

Holy Ground: The Glory of God

John 17 is known as the “High Priestly Prayer,” a reference to Jesus’ priestly work to which His earthly ministry has been building. One a year, the Old Testament High Priest represented the people of God in God’s presence, coming before Him by means of a substitutionary sacrifice (see Leviticus 16, Hebrews 8). Through the cross, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus will come into the presence of his Father as the great High Priest who brings the perfect, final sacrifice: himself! In this prayer, Jesus asks that all God’s purposes will be carried out, for the glory of God and the eternal life of God’s people.

Sermon Summary

As Jesus prays in to his beloved Father, he does so with a heart intent on God’s own purposes. This is not like our prayers, in which our sinful motivations and confusion so often intrude. Jesus prays for precisely what is best: the will of God. First, Jesus prays (v. 1-5) for God’s will to be done concerning the glory of the Son. There is only one petition in these verses: that God would “glorify [his] Son.”

The Glory of the Son’s Nature

The “glory of God” is a concept at the very bedrock of all of God’s creation. One author calls the story of the Bible the, “drama of God’s glory.” That is because God’s glory is the sum essence of God’s attributes. It is, further, the fullness of God communicated beyond himself. It can be thought of as light (1 Tim 6:16) and thunder (Exodus 19:16). It is God’s magnificence made known.

So, when Jesus prays for God to glorify the Son, he is praying that the full majesty of God would be revealed in Jesus. This glory is not something new for Jesus, for it was his before the world began (v. 5). This glory belongs to Jesus, the Son of God, by right. He is not praying that God will transform him into something that he was not, but that the glory that is his would be made manifest.

The Glory of the Son’s Work

The reason for Jesus’ request relates to the plan God has executed for the salvation of his people, and the role the Son has played in that plan (v. 2, 4). This plan began before the world existed, where for all eternity past, the Son existed as the “radiance of the glory of God.” (Heb 1:3) It has always been the delightful role of the Son to set forth the majesties of the Father.

When God created the world, he created a universe that also declares his glory (Ps. 19:1). John 1 speaks of the creation *through* the Son. It could be said that God patterned creation according to the Son, as a means to declare his glory. Into that creation, God placed image bearers (people) who were made to glorify and enjoy Him forever.

Of course, Adam and Eve failed in their calling. They became precisely *unlike* God in that they traded the glory of God for the glory of the creation (see Romans 1). They became enamored with the glory of what was made, not its Creator. Their love was tragically disordered, and all mankind fell into sin.

But, what is this glorious *work* by which Jesus prays he should be glorified? It is that God did not stay far away, but sent his son into the sin-sick world that his people may be healed of their blindness and restored to him. The Son took on flesh, dwelling among the broken, and giving himself on the cross for the salvation of God’s people.

By his work, then, Jesus has done what the Son has always done: proclaimed the excellencies of God. Yet, now, over the course of his glorious “hour,” Jesus does so in the fullest and greatest way. He sets forth the matchless love of God for his people to save sinners

! It was his great joy to do this (Heb 12:3), again, as the Son has no greater joy than to radiate all the riches of the goodness of God.

The Glory of the Knowledge of God

Thus, by his work, according to God's plan, Jesus has been given the authority to grant eternal life to all those whom God has chosen. (v. 2-3) This life is nothing less than the knowledge of God's glory. It is seeing and savoring Father and Son through the ministry of the Spirit. Let us, then, live with the knowledge of glory of God as revealed in the Son. The Father answers his Son's prayer still today when knees bow and hearts worship the risen Jesus. Blessed are all those who behold his glory!

Discussion and Application Questions

1. Use this text as an opportunity to examine your prayer life. Do you pray as Jesus prays? Do your prayers include the request that the glories of the Son would be known by all the world?
2. How should our own lives reflect the glory of the Son? Consider how we speak, think, and live.
3. How does this text shed light on our beloved Westminster Catechism question #1? The Father and Son (by the Spirit) glorify one another, and we are image bearers of God. So, wherein is our chief purpose?
4. What blocks the glory of God in Christ from being seen by so many (the answer is: the blindness of sin!)? Consider Jesus' words in John 9:39. How do sin-blinded eyes see Jesus as one to be rejected, but the world's pleasures as a life to be embraced?
5. What is the true blessedness of Heaven ("eternal life")? How should our lives look now to show that we are in pursuit of that blessing?