

✠ *In the Name of Jesus* ✠

Some believers get rather excited when they read John 17, sometimes referred to as “Jesus’ high priestly prayer.” They think to themselves, “Here’s a chance for me to listen as the Son of God communicates with the heavenly Father.” It’s like having a secret recording of a secret conversation between powerful people. If you want to know what’s in someone’s heart, how they really feel, their private conversations reveal much.

But you know how it is. Sometimes when you’re listening in on private conversations, it’s hard to understand what people are saying. They might say things in ways you’re not familiar with. You might have to listen to the secret recording several times. You might even need to do a little research if you’re going to comprehend fully. Now some people get rather sleepy from just hearing the word ‘research.’ Slowing down and thinking can be a recipe for snoozing.

But if you lean in and listen closely as Jesus prays to our heavenly Father, you will be well rewarded with knowledge, the kind of knowledge that gives peace, the kind of peace you can’t get anywhere else except from God’s Word.

¹*After Jesus said this...* After Jesus said

what? Well, you see, for the last several hours Jesus has been with his disciples in the upper room of a home in Jerusalem. Jesus has been preparing his disciples for his death the next day and also his resurrection and ascension.

¹*After Jesus said this he looked toward heaven and prayed...* The original Greek language of the New Testament makes clear that Jesus looked up. We like to think of God as ‘up,’ highly exalted. ‘Up’ seems more powerful to us than ‘down’ or ‘sideways.’ It’s okay for us to think of our prayers going up to the all-powerful God. Jesus looked up to pray.

He ¹*prayed*: “*Father, the time has come.*” The time has come for what? It’s almost time for him to face an onslaught of hatred and pain tomorrow. What a great time to pray! Do you do that? Pray just before a big task? Yeah, so did Jesus. Very wise.

What did Jesus pray? Did he pray, “O dear God, this is going to be hard; I’m going to be in such pain”? No. Listen. He says: *Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.* If that’s confusing, think about what ‘glorify’ means. ‘To glorify’ means to ‘recognize or honor or praise or invest with dignity.’ In other words, to glorify someone is to give them honor by putting them into an honorable position. Think how we might do this for

someone we elect to the office of president. We applaud the person and set a podium up high so everyone can see the new president. We might have a band play “Hail to the Chief.” We may not even have heard about this person a few years ago, but now this person cannot be easily accessed—we’ve made them great. We understand glorifying a person.

But how can the Father glorify the Son? The Son is already Almighty even if no one recognizes him or invests him with dignity. Yet when Jesus says, *Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you*, he is asking the Father to bestow honor on him, to make it obvious to everyone that he has the same divineness as the Father. “Let’s reveal our true glory to the world.”

Is Jesus asking for a display of power? Some people think that true glory lies in power and prestige. Sometimes you will hear Americans say that we should just nuke our enemies. That’ll show ‘em. Maybe, but it would cause a host of other un-glorious problems. The North Korean nation can put on a powerful parade to glorify their leader. But their government can’t consistently feed its people. So there really isn’t much glory in power. Not by comparison to mercy. When Jesus prays, *Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you*, he’s basically saying, “Let’s

rescue all the people who have made themselves worthy of punishment by sinning against us. Help me go pay the penalty for their sins by suffering it myself. Then we can have them with us forever.”

We know this is what Jesus means because of what he prays next. Talking about himself, Jesus says: *²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.* Those who have been given to Jesus are all who follow Jesus. It glorifies Jesus and the Father to give us sinners eternal life.

Next Jesus explains how eternal life happens. *³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.* Under most circumstances, ‘to know God’ is essential to being saved. A good example of an exception is when we baptize a baby. We don’t know how much baptized babies understand about Jesus. We suspect they don’t know much. But we are convinced that the Holy Spirit can bring them to faith in Jesus through Baptism because of the Bible passages that teach about Baptism. It’s important for parents and other adults to teach baptized babies to know Jesus through Bible study. Why? Because *this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, the only God that actually exists, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

So then, when does eternal life begin for us believers? Do we have to wait until we die and are taken to heaven? Actually, by Jesus' definition, eternal life begins as soon as we know God, as soon as we are brought to trust in God's forgiveness as a wonderful gift that he really wants us to have. For us believers eternal life has already begun. And after our earthly lives are over, we will have eternal life in all its fullness.

Jesus' prayer continues: ⁴*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.* "Umm, Jesus. That's not quite accurate, is it? You're not going to finish your saving work until tomorrow when you say 'It is finished' and then die." Well, technically, yes. But, you see, when the Son of God promises to do something, he can talk about it as if it's done already, because it's gonna happen. He's almighty. It's gonna happen.

⁵*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.* Now that's a juicy morsel! Think about what this indicates. The human Jesus had an existence before he became human. In fact, he existed before the world began, before creation happened, before time began. So then Jesus must be God. So we have God the Father. And we have God the Son. Two Gods? No, two

persons—three persons if you count the Holy Spirit, but just one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Timothy 2:5). Now that Jesus is about to complete his work, it's almost time for him to have back all the glory that he has been making only partial use of during his earthly life. He is asking the Father for his glory because Jesus is still in his humble state.

Jesus continues: ⁶*I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.* The term 'obey' can mean 'believe,' especially in contexts like this one. Think about how this works. God wants us to listen to his Word and believe everything he tells us because that's the way he intends to get his blessings to us—through the Word. So to listen and believe the Word of God is to obey the Word of God. This is why I keep asking you to have regular, frequent, faithful, mindful contact with the Bible. This is why I want you to come to church every week and stay for Bible study.

Jesus continues: ⁷*Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.* They understand my connection to you. ⁸*For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.*" That's quite a claim! But

the Bible makes it again and again. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one who sent him. To reject Jesus is to reject the one who sent him.

Jesus continues: ⁹*I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.* By ‘the world’ Jesus means ‘everyone who rejects God and opposes the truth.’ Jesus isn’t saying he doesn’t care about the world. After all, he came to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). But right now, he’s just praying for believers.

¹⁰*All I have is yours, and all you have is mine, including all the believers. And glory has come to me through them.* See, we can bring God glory. We don’t add to his glory, but when we believe what he says, we honor him and we show others how worthy of glory God is.

Jesus says: ¹¹*I will remain in the world no longer—I’ll be around for about 43 more days, but the world won’t see me, only believers will see me after I rise. I am concerned for the believers because they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.*

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name. Now that’s an interesting idea! How is God’s name powerful? If I say God’s name at a glass, will the glass shatter? It’s possible, but that’s

not the point. God is powerful. Almighty, in fact. His name represents him. His name especially represents his mercy toward sinners. When Jesus asks the Father to protect us, he wants the Father to show mercy to us because we keep sinning day after day. We need God’s forgiveness if we are to be protected from what we deserve. We also need God to protect us from Satan. The devil wants us to fall away from God or at least to get angry with each other and not come together for worship. But Jesus wants us to be together. *Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.”*

Listening in on this private conversation between Jesus and the Father helps us understand how much God loves us, that he made us one with himself similar to how the Father is one with the Son of God. And when we understand this, we have such peace in our hearts that we work at changing our lives to be more godly. We turn away from unkind words. We limit the activities that are likely to make us too tired to gather for worship. We find a way to make the Lord our highest priority in life because we understand that Jesus made us his highest priority. Aren’t you glad you got to LISTEN IN ON JESUS’ HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER? How helpful it is to us in our understanding of God and in our daily living!