

God's Passion for His Glory in Salvation (John 17:1-3)

He was to Scotland what Luther was to Germany, a fiery preacher of the Reformation in the 1500s. His name: John Knox. Of his preaching they said "this one man is able in 1 hour to put more life in us than 500 trumpets continually blustering..." Art Azurdia explains: 'Mary, Queen of Scots, the Catholic monarch of a nation that was rapidly becoming Protestant said on one occasion "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of Europe." He was a mighty man of God, a warrior for the cause of Christ, and yet [this prayer warrior]...when laying on his own death bed, he turned to the prayer of Another to strengthen and comfort his own soul ... he asked his wife to read over and over again the prayer of Jesus, as recorded in [Jn 17. That will be our study today if you'd turn there. John Knox called it the 'scripture where I first cast my anchor'] in those last days of his life ... it was while she was reading it to him that he passed into the presence of the One who had originally prayed it...Philip Melancthon [friend of Luther in Germany], another great Reformer, said in the very last lecture he gave just before his death [speaking of Jn 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 [this] prayer offered up by the Son to God Himself."¹

Let's listen with reverence to these words of God the Son to God the Father:

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, 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. [today we'll focus on just these first 3 verses, but let me read some others. He says of His 12 disciples in v. 12:] *While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and **these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves...** ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth ... ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but **also for those who will believe in me through their word, [that's us, He's praying for believers in the future!] ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, **that they also may be in us ... ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world ... ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."******

I have a new favorite chapter in the Bible. I hope this chapter will become a favorite of yours as we study it. I've said in the past that other chapters are my favorite, my favorite will probably change in the future, but this is one of those chapters that can change *you* in the future. In all seriousness, I've heard Steve Lawson say John 17 may be his lifelong favorite chapter of all.

v. 1 begins with '*When Jesus had spoken these words*' - what words? These words in Jn 13-16 we've been studying, I argue they're the greatest message ever given and He concludes with the greatest prayer ever recorded. He says in v. 1 '*the hour has come*,' that's the time of the cross, the greatest event in all history; His own death and resurrection (Jn 18-20). And before that most important work, Jn 13-17 are the most important words He wanted to leave with His followers when He left this world, truths to sustain them and us till the end of the world. In the upper room after the 'Last Supper,' Jesus gave His last sermon, then He closed in a prayer to give lasting strength and joy.

I have to confess I feel unworthy and inadequate to preach on a prayer like this, but the good news is Jesus knows my unworthiness and inadequacies and He actually prays for me in this chapter and prays for you if you believe in Him, v. 20 says. Jesus is praying for each believer. Unworthy inadequate people is what we are and why we need to pray, and why Jesus prays for us. Matthew Henry called Jn 13-16 'the most full and consoling discourse ever uttered on earth [followed by] the most remarkable prayer.' J.C. Ryle wrote 'The chapter...is the most remarkable in the Bible. It stands alone, and there is nothing like it.' A man Spurgeon considered the greatest expositor of his era, John Brown, considered no Scripture greater to exposit when he wrote: 'Scripture...contains many wonderful passages, but none more wonderful than this...The 17th chapter of the Gospel by John, is, without doubt, the most remarkable portion of the most remarkable book in the world.'²

Jn 17 is truly wonderful and remarkable, and stands alone on several levels:

- This chapter takes us back in eternity and eavesdrops on the Trinity
- This is the only extended dialogue we have within the Godhead (a few other places there is a sentence or 2 of Jesus speaking to Father)
- Many pray *to the Lord* in Scripture, but this is a prayer *by the Lord*
- The so-called 'Lord's Prayer' many memorize from Mt 6 is actually what He taught for disciples, but that can't be the Lord's own prayer because it asks '*forgive us our trespasses*'—that's a sinner's prayer not the Lord praying—Jn 17 is the true Lord's Prayer, His very own prayer that *we can't pray* (ex: v. 5 '*glorify me*' only Christ can pray)

So let's start with the first part of this true Lord's Prayer. Jesus starts with '*Father*'—in Hebrew it's *abba*, a term of intimacy He'll repeat in the garden. '*the hour has come*' – we sing of a 'sweet hour of prayer.' We pray because we need Him every hour. But John's gospel uses *hour* also in another sense:

- '*an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father ... an hour is coming ... when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*' (4:21, 23)
- '*an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of God, and those who hear will live*' [5:25, the verse before explains, that's when we believe, the spiritually dead '*pass from death to life*']
- So when Jesus says '*the hour has come,*' it means the time is arrived for salvation of spiritually dead sinners, the age is here for worship to change from a place to a Person, from a Jerusalem temple to Jesus
- In chapter 7 '*they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come*' (7:30, repeated in 8:20)
- Jesus Himself said earlier '*my hour has not yet come,*' (2:4), now in 12:23 '*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*' (then He talks about dying; '*for this reason I came to this hour,*' v. 24-27)
- He's come to the hour of His arrest, when they'll lay hands on Him, the hour of suffering and death, the weekend of the cross He's going to (chapters 18-19) and the time of His resurrection and glorification
[also ascension, Pentecost; 12:16, 32, 7:39, 4:23]

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...

