

John 17:1-12 – The High Priestly Prayer (Part 1)

Introduction

- We are finally getting back to our study of the Gospel of John that we last looked at before the start of the Christmas season.
 - o We have just reached the point that the entire Gospel has been building toward.
 - o Jesus has given his farewell address to his 11 faithful disciples, ending with “take heart; I have overcome the world.”
 - o Now as the forces of darkness close in Jesus prays.

- Prayer was an important part of Jesus’ life throughout his ministry.
 - o In the Gospels, there are numerous times when Jesus goes off by himself to pray.
 - o In the last couple chapters, we saw him urging his disciples to pray in his name (as if he himself were making the request) with confidence that God hears & answers (15:16, 16:24).

- Now, we get to see what Jesus himself requests in his prayer to the Father.
 - o This is often called *the high priestly prayer* because Jesus is praying for his followers like the OT high priest making intercession for Israel (*cf.* the book of Hebrews).
 - o We are invited to listen in on this intimate conversation as God the Son talks to God the Father.
 - We get to hear Jesus talking with his Father about their plan for the ages.
 - It encourages us as we see who God is, how he looks at us, and what he plans for us.
 - It challenges us to live according to his will – to cooperate with what he wants to do in our lives.
 - He *is* going to accomplish his will, but it’s a lot more rewarding for us if we don’t have to be dragged along kicking, screaming, and resisting.

(1-5) Glory

- (1) Jesus prays that he would be glorified because he knows that it is now the proper time for that part of God’s plan to take place.
 - o Glorified: That his greatness would be revealed / that he would be “clothed in splendor”
 - o What brings glory to God the Son also brings glory to God the Father.
 - o When Jesus says, “the hour has come,” he is referring to his death.
 - E.g. 7:30, 8:20, 13:1
 - It is through the agonizing, shameful death on the cross that God’s glory is revealed. That the Son is clothed in splendor and we stand in awe of him.

- (2-4) It is through Jesus' death (followed by his resurrection) that Father and Son accomplish their plan to provide eternal life for all those who belong to him.
 - o Eternal life is not just living forever: there are plenty of science fiction & fantasy books/movies about how living forever in this world would be a curse and a burden.
 - o *True* eternal life is nothing less than a personal relationship with our perfectly loving Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ:
 - The kind of relationship where the brokenness of this current world cannot truly harm us, and we have a future in the eternal kingdom of our Father that he prepared with us in mind (Matthew 25:34).
 - The kind of relationship that transforms us to be like our loving God
 - Just look at the description of how the lives of those who truly belong to Jesus differ from the lives of those sent into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:35-46).
 - Much more on our transformed lives next week as Jesus prays for our sanctification.
 - o The main point here: God is glorified in Jesus' death and exaltation as his loving gracious character and his almighty power over sin, death, and hell are more clearly revealed than ever before.
 - The rescue mission is accomplished (Remember "It is finished!").
 - Salvation and everything that comes with it now comes as a free gift to all who trust in Jesus Christ.

- (5) Jesus prays that when all is accomplished he will reassume the glory he laid aside when he came to earth as a human being.
 - o Remember: Jesus is not some regular guy that God chose and gave special powers & privileges – He is God, the Creator of the universe in human flesh (John 1:1-3, 14).
 - God the Son did not come into being when the virgin Mary miraculously conceived.
 - That was the beginning of the Son's humanity, but his existence is eternal – there was never a time when he did not exist.
 - God's greatness is fully demonstrated through his humility and self-sacrifice (See Philippians 2:5-11).
 - o Jesus has now reassumed his full glory and yet remains God in human flesh – John (the same one who wrote this Gospel) sees him in Revelation 1:12-18.
 - Like any other prophet who catches a glimpse of God's glory, John is overwhelmed with awe at the splendor of his greatness.
 - This is the One we worship, the One who loves us individually, the One who in John 17 prays for not just his 11 faithful disciples, but for all others who will believe in him.

