The High Priestly Prayer Of Jesus (Part 1) – John 17:1-5

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John 17:1-5. Lesslie Newbigin and his wife Helen were missionaries in India for almost 40 years, and after returning in 1974 he wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John. And when he came to John 17, he said this:

> "When a man is going on a long journey, he will find time on the eve of his departure for a quiet talk with his family, and – if he is a man of God – will end by commending to God not only himself and his journey, but also the family whom he leaves behind. Very *surely* will this be so if his journey is the last journey."
> (Newbigin, *The Light Has Come*, 223)

Which it was for Jesus, and which he did. Praying for himself, praying for us, and informing us of some of the most glorious truths in all the Bible. So we're going to take it one section at a time one week at a time, starting in v1-5.

[1] When Jesus had spoken these words [the words of his Farewell Discourse]*, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son* [referring to himself] *that the Son may glorify you, [2] since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.*

[3] And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. [4] I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. [5] And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (ESV)

For 3 years Jesus said his hour had *not* yet come. But now he says it has. *"Father, the hour has come."* (1) Referring to the time of his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. All of it. Because the first three are right around the corner, and his ascension is part of what he prays for. *The hour has come*.

And then he starts praying. Praying for his glory, because he fulfilled his calling, to give us life. That's v1-5 in one sentence. One prayer, in three parts.

Starting with his glory:

Jesus prayed for glory (v1, 5)

V1b – *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."* And then again in v5 – *Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

Now, before we get to the glory, don't miss that last comment. A mere passing comment on his eternal existence! Just like that!

But think of it. He pre-dated the world! The universe! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in glorious fellowship and glorious splendor before space and time even existed. No wonder he prayed for glory. No wonder he prayed for honor and exaltation. Twice.

"Glorify your Son" in v1 and *"glorify me"* in v5. "Magnify me. Make much of me. Clothe me with splendor." Like people of old did with kings. And we do with athletes. Lifting them up and putting them on a pedestal. He prayed for glory.

And if you're not thinking right, that sounds incredibly self-serving; self-absorbed; out of place. How could the one who came to serve, pray to be exalted? Pray to be glorified?

Because he deserves it. He's God. From all eternity. Deserving *all* glory. All honor. All praise. Which makes it entirely legit, and anything *but* self-serving.

Plus, the glory for which he prayed involved the cross.

It wasn't just glory in heaven he desired, we'll get to that, but . . .

• **Glory in the cross**

When Jesus prayed in v1 – *"Father, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,"* he had the cross in mind. Because a few days earlier, Monday of that week, he said in **John 12:23-24** – *[23] "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

And then, in the very next verse, he speaks of death. *[24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* Referring first and foremost to himself. His death. On the cross.

Same for **John 13:31**; a few *hours* earlier. *"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."* Now. In just a few short hours. On the cross.

So the glory for which Jesus prayed in v1, was glory in the cross. Which suddenly removes all thought of self-serving vanity, and replaces it with selfless sacrifice.

But that raises the question – How is there glory in the *cross*? Instrument of death and torture that it is, how can that be?

Five ways:

1. It lifted him up for all to see. Like Moses lifted the bronze serpent up in the *desert* for all to see. John 3:14. (Numbers 21:9) That's glorifying.

2. It identified him as the Lamb of God. The one who takes away the sin of the world. (Jon 1:29) The sacrificial Lamb. *Worshipped* as such in heaven. (Revelation 5:12-13)

3. It brought about his death for our sin. About as glorious as it gets from our perspective. The means by which he paid our debt.

4. It forced him to endure suffering. Which is glorifying, because we tend to admire people who suffer. Especially those who suffer graciously.

5. It made him the one on whom we depend for forgiveness. Once and for all. The *only* one on whom we can depend.

Jesus prayed for glory and the cross delivered. Just as he was glorified in his resurrection. With new life in a glorified body. Jesus prayed, and God answered.

But that's not it, he also prayed for . . .

• **Glory in heaven**

Glory in the cross and glory in heaven. V5 again – *Father, glorify me in your own presence.* Or glorify me in heaven. Because that's where the Father *is*.

And Jesus *prays* for such glory, because that's one of the things he gave *up* when he came to earth. Philippians 2:7 says that instead of hanging *on* to his glory, instead of hanging *on* to his position and privilege, he *emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant*.

He gave those things up. Not his attributes. Not his power. Not his knowledge or perfection. That would have emptied himself of his deity. Contrary to his *claims* of deity. And proof of it.

Rather, he gave up his *glory* as God. He gave up his *position* as God; at the right hand of the Father. He gave up his *privilege* as God; to rule and reign.

In other words, Jesus came to be what he was not, a man, without giving up any of what he was. God. He *suppressed* some of his attributes; he didn't always tap *into* his power; but neither did he relinquish it.

The point being, he prayed for glory in heaven because that's what he *had*, that's what he gave *up*, and that's what he deserves.

But even then, his prayer wasn't self-serving. Jesus prayed for glory . . .
• So that he could glorify the Father
V1 again – *"Father . . . glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.* Other-oriented to the core.

But how? What did Jesus have in mind? How would he glorify the Father by being glorified himself?

