

“Glorify Your Son”

John 17:1-5

Preached by Minister Jason Tarn at HCC on August 19, 2012

Introduction

- ❖ In the past few weeks, we’ve been studying the Gospel of John and looking at Significant Sayings of Jesus. This morning’s saying comes out of chapter 17 in a prayer that Jesus offers on behalf of his disciples just hours before he’s betrayed and arrested.
 - ▶ He also says in v20 that he is not only praying for these disciples but all those who will come to faith in him through their testimony – which includes us who believe.
 - We know, as well, that this prayer is motivated by a deep, abiding love for his disciples. We read back in chapter 13:1 that “*Jesus knew his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*”

- ❖ So listen now to how Jesus begins this loving prayer on your behalf. Look at v1, “*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son.”*” **Apparently the way Jesus prays for those he deeply loves is by praying for his glory.**
 - ▶ I understand if that doesn’t sit right with you. It would be like Pastor David coming to me for prayer for some problem he’s going through, and just imagine if I were to start praying, “*Father, let David see how awesome I am. Make much of me in his eyes. Exalt my name and magnify my worth before him, O Lord.*”
 - You’d think I was the most insensitive, self-centered egomaniac you’ve ever met. Pastor David would walk away not feeling loved, not feeling cared for.

- ❖ But this is exactly how Jesus prays for those he loves. He just told them that he’s going away (16:28), but he’s leaving them in the world – a world that hates them (15:19), that will persecute them (15:20) and possibly kill them (16:2). He warns that they’re going to face tribulation (16:33) and that they’ll soon be scattered (16:22). But he also promises to pray to his Father asking him to send another Helper, the Holy Spirit (14:16).
 - ▶ And now in the beginning of this chapter he begins to pray for them. His disciples are thinking to themselves, “*Wow this is going to be huge. Jesus is about to pray for me. He’s about to ask his Father to help me and protect me. He’s so thoughtful.*”
 - But then he goes on for five verses without even mentioning his disciples and instead just focuses on himself asking to be glorified.

- ❖ *How would you have reacted if you were one of those disciples? Would you have felt loved or offended? My goal this morning is to help you see why we are so fortunate to have a Lord who prays, first and foremost, for his own glory.* My goal is for you to walk away feeling loved by Jesus for praying like this for you. So to that end, let me raise two questions.

What is Jesus’ prayer asking for?

- ❖ The first is this: **1) What is Jesus’ prayer asking for?** He asks God to “*Glorify your Son*” but what does that mean? Let’s figure that out before we determine whether it’s an expression of love or arrogance.

- ❖ Notice with me in v1 that Jesus begins this prayer with an acknowledgment that the “*hour*” has come. **Now in John’s Gospel, the word “*hour*” is a technical term referring to Jesus’ appointed hour of death.**
 - ▶ In earlier chapters, we read of Jesus saying his hour is not yet (2:4), or we read of his enemies trying to arrest him but it says “*no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*” (7:30; 8:20)
 - But then in chapter 12 upon entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, which marks the last week of his earthly life, Jesus says, “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” (12:23) And the events of that final week quickly lead to him hanging on a cross.

- ❖ Notice the connection in that verse between the ‘hour coming’ and the ‘the Son of Man being glorified’. The same is found in chapter 17:1. “*Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son*”.
 - ▶ So Jesus has his imminent death in view. **a) And his heart’s desire is to be glorified in his hour of death.** His first and foremost prayer is for his death to bring him glory.

- ❖ Now throughout history, great and mighty men have sought for glory in death. There are historical figures who are famous in large part because of their legendary deaths. We think of Julius Caesar or Joan of Arc or Abraham Lincoln. They were glorified in death. They are known for how they died or the circumstances surrounding their deaths. **But Jesus’ request is different. He’s not just asking to be remembered in death.**

- ❖ He wants something more. Look at v2. (I realize we’re skipping over an important clause in v1.) In v2, Jesus supplies the basis for his request. Glorify your Son, “*since you have given him authority over all flesh (all humanity)*”. Earlier in John we read, “*The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.*” (3:35; 13:3).
 - ▶ **We’re told this handing of authority from the Father to the Son took place in the counsels of the Trinity even before the world began.** We get a glimpse of this in **Daniel 7:13-14**. “*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.*”

- ❖ **So the Father delegated authority to the Son giving him dominion over all humanity. And yet in his 33 years of incarnate earthly existence, the Son of God lived in relative obscurity.** Even in the last three years as his popularity as a teacher and miracle-worker grew, it was still limited to the provinces of Galilee and Judea.
 - ▶ The Ancient of Days gave him dominion over all peoples, nations, and languages that they should serve him, and yet here he is with just a small band of followers who are on the verge of being persecuted and scattered.

