJD) may be an overused phrase from 30 years ago or whatever, but it's not a bad question to ask. And in this situation: he prays.

There's a story about a man who took his small son with him to town to run some errands. When lunch time arrived, the two of them went to a familiar restaurant for a sandwich. The father sat down on one of the stools at the counter and lifted the boy up to the seat beside him. They ordered lunch, and when the waiter brought the food, the father said, "Son, let's have a silent prayer before our meal." Dad got through praying first and waited for the boy

to finish his prayer, but he just sat with his head bowed for an unusually long time. When he finally looked up, his father asked him, “What in the world were you praying about all that time?” With the innocence and honesty of a child, he replied, “How do I know? It was a silent prayer.” ☺

Fortunately for us, and for Jesus’ disciples, his prayer was not silent, and we know what he prayed. And if the fact that he prayed is one thing for us to learn from this and inspire us to pray more as well, then the content of his prayer is the second thing for us to take away. **And throughout this prayer, and especially here at the start of it, we see that Jesus prayed for glory. Specifically, he prays for his heavenly Father’s glory, and that he (Jesus) would be glorified.** Five times in these five verses we see the noun glory or the verb glorify.

The root word for both in the Greek that the New Testament was written in, is “doxa.” Say that with me, “Doxa.” It’s a great Greek word that we see throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Yes, the Old Testament was mostly written in Hebrew, with a little Aramaic, but the first translation was into Greek, about 300 years before Jesus walked the earth. 340 times we see “doxa” throughout the Bible, with about 230 of those being in the New Testament. In fact, 42 times we see it in John’s gospel. So, it’s a common word.

It’s interesting here because twice Jesus uses it in a command form – in verse 1 and in verse 5. Both times, he doesn’t ask, but rather commands, his heavenly Father to glorify Jesus. Doxa is clearly in the imperative form. This little bit alone tells us that Jesus saw himself in a different light than anyone else, because prayer is never about us humans, created in God’s image, commanding God to do something. The Apostle Paul captures the essence of this in Romans 9:20, **“But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” (Romans 9:20).**

In fact, it was just prior to this, as we talked about last week, that Jesus tells his disciples to *ask* God for things in His name, that is: in Jesus’ name. Jesus isn’t *asking* here, because he’s not like us. Jesus is different. He’s got a

different relationship with his heavenly father than you or I have because of who he is. For those of us who are Jesus followers, we know that. We get it. But if you're here this morning and you aren't sure about Jesus and who he is, this easily-overlooked detail about how Jesus talks to his heavenly father is an important insight into who Jesus is. There's an equality that he has with God the Father that the rest of us don't have.

As kind of a side note: Jesus refers to himself in the 3rd person and the 1st person, which might seem odd. But that's not uncommon in Jesus' ministry and teaching. He does that regularly. Also, in this prayer, we see an affirmation of who he is, the authority he had, the mission that he was on to bring people into relationship with their heavenly father and therefore to have eternal life, and Jesus' sense of accomplishment in regards to that mission. But without question, the main theme of this opening part of his prayer, is that God the Father, and God the Son would be glorified.

Jesus' command and request is that God would be glorified, much as Jesus has glorified his heavenly father while on earth. We might wonder what it means to glorify something. It's one of those words, at least for me, I think I know what it means, and I'm confident I know what it means, until I have to define it. What is glory? What is glorification? What does it mean to glorify someone or something?

There are actually a couple meanings, and both are seen here. **One meaning of glorification is the final stage of the ordo salutis and an aspect of Christian soteriology and Christian eschatology.** I'm sure nothing more is needed to be said about that, right? I've never said so many big words in one sentence in my life. In common English: this glorification refers to the nature of Jesus, and those who follow him, *after* death and judgement; it is the final step in God's work of salvation and redemption of an individual: in eternity, standing before God Almighty. You and I, if we confess our sin and follow Jesus, we will one day will be glorified in eternity (the letter of 1 Peter speaks of this as well). When Jesus says, "Father, glorify your Son...glorify me" this is the kind of glorification Jesus is speaking of.

The more common Biblical way of thinking of “glory” or “glorify” is not what God does for us in eternity like that first definition, but what we do for God here and now. Generally speaking, to glorify is to praise or honor someone or something to an extreme degree. We can glorify ourselves, we can glorify a celebrity, we can glorify an aspect of creation, a human creation, and so forth. **Jesus’ prayer is that God would be glorified; and as his disciples, that is our aim as well. So, to glorify God is to praise or honor Him or to an extreme degree.** When something is glorified, it is praised to the highest degree possible.

And everything Jesus did in his ministry was always about glorifying God the Father. He always pointed people to the Father. He praised the Father. He magnified the Father. He honored the Father. And that’s what Jesus does. His mission is to glorify his heavenly Father so that people would see his holiness, his grandeur, his glory, confess how short of that they have fallen in spite of being created in his image, and then be connected to him. All of that is wrapped up in glorifying God. And that’s what he prays for even as Judas is coming with the authorities to arrest him. *I wonder if we pray for God to be glorified in us and through us in the trials we face?* Whether that’s health concerns, difficulties in parenting, marital struggles, a job being terminated, life in the wake of a divorce, facing death as Jesus will very shortly...in the face of whatever challenge, difficulty, or obstacle before us, is our hope and prayer that God would be glorified? That’s what Jesus does here.

As many of you know, the Super Bowl is later today. For those of you who didn’t know, I’m sorry to have ruined your blissful ignorance that apparently results from living in a cave. ☺ And in meeting with the media, the Kansas City Chiefs starting quarterback, Patrick Mahomes, had this to say: “My Christian faith plays a role in everything that I do. I always ask God to lead me in the right direction and let me be who I am for His Name...And obviously, we’ll be on a huge stage in the Super Bowl that He’s given me, and I want to make sure I’m glorifying Him while I do it.”

“It just kind of relieves the pressure of playing the football game, because I know that I’m on that football field to glorify Him before everything,” (Patrick Mahomes) “...And so it’s not about winning or

losing. It's about going out there and being the best that I can – the best that I can in His Name....I know why I'm here – and it's not about winning football games. It is about glorifying Him.”

He's not the only Christian on the two teams, of course. And a lot of them have this same kind of mentality. And it doesn't mean he, or any of the others, lives that out perfectly. But I love how he shows us what it means to live out our faith where we work. Or where play, depending on how you view professional football players. Their job is to play a game, so it's both. Regardless, he wants to glorify God there. He's not glorifying the Super Bowl, or himself, or other players, as most of the American Sports world is doing today. He wants to play for God's glory.

And I hope that like Jesus, and even like Patrick Mahomes, that our aim would be to glorify God wherever we are. That even when we're facing incredible obstacles – whether that's an opposing football team, crucifixion, cancer, a job search, serving as an elder or deacon (which is actually more “fun” than “challenge”), whatever it is, turn to God in prayer as Jesus does here...and pray that God would be glorified. That is job #1. It's not just something for Sunday mornings, but something we can do at any time, regardless of the circumstances. And I pray that this week, even today when you're watching the game, that you'd have the opportunity to bring glory to God, and you'd step through that door and to it. Let's Pray for God's glory even now...Amen.