1. Notice First, God's Passion for His Glory

Jonathan Edwards wrote *The End for Which God Created the World*. It was republished under the title *God's Passion for His Glory*. That book rocked my world and changed my worldview to see it isn't just *man's* chief end and purpose to glorify and enjoy God forever. It's also the ultimate purpose of *God* to glorify God and enjoy God forever. In v. 5 Christ prays the glory He enjoyed with His Father before creation be restored. Edwards writes on v. 1:

'Christ seeking the glory of God as his ultimate end, is manifest by what he says, when he comes yet nearer to the hour of his last sufferings, in that remarkable prayer, the last he ever made with his disciples, on the evening before his crucifixion, wherein he expresses the sum of his aims and desires. His first words are, "*Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee*" [John 17:1]. As this is his first request, we may suppose it to be his supreme request and desire, and what he ultimately aimed at in all. If we consider what follows to the end, all the rest that is said in the prayer, seems to be but an amplification of this great request ... Jesus Christ sought the *glory of God* as his highest and last end.'³

The passion of the Christ wasn't centered on us, it's centered on the Son's glory to give the Father's glory. God is passionately committed to His glory first and foremost, more than us, and that's the first and foremost truth we can learn from this prayer for our prayers and perspective. It's not about us primarily. Jesus does have us in mind in this prayer in glorious love (v. 24-26), but first in v. 1: *Father, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...*

In context, v. 2-3 give a key way He's glorified: saving sinners, giving them eternal life. In v. 4 Jesus talks about finishing the work He was sent to do, that's the work of salvation on the cross where He will say '*it is finished.*' And v. 5 looks beyond that to the resurrection and His glorified ascension to heaven at the right hand: *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* ⁶ *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*

Glorifying God in this context parallels v. 6 '*manifesting His name,*' in the sense of *making visible* who God is, *displaying* His character and attributes. So 'glorify the Son/Father' includes the idea of *make visible His attributes* and character, *put who He is on display*, make that *manifest and magnified*. That's what the cross, resurrection and ascension soon did for Christ's glory

Earlier in John's gospel, miracles displaying Christ's character or attributes '*manifested His glory*' (2:11), most notably raising the dead (11:4, 40). The greatest display of that will be Christ's own death and resurrection to glory. In light of that He prays in v. 1 for the Father to glorify the Son at the cross, and v. 5 prays in light of glory they shared '*before the world existed.*' This takes us back to ultimate questions of life, like why does the world exist? Why do we? What in the world is our purpose? Why was the world created?

The text tells us it's for the glory of God. v. 5 goes back to before the world existed and the pre-existent glory of Father and Son, which takes us back to Jn 1: '*In the beginning was the Word [Jesus who]...was with God and...was God...all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made*' [then it talks about His glory in v. 14]. Col 1 says of Jesus '*all things were created by him and for him...so that in everything he might have the supremacy*' (v. 16, 18 NIV). Heb 1 says Christ '*is the radiance of the glory of God...he upholds the universe*' and through Him the world was created. Here Jn 17:2 moves from Christ's supremacy to Christ's sovereignty when He prays for glorification '*since you have given him authority over all flesh*'

Because you (the Father) have given him (the Son) absolute authority over all flesh, that's why Christ prays for His glorification in v. 1. The sovereign authority of God over *all flesh*, no exceptions (*flesh* even often refers to the rebellious part of humanity) Jesus is glorified by almighty all-sovereignty. And He continues in v. 2 *to give eternal life to all whom you have given him* ... so not only is He glorified in being sovereign over all, God is glorified in salvation being given to all God the Father gives God the Son. We'll see that more in future weeks in v. 6-9 but just look at v. 9 for now: *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me* ... So it isn't the whole world, it's those God the Father has given to God the Son. Jesus says in v. 2 He gives eternal life to all the Father has given Him.