- ❖ So in praying to the Father, "Glorify me since you gave me authority over all", an authority that is presently hidden expect through the eyes of faith, **b) Jesus is basically praying for his authority as Lord of all to be universally recognized and highly exalted.**
 - ▶ What he is praying for is what the Apostle Paul writes in **Philippians 2:6-11** as having taken place. Turn there with me. This passage is critical to understanding Jesus' prayer for himself. There are so many overlaps between the two.
 - *"⁶Who though he (Jesus) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

- ❖ Let's pause there. Notice how in v6 it says Jesus was "*in the form of God*". That means he shares the same nature as God. **This affirms the unique Christian conviction that the Son of God is equal with God.** Not equal as in being two separate co-existing gods of equal authority, but equal as in being one in nature (in form) yet existing as distinct persons along with the person of the Spirit. **We believe God is one being who exists eternally in three persons. He's a Trinity.**
 - So the Father and Son share the same nature, which means they share the same glory, but now it says in v7 that the Son emptied himself of that glory when he became a man. That doesn't mean he gave up his divinity or set it aside temporarily. **"Emptied himself" simply means Jesus humbled himself by veiling his divine glory behind human flesh.**

- ❖ That means if you were alive back then, Jesus could walk past you on street, and you would have no idea it was God. It's not like he had some glow of glory gleaming off his body. He had a regular body like you and I. He was "*found in human form*".
 - ▶ In fact, it was the form of a servant. For 30 years he lived the life of a carpenter's son, not the life of a royal prince. And in obedience to his Father, he died the death, not of a hero, but of a convicted criminal on a cross. He emptied himself of glory.

- ❖ So now go back to John 17, and in light of all that, read Jesus' request in v5, "*And now, Father, glorify, me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*"
 - ▶ **Jesus is praying for the Father to reverse the self-emptying that took place in his Incarnation and to restore the glory he shared with him before the world began.** He's looking right now beyond the cross – to the joy set before him – the joy of his resurrection and exaltation as victor over sin and death, as Savior and Lord of all.
 - That's what he wants when he asks to be glorified. **He's not asking for anything that is not rightfully his.** He's asking for the universal recognition of the dominion and glory and kingdom authority that the Ancient of Days already gave to him.

- ❖ Okay go back to Philippians 2 and pick up in v9. What Jesus prayed for, Paul says he received. *"⁹Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Phil. 2:6-11)
- ❖ My point is this: **In praying to be glorified in death, Jesus was asking for more than a name that will go down in the history books. He was asking for a name that is above every name.** He was asking the Father to glorify him with a name at which every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus has authority over all because he is Lord of all.

How is Jesus' prayer an expression of love and *not* arrogance?

- ❖ And how is this not arrogance? That's our second question: **2) How is this prayer an expression of love and *not* arrogance?** It sure sounds like arrogance if you or I were to pray like that. So why can Jesus do it and not be labeled a self-centered egomaniac?
 - ▶ This is not a theoretical problem. Perhaps you've been in the church so long that you've been inoculated to how offensive this sounds to the world. People are repelled from Christianity by verses like this.
- ❖ Did you know **Brad Pitt** grew up in a Southern Baptist church? But he abandoned his faith in college. Why? Because "*it seemed to be about ego*". This was out of a Parade magazine interview he did a few years back where he said, "*I didn't understand this idea of a God who says, 'You have to acknowledge me. You have to say that I'm the best, and then I'll give you eternal happiness. If you won't, then you don't get it!' It seemed to be about ego. I can't see God operating from ego, so it made no sense to me.*"
 - ▶ So to hear the Son of God ask to be glorified sounds to him like the prayer of an egotistic God of an egocentric religion.
- ❖ Let me give you another example. **C.S. Lewis** was slow to come to Christ. He had a number of objections that kept him from Christ, but there was one thing in particular. He said, before he was a Christian, he would read the Psalms, and the constant demand from God to be praised on every page gave him the impression that God was craving *for our worship like a vain woman who wants compliments*. It was vanity, pride, narcissism, egocentrism. It did not compel Lewis' love and worship. It repulsed him.
 - ▶ Well as we all know, his repulsion did not last for long. Something changed for Lewis. Light broke into his darkness. His blinders were removed. **His disdain for a God who seeks his own glory transformed into love. Lewis eventually fell in love with a glory-seeking God.**
- ❖ I believe that can happen for us as well. I know that it ultimately takes a work of God in your heart for you to fall in love with something that presently repulses you, but I'll do my best to explain the reasonableness and loving nature of this prayer.

