

Reflection 2: Prayers of Jesus

John 17: 1-5

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. **2** For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **3** Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **4** I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. **5** And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus has just talked about his victory in the world. (John 16:33b) He says he has overcome the world. Then he prays.

This prayer clearly portrays what is on Jesus’ heart at this time (as all our prayers do). His prayer that follows also assumes that his mission is completed so in this section, vs 1-5, Jesus prays for himself as he goes to his Father

Even as he had talked about his death and even though they didn’t fully understand what he was teaching them they would have recognised the depth of his relationship with God, the trust he had in his Father, and the intimacy that he enjoyed through their unity.

This prayer underlines the fact that Jesus is very aware that the ‘hour’ has come, the ‘hour’ of his glorification, for him to complete the work his Father has set for him. We have previously learned that to glorify, or hallow, the Father is to do his work. So, Jesus here asks the Father to ‘Glorify the Son, that the Son might glorify you.’ Jesus will glorify his Father by doing his work. His work was to bring in the Kingdom of God. The way God had deemed for this to occur was for Jesus to lose his life that we might find ours. Jesus was to glorify the Father by dying for us. The Father is glorified through Jesus’ obedience to the Father and as a result Jesus too will share in the glory which he had in the Father’s “presence before the world began.”

Jesus reminds the Father that he has given Jesus authority over all people so that he might give them eternal life. He will give eternal life only to those the Father has given to him. So even whilst offering eternal life he does it under the Father’s authority.

The eternal life that Jesus is offering is an interesting concept. First, it would not be given without Jesus’ death on the cross, his resurrection and his exaltation for without these our sins would not be forgiven, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God would not have removed our sin.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit would not have been sent to convict the world of sin, its righteousness and its judgement or to generate new life in believers.

Thirdly, the Great Commission would have lost its meaning for the basis of its work was the authority given to Jesus, by the Father, to offer eternal life to those who the Father had given him.

What then is this eternal life? We tend to think of eternal life as life forever as we know it but with Jesus’ physical presence. We also think of it in heaven as we worship and praise God with all the other believers who have been called to him.

In this passage eternal life is actually described as knowing God, the only true God and knowing Jesus, the one God sent into the world. So it is knowledge of God and knowledge of Jesus that equals eternal life. In Carson’s words, eternal life is best seen not as everlasting life but as knowledge of the Everlasting One. (p206) The one we will know forever as his children.

It is therefore not possible for us to choose how we will know God. For God himself has ordained how this will occur. It will only be through Jesus, the one who glorified the Father and who in turn was glorified by the Father, so that he might offer eternal life to the ones the Father has given him.

Reflect on:

1. When you think about glorification in today's world what is the first thing that comes into your mind? How does this compare to your understanding of the glory of God?
2. Glory is a central theme of these verses. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."
3. The essence of this prayer is Jesus' commitment to do the Father's will. He makes this commitment to ensure God will be truly known and that eternal life might come to those who have heard his word. What do you understand eternal life to be? What does this passage say about eternal life? How does your understanding differ from the text, if it does?
4. Jesus is praying this prayer in the presence of his disciples. If you were with the disciples while Jesus was praying this prayer what would you be thinking? Do your prayers reflect Jesus' prayers?
5. Jesus says in V5 "*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*" What do you think Jesus meant by the glory he shared with the Father before the world began?

Concluding thoughts:

Jesus says, "*The time has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.*" I'm ever so grateful that Jesus chose to be obedient to his heavenly Father. His selfless obedience has made it possible for him to give those who love him eternal life. I'm also grateful that he does this under the authority of God, the Father. For without this authority this generous gift would be meaningless. It would have no reality or value. We would still be without hope, as we were before Jesus died for us.

Let us give thanks at all times for what Jesus has done for us.