2 Tim 2:10 says the *elect* are given salvation '*in Christ...with eternal glory.*' There's eternal life here (Jn 17:2) and eternal glory (v5, 24). Put on thinking caps and buckle your Bible belts, I want to take us on an eternal glory trip. Let's begin before the beginning. What did God do for believers then, why? Eph 1 says '*before the foundation of the world...he chose us in him...in love he predestined us...[why?] to the praise of the glory of his grace*' that's why [Rom 9:23 calls us '*vessels of mercy...prepared beforehand for glory*']

God chose or elected or predestined all in Christ for His glory, to the praise of the glory of His grace, and He did it in eternity past before creation. That boggles minds and should humble hearts and raise our praise to the glory of sovereign grace! That's before creation, what about other things in creation?

- Gen 1, day 1, He created light. Why? To shine forth glory, 2 Cor 4:6
- Day 2: why create a firmament in the sky? To declare glory, Ps 19:1
- Day 3: why did He create dry land called earth, separated from seas, and why did He create plants and trees? So the Psalms can say '*may the whole earth be filled with his glory*' (72:19) and '*Let your glory be over all the earth*' (57:5, 11, 108:5). The waters covering the rest of the earth pictures and makes possible the prophecy of Hab 2:14: '*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*' His creating trees pictures and makes possible the prophecy of Isa 61:3 NKJV '*they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*'
- Day 4: why did He create the sun to rise? To show His glory, Ps 19
- Day 5: why did He create sea creatures and birds? His glory, Ps 148
- Day 6: why did God create the beasts of the field and create people? In Isa 43 God speaks of people '*whom I created for my glory.*' Same chapter says even '*The beasts of the field will glorify Me. The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise*' (v. 20-21 NASB)

- Why did God say at the end of Gen 1 to man and woman created in His image *'be fruitful and multiply'*? To fill the earth with His glory in children reflecting His image as parents tell of His glory, Ps 78:4
- Does it glorify God to trust Gen 1 literally happened, not by billions of years of evolving or explosions, He spoke it into being, it's done? Ps 33:6-9 NKJV *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made and all the host [stars] by the breath of His...Let all...stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood...*

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Who made you? God. What else did God make? All things. Why did God make you and all things? For his own glory

- Why did God create marriage in Gen 2? For His glory, Eph 5:31-32, and to picture His love that makes His bride glorious, v. 27, Rev 19
- In Gen 3 why did God allow Satan and sin in the world? One reason is for His glory in His victory over them, Jn 12:23-31, 16:8-11, 17:1
- In Gen 6-8 why did God bring a flood? To display His glory, Ps 29
- In Gen 11 why did He form nations with different languages? God's plan was *'to declare His glory among the nations'* (Ps 96:3) and to one day re-unite every tribe and language for His glory (Revelation)
- Later in Genesis why did God call Abraham and Israel his offspring to come from him? Acts 7:2: *the God of glory appeared to Abraham*
- The prophet says on behalf of Israel: *The LORD called...he said to me 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified'* Isa 49:3
- In Exodus, why did God allow Israel to be oppressed by Pharaoh in Egypt? God tells us why in Exodus 14: *I will get glory over Pharaoh ...the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen* (Ex 14:17-18)
- Why did God divide the red sea and lead Israel thru the wilderness? Isaiah says God *'caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths ... So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name'* (Isa 63:12-14)
- Why did God give Israel His Law? The Scripture says: *The LORD was pleased... to magnify his law and make it glorious* (Isa 42:21)
- Why did His covenant promise land despite Israel's sin? God said in Isa 60:21 *They will possess the land forever...that I may be glorified*
- Why didn't God cut off Israel in repeated sin that made Him angry? *'For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off...For my own sake, for my own sake I do it...my glory I will not give to another'* Isa 48:9-11

- Why would He still redeem sinful Israel after Babylonian captivity? Isa 44:23 gives the answer: *'the LORD...will be glorified in Israel.'*
- Why does He save? *'His glory is great through...salvation,'* Ps 21:5
- Why deliver? *'I will deliver you and you shall glorify me,'* Ps 50:15
- Why did Jesus come? *'Glory to God in the highest...on earth peace'*
- Why did Jesus do miracles? He said before one: *'It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'* (Jn 11:4)
- Why did Jesus come to die? For His glory and the Father's, 12:23-33
- Why did He rise? 1 Pet 1:21 *God raised him from the dead and gave him glory';* Rom 6:3 *'raised from the dead by the glory of the Father'*

All that takes us from creation to the cross, the hour of hours, greatest glory: *The hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life that they know you the only true God*

That's God's passion for His glory. Application: Our passion for God's glory
Do you have a passion for God's glory? If this is the most important driving reality in the universe to God, and why He created the universe, we need to live for the glory of God, or we're missing our whole purpose on the planet. But before you can live God's glory, you need to know, as v. 3 says, the one true God. You need to know Christ and have this eternal life (in the words of Phil 2:11 *'confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father'*). Your knee must bow, your tongue must confess He's Lord to God's glory.

