

## Sermon – 16/07/2006 am

### Jesus Prays for Himself

Study Text: John 17:1-5

Sometimes Jesus went off to pray alone, and sometimes He prayed in public. He prayed to His Father in heaven and taught His disciples to do the same. What Jesus said in prayer is not often recorded – except for this amazing prayer in John 17. This is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus and as such gives us a wonderful insight into Jesus relationship with His Father. This is God the Son communing with God the Father. Do not be surprised therefore if there are thoughts here that are beyond your comprehension. Still we are to learn from this prayer. We are to learn truth, as well as the nature of prayer.

Jesus was probably still in the upper room with His eleven disciples when He *lifted up his eyes to heaven* and prayed. He lifted up His eyes and spoke to God as His Father just as he did when He was at the tomb of Lazarus (11:41). We also are to address God as Father, for we are adopted children of God. We also are to lift our eyes to heaven, at least figuratively if not physically, for we pray to our Father in heaven.

*The hour has come* said Jesus. This was the hour upon which His whole life was focussed. This was the hour upon which your whole life should be focussed if you believe in Jesus Christ. In fact this is the hour that is the centre of all human history. From the beginning of his ministry Jesus spoke about this hour. Here in Jerusalem, here in the upper room just before going out to the Mount of Olives, Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to fulfil all Scripture, to obey His Father and offer Himself as a sacrifice in atonement for sin. *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (1:29).

### Glorify Your Son

A man in WA has declared himself to be a prince, and has excised his property from Australia. He is not of royal birth, nor has he done anything deserving of being called a prince. His claim is not recognised by anyone but himself. Prince Charles on the other hand is recognised as a prince because his mother is the Queen. He rightly receives the honour accorded to an earthly prince. The Queen also chooses to honour other people in her realm for the work they have done. Each year on her birthday she bestows such honours.

Jesus could pray *Father...glorify your Son*, for honour was due to him on both accounts. He was born the Son of God, and he completed the works the Father gave him to do. Jesus was with the Father *before the world was* (17:4). John began this gospel with the words: *He (Jesus) was in the beginning with God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. The incarnation is a key doctrine of this gospel.

Jesus was sent by the Father into this world (17:3). Throughout his ministry Jesus proclaimed that he was sent by God the Father, and was doing the work of his Father. The Jewish leaders refused to accept that he was sent by God, but his disciples did believe this. *We believe you came forth from God* they said (16:30).

*I have finished the work that you have given me to do* (17:4). This was a bold claim, but one Jesus could make confidently for he walked in the will of his Father continually. So close was his relationship to the Father that the Jews accused him of blasphemy, of making Himself equal with God. So close was his relationship with the Father that Jesus could say *I and my Father are one* (10:30). Jesus could say he had finished the work even though he had not yet gone to the Cross and completed that work.

What did Jesus mean when he prayed *Glorify your Son*? What does glory mean? At this point we see the uniqueness of this prayer, for no man would ask the Father to glorify him. As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus could ask to be glorified. But Jesus does not ask for glory for himself, full stop. His glorification would bring glory to the Father – *that you Son also may glorify you* (17:1). Even when Jesus was troubled and prayed, or thought to pray, *Father save me from this hour*, his prayer quickly became *Father glorify your name* (12:28).

Glory means to give praise and honour. It also means in this context to ‘clothe with splendour’. Note that this glory Jesus prayed about was not coming from man. It was not earthly glory. It was the glory he had with the Father before his incarnation.

Moses wanted to see the glory of God, but it was beyond human comprehension. Similarly with Peter, James and John on the mountain with Jesus praying (Luke 9:28f). Yet in Jesus, God revealed his glory. *He who has seen me has seen the Father* Jesus told Philip (14:9). The Son is radiance of the Father's glory (Hebrews 1:3). If you struggle to comprehend the glory of God revealed in Jesus do not despair. One day you who believe in Jesus will see him face to face in all his glory.

Jesus was praying about glory when he was about to be crucified! How could this be? Surely this would be the hour of humiliation not glorification! The truth is, it would be both, for it was the will of God for his Son to die on the Cross. His death was the climax of God's great plan of salvation for mankind. In his death Jesus would satisfy the wrath of God against sin. In the sacrifice of the Cross sin was atoned for, and death, the penalty for sin, was defeated.

*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* Jesus had just told his disciples (16:33). Here is reason to rejoice and to pray *Father glorify your Son*. The one who holds the power of death, Satan, was about to be defeated, to be defeated once and for all (Hebrews 2:14). In heaven this was cause for rejoicing.

As the Psalmist wrote and Paul affirmed – *When he ascended on high he led captivity captive* (Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 3:8). It should be cause for rejoicing among people on the earth also – and it is for those whom Jesus has set free from the power of Satan.

## **Authority**

Jesus grounds his petition in two facts. The first is that the Father has given him authority over all flesh and the second that Jesus should give eternal life. Verse 2, and especially verse three are sometimes regarded as being parenthetical in this prayer, but they are integral to the prayer both grammatically and in thought.

The question of authority is a vital question. Who has authority in the family, who has authority at work, who has authority over the nation? These are important questions for men.

The most vital question of all is who has authority over life – not death but life. Satan has the power of death and gives it to many men. But who can give life?

The Father gave Jesus authority on earth. Jesus exercised authority over men and over the demons also. He healed many people and even raised some from the dead. He cast out many demons in demonstration of his power over the devil (Luke 10:18).

The risen Lord told his disciples in Galilee *all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth* (Matthew 28:18). On the basis of this authority they could go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus has authority over all flesh. He has authority to forgive sin; he has authority to give life to whom he will (5:21). In exercising that authority he prayed that he would bring glory to God.

‘Although the grant of authority is over all people, the purpose of the grant is that those whom the Father has given to the Son might have eternal life’

## **Eternal Life**

Years ago I was travelling in the back seat when the two churchgoers in the front seat began to talk about eternal life. One said he kept hearing about eternal life in Bible readings and in sermons, but did not understand what it meant. Would you be able to answer his question? What answer would you give to someone who asked you ‘what is eternal life’?

*This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent* (17:3). Jesus gives eternal life to those whom the Father gives to him. It is all of grace but it is not something that believers know nothing about. It is in fact to know God and his Son Jesus Christ.

Note the names here – the only true God. There is only one true God and that is the God who sent Jesus into the world. And there is only one Jesus Christ and that is the one God the Father sent into the world. You cannot have one without the other and still claim to have eternal life.

To know means more than just head knowledge or ‘devil knowledge’ You believe there is one God – great so does the devil said James (James 2:15). To know God and Jesus Christ, is to believe that God sent Jesus, that Jesus was crucified, died, and rose again and ascended into heaven. It is to believe that Jesus has the authority to forgive your sin and give you life.

This verse complements the well known gospel text of John 3:16. That verse also speaks of eternal or everlasting life. Those who believe in Jesus will *not perish but have eternal life*. Here Jesus tells what eternal life is.

Do you have eternal life? If you truly know the only true God and believe in Jesus Christ who died and rose again, then be assured you do. If you are not sure then read these verses again, and humbly and sincerely come before the Lord in prayer.

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