July 5, 2015 Don Riley

The High Priestly Prayer: The Glory of God in the Flesh, Jesus

John 17

The first week of our 6 week series on the glory of God we considered what Moses desired to see: God’s glory. The second week we considered what Habakkuk prayed to see: God’s glory. Last week we considered what the heavens declare: God’s glory. This morning we will hear the Glory of God in the flesh, Jesus’ prayer.

Prayer is as natural to a Christian as breathing. We pray over meals when we say grace. We go to worship and hear a liturgist pray for the people. We meet in small groups and hear the prayers of others. But now we get to hear Jesus pray.

The prayer of Jesus in John 17 covers a wide range of topics. If we studied the structure of the prayer we would see that Jesus prayed about His relationship to the Father in verses 1-6. He prayed about his relationship to the eleven remaining disciples who were asleep around him in verses 7-19. Finally he prayed about his relationship to those of us reached down through the ages in verses 20-26.

John Knox, one of the major founders of Presbyterianism used this one chapter, this one prayer, to argue for the priesthood of all believers. John Knox used this prayer to structure much of what makes up Presbyterianism and influenced that american experiment known as the United States of America. Horace Walpole spoke from the English House of Commons to report on these “extraordinary proceedings” in the colonies of the new world. He said, “There is no good crying about the matter, Cousin America has seen off with the Presbyterian parson, and that is the end of it. The Presbyterian rebellion impacted the 3 billion people who lived in the colonies at the time of the Revolutionary War. Approximately 900,000 were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish origin, 600,000 Puritan English, over 400,000 were of Dutch, German Reformed, and Huguenot descent. ⅔ of the Revolutionary forefathers were trained in the school of John Calvin. When Cornwallis was driven back to the ultimate retreat and surrender at Yorktown, all the colonels of the Colonial Army, with the exception of one, were Presbyterian elders. It is estimated that more than half of all the soldiers and officers of the American Army were Presbyterian. Presbyterians have sought to understand history and the light of the Bible in how that pertains to liberty. We must study history and our Bible.

So we turn to John 17 to hear Jesus pray. Moses asked about God’s glory. Habakkuk asked about God’s glory. The heavens give us a declaration of God’s glory. Jesus, in John 17, prays about God’s glory. And it is in this prayer that we learn a great deal about God’s glory. We hear Jesus pray about the glory he had, glory he accomplished and glory he enables. Glory he had before time. Glory he accomplished in advance. Glory he enables in prayer for us. We can further see that Jesus perfectly depicts God’s character. We see that Jesus perfectly fulfilled God’s glory. We see that Jesus perfectly enables us to glorify God.

Jesus perfectly depicts God’s glory. Jesus prayed in the first verse “Glorify your Son.” again in the prayer, verse 5, Jesus prayed “Glorify your Son.” This is one amazing way that Jesus reveals that His is God. How? It reveals that He is God. Why? Twice in the Old Testament, Isaiah quotes God as saying, “His glory, He will not share with another.” For Jesus to pray, “Glorify your Son.” can only be a claim to deity. Jesus knew he was divine. Jesus knew he was not violating scripture when he prayed this.

The next major truth we hear in verse 5, we hear Jesus pray, “The glory that he had with God before the world existed.” Contemplate this. Stop to consider this. The glory Jesus had before the world existed. The glory he had before his incarnation. In eternity, eons before time began, Jesus shared in the brilliant Shekinah glory. Can we fathom what that means? Equality with the Father and Holy Spirit. Glory before creation of the world, before we were chosen, before man sinned, and chaos reigned, before the book of Genesis events took place, before all wars, before the rising and falling of nations. Glory he had which is the fullness of God encompassing His beauty, His holiness, His perfection, His splendor, His magnificence, His purity, His peace, His rest, His communion, His love. Heavenly glory that must have involved the singing and worshipping of angelic beings of the heavenly choruses, all the crescendo of praise. This is what Jesus experienced, Jesus shared, and Jesus enjoyed with the Father before He ever was swaddled with a diaper.

Remember the awe you felt the first time you stepped up to the Grand Canyon? The glory Jesus had before time is greater! Remember the most beautiful sunset you have viewed from the beach? The glory Jesus had before time is greater! Remember the miraculous birth of your first child? The glory of God before time is greater! Remember the music that touched the deepest recesses of your life? The glory of God is greater. Jesus prays in John 17 and perfectly depicts God’s glory, for Jesus is God. Jesus shared the glory of God before time and Jesus became glorified throughout.

The second major discovery of Jesus’ prayer is that Jesus perfectly fulfilled God’s glory. He patiently endured suffering to the glory of God. He paid for our sin to the glory of God. And thus, he perfectly fulfilled His call. Verse 4 reads, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” What certainty! What resolve! Remember after giving eternal water to the woman at the well, the disciples came to him and said, “Rabbi, eat.” Jesus said to his followers, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.” (John 4:34) Jesus said at age 12 in the temple, “I must be in my Father’s house.” Jesus knew his job description. Time frames can be accelerated.