(6-12) Protection & Unity

- Before making any more requests, Jesus describes who he is praying for.
 - o The immediate focus is on the 11 disciples, but in verse 20 Jesus expands this to include all true believers.
 - o We get to see how God describes us when Father & Son talk about us and their eternal plan.

- (6-8) The Father takes us out of the sinful, corrupt, dying world and gives us to Jesus our Savior.
 - o Jesus has already emphasized to his followers that the ultimate reason they are his followers is God (Father & Son) choosing and drawing them (6:44, 15:16).
 - o Salvation is a work of God from beginning to end.
 - o That choosing & drawing that goes on “behind the scenes” results in saving faith that Jesus is the one sent by God the Father who perfectly reveals the Father’s word and will (e.g. John 6:66-69).
 - o Respond to the message of the Gospel today (Romans 10:9-11).

- (9) Jesus makes it very clear that he is praying only for those who belong to God.
 - o This is a sobering reminder that not everyone is a child of God who will experience his blessings – only those who trust in Jesus as Savior (John 1:11-13).
 - o It challenges us who have received him to proclaim the Gospel as that proclamation is the external means by which God draws people to himself (Romans 10:14-15).
 - o It encourages us that we are on the side of the Almighty God of the universe – God the Son speaks on our behalf so that nothing this world throws at us can truly harm us in the long run (Romans 8:31-34).

- (10) Jesus regards us as connected with his glory.
 - o Later on in the prayer he will talk about sharing his glory with us.
 - o In Ephesians 1:18, God regards us as his rich, glorious inheritance.
 - o All of creation belongs to God, and his most valuable treasure is you: his masterpiece saved by grace and one day glorified with him.

- (11-12) Jesus asks that the Father keep/protect his followers when he is no longer visibly, physically present in the world.
 - o i.e. He prays that we be kept in that personal relationship of unity that is eternal life.
 - o Jesus points out that he has kept safe all those in his charge with the exception of Judas.
 - Judas Iscariot was never a true disciple; he was the one doomed to destruction whose presence was necessary for the fulfillment of prophecy.
 - The disciples who truly believe are all kept in their relationship with him even though they sometimes mess up big time.

- Even though within the hour they are all going to run away when danger arrives.
 - Even though Peter will vehemently deny even knowing Jesus.
 - They will all go on to be faithful witnesses, willing to die for their faith.
- Salvation is a gracious, loving act of God, and so is keeping us saved.
 - If God has rescued you from condemnation and made you his child and a citizen of his kingdom, he is not going to throw you out of his family and leave you to be condemned with the unbelieving world – Saving faith does not go away.
 - John 10:27-30 – Jesus has already made it clear that those who belong to him are kept secure by the power of God – Father & Son working together in perfect unity.
 - This same security prayed for and promised by Jesus is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit-inspired apostles throughout the rest of the New Testament.
 - Philippians 1:6 – What God starts in your life, he will bring to completion.
 - 1 Peter 1:3-5 – We are kept not by our own power and ability to do good or summon up enough faith, but by the power of Almighty God who causes us to persevere in our faith.
 - Ephesians 1:13-14 – We are united with Christ and given the Holy Spirit (God Himself) as God’s seal of ownership and guarantee of receiving salvation in all its fullness.

Conclusion

- This first part of Jesus’ prayer doesn’t have a lot of “go out and do this” applications because it is all about what God has done, is doing, and will do for his people.
 - He displays his glory through self-sacrificing love.
 - He gives us eternal life – perfect fellowship (sharing life together) with him that supports and transforms us in this broken world & unstopably continues into the perfect kingdom created for us.
 - He takes pleasure in doing this.
 - As Jesus is pouring out his heart to his Father, this is what they are talking about: their glorious plan to bring us mere humans into perfect fellowship.
 - God’s grace and mercy toward us is not a reluctant concession, but the very heart of who he is.
- Sometimes it is important to just ponder and rest on these truths – to regain peace & perspective:
 - Realize just how much we are loved by the Almighty God of the universe who tells us to call him *Father*.
 - Romans 8:38-39.
 - One final way to meditate on that glorious love is the ceremony Jesus gave us to proclaim his death until he returns.