- ❖ The key really is to look back at v1 and consider the clause I skipped over. This is Jesus' whole request, "*Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.*" So the goal is not to make a name for himself but for the Father. **a) His ultimate purpose in praying this prayer is to bring glory to his Father.**
 - ▶ Whenever we seek our own glory it is at the expense of God's glory. We're glory-robbers. We take what belongs to God alone. That's why it is considered sinful. But Jesus is unique. **He is the only man who ever lived for whom seeking his own glory does not rob God of glory.**
 - Philippians 2:11 says that when every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord – when he is glorified – it redounds "*to the glory of God the Father*". It's because of their unique relationship within the Godhead. Because, as Jesus said, he and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30). That means the glorification of one *is* the glorification of the other.

- ❖ **This kind of reciprocal glorification characterizes the inner life of the Triune God.** In chapter 16:14, Jesus says the Spirit comes to glorify him. In turn, in v4 of our passage, it says the Son glorifies the Father through his obedience, and in v5 the Father is said to glorify the Son. **There appears to be some sort of mutual interchange between the persons of the Godhead where each one reciprocates in giving glory to the other.**
 - ▶ Tim Keller makes a perceptive observation drawing from the works of Lewis. He says self-centeredness is where you position yourself in the center of the universe and demand everyone else to orbit around you. Which is why it makes all the difference that our one God exists eternally as three persons.

- ❖ **If he were just one person, then he would be liable of self-centeredness, but the one true God ever exists in a community of three.** And in the inner life of the Trinity we find what Keller calls "*mutually self-giving love*".
 - ▶ He writes, "*When we delight and serve someone else, we enter into a dynamic orbit around him or her; we center on the interests and desires of the others. That creates a dance, particularly if there are three persons, each of whom moves around the other two. So it is, the Bible tells us. Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them.*"¹
 - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always encircling one another, placing each other in the center, so that each reciprocates in giving glory to the other.

- ❖ This is huge. What this means is if you look in the center of the universe, you're not going to find some impersonal thing or force. You're not even going to find a singular person, a self-centered being, around whom all things orbit.

¹ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, 214-5.

- ▶ **Instead you'll find, at the center of all reality, a community of three persons who live in infinite happiness as they eternally live to give glory to one another.** So in praying for himself to be glorified, the Son of God was intending to take that glory and to reciprocate it within the Godhead, showering it on the others.
- ❖ That's the reason why this prayer "*Glorify your Son*" is not arrogance. It would have been arrogance had the Son existed as a singular being separate from the Father and Spirit. Then his prayer for glory would have been all for himself.
 - ▶ **But because the Son of God lives within the Trinity, this is not an expression of self-centeredness but of a mutual, self-giving, other-centeredness.**
- ❖ Okay but how is it an expression of love? You've explained why it's not arrogance, but this kind of prayer still doesn't feel like love. Well what is love anyways? **Daniel Fuller makes an important distinction between what he calls "need-love" verses "benevolent-love".**² Need-love is love motivated by a desire to fill some need or emptiness in you by the object of your love. Need-love says of a woman, "*I can't live without her. I need her.*"
 - ▶ But benevolent-love says, "*I want you to be happy even if that means we can't be together.*" This kind of love is motivated – not by an emptiness in you – but a fullness. So it is free to give without taking.
- ❖ Fuller's point is this, "*The moment we understand that all of God's need-love was met in being a Trinity, then we see that he is free to act toward us, his creation, solely in terms of the freedom of a benevolent love.*"³ **In other words, God creates us and pursues us without any need to use us to fill a need in him.** And this is only possible because he exists as a community of persons reciprocating glory and love to one another. **Because of this, God is the happiest and most satisfied being in the universe.**
 - ▶ Picture someone you simply adore. You think the world of this person. Now imagine if he or she feels the exact same way about you, and the two of you enter into a lifelong friendship or marriage. Sounds like heaven, right?
 - Keller says that's because it comes from heaven.⁴ That kind of joy comes from the inner happiness of the Triune God. But your experience is still only a taste of the infinite joy that fills his heart every single day.
- ❖ **God is an infinitely happy and contented God.** Just contrast Him with the gods of Greek mythology. If you've seen the recent *Clash of the Titans* movies, you'll recall that one of the issues in the plot is that the gods are growing weaker because humans are no longer praying to them. We're told that, "*Man's prayers feed the god's immortality.*"
 - ▶ So the reason the gods were benevolent to you is because they needed you. They needed your prayers. They were satisfying their need-love through you.

² Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, 134.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *The Reason for God*, 217-8.

- **But in stark contrast, God satisfies his need-love in his own Trinitarian existence, which then allows him to freely relate to us out of true benevolence.** You see, God doesn't need us. But he loves us.
- ❖ “*But wait,*” you might argue, “*then why is God always calling us to praise him throughout Scripture? If he doesn't need me, then why does he seek my worship? Why does he want me to glorify him?*”
 - ▶ Yes, God commands our worship. Yes, Jesus seeks his glory in our eyes. But I hope you're starting to see why. That it's not because his self-esteem is low and he's seeking compliments like a vain woman. It's not because he lacks glory and seeks to fill it up through our worship.
 - ❖ **God desires us to glorify him because he desires us to share in his joy!** He enjoys infinite happiness within himself – not through self-centeredness – but other-centeredness, and he invites us to share in his joy. But for that to happen, we need a re-orientation of our hearts.
 - ▶ **Sin has hard-wired your heart to seek glory for yourself,** and this world is always affirming your self-centeredness by telling you that you're happiest when you're at the center of the universe, when everyone and everything revolves around you, to make much of you.
 - But the Bible says we were created *by* God for relationship *with* God. **So the only way we can share in his joy is if we center our lives around him instead of ourselves** – if we live for his glory and not our own.
 - ❖ **So in praying that he would be glorified instead of you, that he would take center stage and not you, Jesus is actually praying for your joy.** He wants you to experience this kind of God-centered life filled with the joy of an infinitely happy God.
 - ▶ This kind of life is what John's Gospel calls “*eternal life*”. And it's a gift Jesus has been authorized to give according to v2. “*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.*”
 - ❖ So his ultimate purpose in praying this prayer is to glorify God, but **b) Jesus' penultimate purpose is to save you – to give you eternal life.** This is another reason why this prayer is an expression of love and not arrogance.
 - ▶ **The beauty of this prayer is that Jesus has both God's glory and the salvation of God's people in view.** In fact, these two aims are proportionate. To pursue one is to pursue the other. To pray one is to implicitly pray the other.
 - That's suggested by v3. Here we're told what “*eternal life*” consists of. Jesus says it's about so much more than just living forever. Eternal life is about knowing the only true God and his Christ. And this is not some intellectual pursuit. **Knowing God, in this context, is about knowing how glorious he is and loving it!**

- ❖ **Having eternal life is simply having your eyes opened to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Cor. 4:6). To know his glory. And that's exactly what Jesus is praying for – for God to be glorified in him and for you to know this glory and prize this glory above all.
 - ▶ I don't know about you but when I read this prayer, my heart is strangely warmed. Jesus has prayed a beautiful, loving prayer for us – a prayer that not only blessing us but teaches us how to pray.

Conclusion

- ❖ Let me leave you with this thought. **If the kindest, most loving, most thoughtful way Jesus could have prayed for you is to pray for himself to be glorified, then the kindest, most loving, most thoughtful way you can pray for those you care about is to do the same.**
 - ▶ Yes, it's loving to pray for their health and safety, for their success in school or in their career, for their stress level and busy schedules, for their family and children.
- ❖ **But the most loving prayer you can pray for them is for the Son of God to be glorified in their lives**, for their lives to be re-oriented around Jesus and not themselves, for them to be happy and satisfied in knowing the infinitely happy Triune God. That's loving.
 - ▶ Would you do that this week? Would you take the time to pray this particular kind of prayer for someone you love?