My son called me Friday from New Jersey where he is in a software logistics job. He went into work on Friday. The only other person there was the owner of the company. My son was hired with the potential of a negotiated raise at the end of his first six months which would have been in September after his performance review. The owner said, “Consider the six months completed. Starting Monday, you get the raise.” My son was kind of excited when he called me. The owner likes my son’s work ethic and skill set and accelerated the time. But he did not say I will pay you for work already accomplished in July, August, and September. But notice before Jesus suffered, he prayed that He had already accomplished the work that God gave Him to do. Notice before Jesus was crucified he prayed that He had already accomplished the work that God gave him to do. Before Jesus died and paid for your and my sins and even cried out, “It is finished!” He prayed that he had already finished the work that God gave him to do. Remember before Jesus was resurrected and before Jesus ascended into the heavenlies, he prayed that he had already accomplished the work that God gave him to do. How can he pray that? Because He is the Word, and the Word spoken is sure. If Jesus said it, if God says it, if the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance, it is the power of the Living Word that is living and active with eternal certainty. That is why we do not live by explanations. We live by the Word. His bread for us to feed on to be nourished upon. That is relevant because he has already accomplished it in your life. Even before you pray about it. He has prepared work for you to do because you are his workman created in Christ Jesus to His glory.

Jesus who set his face like flint prayed with concrete certainty that He had accomplished all that God gave HIm to do because He was perfectly obedient, He never failed, He never sinned, He kept His word, His prayer shows us that all that He has promised to us, and for us: heaven, salvation, eternal life, glory in His presence, fellowship with the Trinity, it is already done it is already accomplished for us. So Jesus perfectly depicts God’s glory, glory he had before time. Jesus perfectly fulfilled God’s glory, glory in advance. Finally, Jesus perfectly enables us to glorify God.

Your name is not only written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, but Jesus is praying specifically for you. Your name is in verse 20 in John chapter 17. Did you know you are in the Bible? You are in the Bible. Verse 20 Jesus specifically prays for you. He says, “I ask for those who will believe in me through this word,” through the disciples who through their word are faithful to the great commission to make disciples of all nations. That is how the word is passed on. That is how you’ve heard it. That is how you’ve responded to it. Even as I called you to pray to receive Jesus Christ last week and take up your Bible and read it daily.

Future disciples, future Christians, verses 20-26 is a recorded prayer about us, about unity in verses 20 and 21, about the glory we receive in verse 22, our witness to the world in verse 23, about God’s love for us in verse 23, about our heavenly dwelling with Jesus in verse 24, our knowledge of Him in verse 25, about knowing God’s name in verse and about having God’s love in verse 26. Jesus was praying for you, but the good news I want us all to see, to hear, to believe in Jesus perfectly enables up to live for God’s glory because He prays for us now. Yes, Jesus enables us to live for God’s glory by the Indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, but this emphasis is that Jesus prays for you and for me.

It is a rich blessing when someone prays for us. At a picnic yesterday an elder at Second Presbyterian said that he goes from his home in Germantown down Poplar Pike to Park Avenue several times a week and passes by Woodland Presbyterian. He said everytime he passes by, he prays for my preaching theses six weeks her at Woodland. That is a humbling honor, but an even greater honor is to know that Jesus is praying for my preaching here. He is praying for you. John calls him our advocate in I John 2. Paul calls Jesus our high priest who always lives to intercede on our behalf (Heb. 7:25). Romans 8:34 says, “Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.” Jesus didn’t just pray for you in John 17. He prays for you now. He is enabling you to live to the glory of God. Be encouraged, Christians, you have the greatest prayer warrior that has ever lived praying for you now and interceding for you as an advocate.

Labor Day a year ago, I was short almost $3,000 to finish out the month for the ministry of Discipling Men. Tuesday $1,000 came. Wednesday, $1,000 came in. Thursday, $100 came in. Friday afternoon I knew everyone was going out of town and I was still short $900 and did not know what to do. It was 4:15pm, and I was in my office alone. I prayed, “God please do something because I do not know who to call or what to do.” I prayed, “Help me.” 15 minutes later at 4:30pm a man in a small group with me called me and asked where I was. I told him my office. He said, “Stay there. I need to see you.” I said, “OK.” Ten minutes later he walked in with a bank envelope in his hand with the number $980 on it. I asked wide-eyed, “Is this $980?” “No,” he said, “I kept $80.” I said, “Why?” He said, “Because God interrupted my day and told me to go to the ATM and bring you $900 exactly.” I could be here until 3:00 today telling you that same story for the past 13 years, how God prays for and intercedes for us. This is not some sort of by and by, not some ivory cover, this is grocery money. And when God intervenes because he specifically knows your need, it enables you to live to His glory. It is very real.

So in conclusion, the takeaway, remember the glory he had before time. He is your Savior and he is God. He accomplished in advance, he who is perfect without sin, how much easier it is to accomplish for him than for us who are sinners. And finally, be encouraged Christians, you are called to glorify God and you are not doing this alone. He prays for you every single day. To God be the glory. Let us pray.

Gracious, heavenly Father, thank you that you prove who you are and that you accomplish all that you have been sent to do. Thank you that you intercede for us. As we go to the table, we thank you that you are the living bread and have given your shed blood for us. We praise you in the matchless, wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.