

## John 17:1-5

### Introduction

This morning we come to John chapter 17. We're going to see that in a sense, this chapter is a beautiful summation of John's Gospel to this point. At the same time, it's the ultimate "preparation" for and transition to the cross.

Ever since the end of chapter 13, when Judas left the upper room to betray Jesus and Jesus was left alone with the eleven, Jesus has been talking with His disciples about His "going away" and about how His "going away" will be the key to His presence with them forever. Jesus concludes this "Upper Room Discourse" with these words:

- John 16:33 — "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

If this is a "farewell," it's not a sad or a gloomy farewell. It's a triumphant farewell. It's a farewell full of joy and hope because it's the prelude to His presence with us forever. Now, as we begin chapter 17, Jesus turns from addressing the disciples as their Teacher and their Lord (13:13) to addressing the Father as His Son in prayer.

**I. John 17:1** — Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You..."

Some have described this chapter as a kind of "holy of holies." The Son is communing with His Father in the most intimate kind of prayer. We could reasonably ask ourselves: Is it right for us to listen in?

We're going to see this morning and in the coming weeks that this prayer is rooted in, and deeply expressive of, the unique, one-of-a-kind relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. And yet here's the wonderful thing—and the mystery: We're also going to see that from beginning to end this is a prayer that reaches out to us and embraces us. As Jesus prays this prayer, we're not left on the outside listening in. Instead, we're being called to enter, ourselves, into this intimacy of relationship that the Son has with His Father. Jesus prayed aloud, in the presence of His disciples because He wanted them to hear – and not just to hear, but even to participate. As we come to this chapter, we come with the unique sense that we're entering into a sacred and holy place, but also with the knowledge that this is precisely what we've been called to do by grace.

**II. John 17:1a** — Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, **the hour has come...**"

In chapter two, Jesus said to His mother, when she informed Him that the wine had run out at the wedding in Cana:

- John 2:4 — "Woman, what does that have to do with us? **My hour has not yet come.**"

In chapter seven, we read:

- John 7:30 — So [the people] were seeking to seize [Jesus]; and no man laid his hand on Him, because **His hour had not yet come**.

And again in chapter eight:

- John 8:20 — These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because **His hour had not yet come**.

In chapter twelve, the perspective changes. Jesus has made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem just a week prior to the Passover Feast. John tells us that there were some *Greeks* among those who were going up to worship at the feast and that they wished to see Jesus. When the disciples told Jesus:

- John 12:23 (cf. 13:1) — Jesus answered them, saying, “**The hour has come** for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

What is Jesus’ “hour”?—the “hour” for which He came into the world; the hour around which the whole history of the world revolves? It’s the hour of His *glorification* via the “shame” of the cross. It will be through the *glorification* of Jesus, when He’s “lifted up from the earth” and displayed on a cross (cf. 3:14) so that He might be *further* “lifted up” to the right hand of God—it will be on the ground of this glorification of Jesus that He will “draw all men,” *Jews and Greeks*, to Himself (12:32). That’s why Jesus responds as He does to the disciples. He knows that His hour has now come and that it’s this hour that will open the way for even these Greeks to come to Him. Jesus’ hour is an hour of triumph. It’s an hour of glory. And yet He goes on to say just a few verses later:

- John 12:27–28 — “Now My soul has become troubled [greatly distressed; in turmoil]; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.”

Jesus didn’t seek His own glory independently of His Father (cf. 8:50). If Jesus did seek His own glory, it was so that the Father would be glorified in Him and through Him. When Jesus comes to the hour of His *own* glorification, what does He pray?—“Father, glorify *Your* name.” What is Jesus doing when He prays these words? He’s submitting Himself to the Father’s will, and so He’s submitting Himself to the suffering and shame and degradation of the cross. It was in and through the suffering and shame and degradation of the cross that Jesus was to be glorified; and it was in and through this glorification of *Jesus* that the name of the *Father* was to be glorified. So Jesus prays here in chapter 17: “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...”

Do we feel like we’re on the outside listening in? Do we feel like this is a sacred moment that we can’t possibly enter into? What does the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father have to do with us? How can it have *anything* at all to do with us? In fact, as we’ve already begun to see, it

has *everything* to do with us! Jesus prays, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...,” and then He continues in verse 2:

**III. John 17:2–3**— “...*even as* You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Just as we had begun to move away out of humility and reverence, these words give us pause, and even call us to come closer.

What did the Father give to His Son? He gave Him *authority over all flesh*. This means that the authority of Jesus extends to every man, woman, and child who lives on this earth. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples at the end of Matthew’s Gospel: “*All authority* has been given to Me *in heaven and on earth*” (Mat. 28:18). There’s no place in heaven or on earth that we can go—there’s no nation or people in the world—that falls outside the purview of His sovereign rule and authority. And what is the practical significance of this? What does this mean? It means that the Son may give eternal life to *all* those that the Father has given Him – from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. This is the foundation for evangelism and missions. Wherever we *are* and wherever we may *go, there* is the sovereign authority of Jesus over all to whom we could ever speak the Gospel. So after saying in Matthew, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,” Jesus says next, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Mat. 28:19).

But still, we have to ask, what does the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father that we saw in verse one have to do with *us*?—With giving us eternal life? Maybe our first answer would be that we who have been given eternal life will praise and glorify the Father through the Son for this gift that He has given to us. But as true as that may be, it misses the mark. It actually separates too much between the eternal life that is given to us and the glory of the Father and the glory of the Son.