3 areas of application for believers: 1st in presenting the gospel of glory

Paul calls it *'the gospel of the glory of Christ'* and *'the gospel of the glory of God'* (2 Cor 4:4, 1 Tim 1:11). Here in Jn 17 it starts with the glory of Christ and the glory of God the Father related to His giving eternal life. Do we put God's glory in our presentation of the gospel? Rom 1 begins with the glory of God's attributes seen in creation but sinners *'did not glorify Him as God ...and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image'* (1:21, 23 NKJV). Man's problem is *'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'* (3:23). The *'eternal gospel'* call in Rev 14 is *'Fear God and give Him glory'* (v. 6-7). Sin at core is a failure to glorify God, falling short of glory. Jesus says here in v. 3 eternal life is knowing the only true God and Christ. Another scripture describes it as *'the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'* (2 Cor 4:6). We need a passion presenting the gospel, *'that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified,'* 2 Thess 3:1 (so pray for more God-given passion for the lost and of the glorious gospel)

2ndly: In our prayers for God's glory

This was the passion of the prayer of Jesus in v. 1 and v. 5. He starts there, and when He taught His disciples to pray He also started there, hallowing the heavenly Father's name, honoring, glorifying, praying it be magnified. We're to pray for His glorious kingdom to come, and God's will to be done, then we can ask for our needs like our daily bread, forgiveness for our daily sins, protection from temptation and deliverance from evil, '*For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory...*' Here in v. 22 and 24 Jesus comes back to praying for God's glory. It begins and ends His prayer and it's also right in the center of this prayer, the end of v. 10 says Jesus is glorified in us

It's not first about us, but prayer benefits us as God is glorified in us and v. 13 says Jesus says these things that we might have His full joy. Our chief and ultimate purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him, and our fullest joy is to be found in glorifying God. We start with glory, v. 1, and get joy, v. 13. Jesus prays in v. 1 for His own glory, '*Father, glorify your Son,*' but if that sounds self-centered or self-serving, we need to remember the context is the cross, which is actually the most self-sacrificing act ever done. And the rest of the verse doesn't end there: *glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you*

And remember, unlike us, Jesus as God is worthy of being glorified but He doesn't keep it to Himself, He gives glory back to His Father and He shares the glory of that love with us by the end of the chapter! That should stir our affections and passions, in light of Christ's glorious passionate love. Pray in light of this great motive of the Lord's heart like Ps 79:9 '*our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake*' (NIV). Or like Jeremiah '*Do not despise us, for Your own name's sake; Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory*' (Jer 14:21 NASB). Or like David pray '*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory*' (Ps 115:1). Or like Jesus just a few minutes before Jn 17 said in Jn 14:13: '*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*'

We glorify God in presenting the gospel, in prayer, and in our personal walk
Last week we ended in Rom 6:4 '*by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*' Baptism pictures death, then rising and walking in resurrection by and for God's glory. 1 Thess 2:12 says '*walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own...glory.*' Col 1:10 says '*walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work...according to his glorious might...*' That ties in with the context of our text, Jn 15:8 '*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit*'

Jesus also said *'let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven'* (Mt 5:16). So the way we walk before other, our works and our witness are ultimately so people will see in us Jesus the light of the world and will glorify the Father. The biblical motive for purity isn't to avoid STDs, it's 1 Cor 6:20 *'you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body...'* That's the motive for mundane everyday life, big or small things I do, 1 Cor 10:31 *'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.'*

You heard practical examples in the public reading of Scripture last week and this week: *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus...therefore ...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love ...* (3:21-4:3). That takes lofty truths of God's glory to the little things of everyday life, this high doctrine needs to be walked out in lowliness in how we view ourselves, in gentleness in how we interact with others who frustrate us, in patience by how we act with those who bother us, bearing in love with those whose sin hurt us. Study Eph 4 for more practical examples you'll have an opportunity to apply this week with people who annoy you in your family/church family, remember your calling, Christ to you despite sin

Why should we accept others? Rom 15:7 *'accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.'* Why should we serve others? Peter says the biblical means and motive is: *'whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen'* (1 Pet 4:11). I close with: *'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.'*

¹ Art Azurdia, "A Prayer for Reciprocal Glory, Part 1," (sermon on John 17:1 at <http://spiritempoweredpreaching.com/sermons.htm>)

² These quotes taken from Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, chapter 57.

³ John Piper and Jonathan Edwards, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 202.