What does Jesus say? “And this *is* eternal life, that they may *know You*, the only true God, *and Jesus Christ* whom You have sent.” Eternal life is not here the *result* of knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Eternal life is not just unending existence in a resurrected body; otherwise, all those in hell will also have eternal life (cf. Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:29; Acts 24:15). Eternal life is a kind of life—a quality of life—that’s wholly other than anything this world can give. Eternal life *is* to know God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. And so the Father and the Son are glorified in and through the gift of eternal life because the gift of eternal life is the gift of knowing the Father in and through our knowing the Son. Are you beginning to see how intimately “one” is the glorification of Jesus and the gift of our eternal life? Are you seeing who intimately “one” is the glorification of the Father and the gift of our eternal life?

The Father and the Son are glorified (not made to *be* more glorious, but glorified) not primarily through our praises—through something *we* do or that we give to Him—but rather through what we have been given – the gift of beholding that glory and gazing upon it in the Gospel; the gift of seeing and knowing the Father in seeing and knowing the Son. The Father and the Son are glorified not primarily through what we do or what we give, but rather through what we have

been given – the gift of eternal life. Now maybe we can understand better and wonder even more at how verses one and two go together.

“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...’ So far we might think that we’re only on the outside listening in. We might begin to move away. But then Jesus says: “...*even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”

What does the glorification of the Father and of the Son have to do with us?—With giving us eternal life? The answer is: Everything. This is the meaning of the “hour” that has now come. Maybe now we can understand better and yet wonder even more at how Jesus can pray in verse ten:

➤ John 17:10 — “...all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; *and I have been glorified in them.*”

Jesus says that He is glorified *in us* — not *by us*, but *in us*. Maybe now we can understand better and yet wonder even more at how Jesus can say in verses 22 and 23:

➤ John 17:22–23 — “The **glory** which You have given Me *I have given to them*, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

When Jesus prays, “Father... glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,” what is He praying? He’s praying for the eternal life of all those that the Father has given Him. He’s committing Himself to the suffering of the cross so that we might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. When we hear Jesus pray, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,” we hear words that reach out to us and embrace us. We’re not on the outside listening in! We hear words that are the guarantee of our being called to enter, ourselves, into this intimacy of relationship that the Son has with the Father. So now Jesus continues:

**IV. John 17:4** — “I glorified You on the earth, having finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

Jesus looks ahead to the cross, now just a few short hours away, and because of His unwavering commitment to doing His Father’s will He can speak of the cross as something already accomplished. The work which the Father gave Jesus to do *on earth* included everything from His baptism to the cross. But what really was this work? Jesus says, “*I glorified You on the earth.*” The work that the Father gave Jesus to do was to glorify Him. But how does Jesus glorify the Father? Not by praising the Father. Not by coming Himself to know the Father. How does Jesus glorify the Father? By manifesting the Father to *us* so that *we* come to *know* the Father. Jesus glorifies *the Father* by giving to *us* the true knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus

Christ whom He has sent. Which is simply to say that Jesus glorifies *the Father* by giving *to us* eternal life. This explains Jesus' words in verses 6-8:

- **John 17:6-8** — “*I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.*”

All of which is simply to say, “I have glorified *You* by giving *to them* eternal life. I have glorified *You* by giving *to them* the true knowledge of *You*, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom *You* have sent.” And then Jesus prays:

**V. John 17:5** — “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

I said at the beginning that we would see that this prayer is rooted in, and deeply expressive of, the unique, one-of-a-kind relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. How can Jesus speak of knowing the only true God *and* knowing Jesus Christ (coordinate and together in the same breath) unless Jesus is truly equal with God? How can Jesus manifest the Father to us so perfectly and so completely as to give us eternal life unless Jesus partakes of all that the Father is? How can Jesus pray, “Father, *glorify Me together with Yourself*, with *the glory which I had with You before the world was*,” unless Jesus is verily “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God”?

So when we hear Jesus pray these words, where do we find ourselves? If ever we were to be on the outside listening in, that would be now, wouldn't it? And yet!—*Why* does Jesus pray this? Why does Jesus ask that He would be glorified together with the Father, with the glory which He had with Him before the world was? Is this, at the very last, an example of “self-seeking” on the part of Jesus? Or is this the ultimate expression of Jesus' desire that *the Father* would be glorified through the eternal life that Jesus gives to us – which is to say, through *our fullest* possible knowledge of the Father and the Son? We don't have to wonder about the answer to that question. At the end of this very chapter, Jesus prays:

- **John 17:24** — “Father, I desire that *they also*, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, *so that they may see My glory which You have given Me*, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

Why does Jesus desire that we should one day be with Him in His presence and see His glory? Because to see Him is to see the Father. Because to know Him is to know the Father. And because to see and to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent *is* eternal life. So the last words that Jesus prays are these:

- **John 17:25-26** (cf. 12:28 [“*have... will...*”]) — “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; *and I have*

*made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

When we hear Jesus pray, “Father, *glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was,*” we hear words that reach out to us and embrace us. We’re not on the outside listening in! We hear words that are the guarantee of our being called to enter, ourselves, into this intimacy of relationship that the Son has with the Father. We hear words that are the promise to us of eternal life.

### **Conclusion**

Do you have, even now, this eternal life? Do you know God—the only true God—and Jesus Christ whom He has sent? Christianity is not first of all or even primarily about doing (though we must and will keep Jesus’ commandments; cf. 15:12-14), but about knowing — knowing not just in an academic, factual sense, but knowing relationally. Eternal life isn’t just unending existence, or even unending existence in a resurrection body, or even unending existence in a resurrection body in heaven. That’s not what eternal life *is*. Eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Eternal life is the *reason* that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world.

Do you have, even now, eternal life? Because if you do, then you have, and possess, everything. We have the ultimate reason for joy and for peace — and for hope. Because if we have eternal life now, we know that one day we’ll experience this eternal life even more fully, when the prayer of Jesus is answered and we’re with Him where He is and we see His *glory*—which *is* to see and to know *God* – the only true God.

This is eternal life.