By obeying him even unto death. Like a soldier glorifies his commanding officer by obeying *his* commands and putting his life on the line.

But it wasn't just obedience in death that glorified the Father, it was obedience in life. Perfect obedience. Like good parents are glorified when their kids obey.

But that's the next point. For now, take your cues from Jesus' *prayer*. And make sure your prayers are the same. Not for your glory, but God's.

Make sure the ultimate goal of your prayers is God's glory

Instead of selfish prayers, or self-centered prayers; prayers that glorify you and you alone; pray for *God* to be glorified. Ask for things that will exalt him. And draw attention to him.

Instead of "God, help me; God, heal me; God, bless my family and friends," full stop. Pray, "God, help me for *your* sake, to advance *your* purposes. God, heal me to draw attention to *your* goodness and greatness. God, bless my loved ones for *your* renown; the fame of *your* name. In fact, do whatever you want as long as it magnifies *you*."

Pray like that. Make sure the ultimate goal of your prayers is *God's* glory. That's the first part.

The second focuses on his work. Where Jesus prayed for glory . . .
Because he accomplished his glorious work (v2, 4)
His glorious work of ministry. His glorious work of redemption. Like he prays in v2. *Father, glorify your Son . . . [2] since you have given him authority over all flesh* [or Lordship]*, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* Salvation.

Since. Did you see it? *Glorify your Son . . . since* [or because] *you have given him* the authority to grant eternal life. Indicating that v2 is the *reason* he prays for glory. Because the Father gave him a glorious responsibility. To save and keep those he gives.

Then, in v4, he confirms that he's done it. That he *accomplished* his glorious responsibility and work. No doubt including his work on the cross. Stating it in the *past* tense like he's done several times before, because it's a done deal.

[4] I glorified you on earth [past tense]*, having accomplished* [past tense] the *work that you gave me to do."* The work of ministry. The work of living a perfect life and dying a perfect death. It's done, Jesus says. "So glorify me. Exalt me. For my sake *and* yours."

Jesus prayed for glory because he accomplished his glorious work. Work given by God, with the *authority* and *ability* to carry it out. Authority, in his Lordship *over all flesh*, v2; and the *ability* to save those who believe. Those God gives.

In other words, Jesus is Lord and Savior. *Enabling* him to accomplish all that God gave him to do. Then *and* now. Now *and* later.

So make sure you do the same. It's an example to follow.

Make sure you accomplish the work God has given *you*

Because there's no excuse. Whatever God calls you to, he enables. He empowers.

Especially so, because the power at work in Jesus is the same power at work in us. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit. (John 7:38-39; 16:7) The power and presence of God the Father and God the Son; (John 14:23) making their home with us. God never leads where he doesn't empower.

So make sure you accomplish it. Just like Jesus. Make sure you fulfill *your* calling just like he fulfilled his. Whether it's working as unto the Lord in a factory, or being the best employee in a store, or the best engineer in an office. A kind doctor or caring nurse. A faithful admin or godly leader. A good teacher or diligent student. Make sure you *do* what God has given you.

Maybe it's finishing strong in life; doing the work of ministry and serving others instead of floating down stream and serving yourself. Maybe it's discipling your kids; or grandkids. Maybe it's serving the least of these. Loving the lost. Leading a group. Supporting the church. Going to seminary. Becoming a pastor. Being a missionary.

Whatever it is, whatever the work God has given you or is calling you to, make sure you're obedient. Make sure you do it and accomplish it. Just like Jesus. Who prayed for glory, because he accomplished his glorious work.

And last, he did so . . .
To give us eternal life (v2-3)
He gave up his glory and endured the inglorious cross, to give us glorious life. V2-3 – *"Glorify your Son . . . [2] since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.*

[3] And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. It's the core of this section. This very thought. The essence of eternal life.

But why? Why did he pray such a thing? Why did he make such a statement? Basically defining eternal life. Was it because the Father didn't know? Didn't know about the essence of eternal life? Of course not.

He prayed it so *we* would know. That we would know it's not just about time, like we normally think, but relationship. A life of knowing and being known.

• **A life of knowing <u>God</u>**
That's the first part of eternal life he highlights. It's a life of knowing the *only* God. *The only <u>true</u> God*, v3. *This is eternal life* [he prayed]*, that they know you* [Father]*, the only true God.*

Which means eternal life *isn't* found in any other god. Small g. Religious gods. Imaginary gods. Fictional gods. Demonic gods. The only thing found in them is eternal death. From Allah and Buddha to Krishna and Vishnu. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* (Proverbs 14:12)

Eternal *life* on the other hand, is found in knowing the *real* God. The true God. God the Father.

Knowing him. That's the emphasis. *This is eternal life* [Jesus said]*, that they <u>know</u> you.* (3) Not just know *about* you, but *know* you. Personally.

You know what that means? It means living your life in constant communion with him. It means living in fellowship with him; he in you and you in him. It means walking with him and talking with him. Conducting your life with him. Thinking his thoughts and following his ways. Loving him and being loved. That's what it means to *know* God.

And that's life, Jesus says. Eternal life. Knowing and being known, forever and ever. In the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God.

And don't miss the connection to the Old Testament in this respect. The Old Testament promise of a new covenant to establish and characterize our relationship.

It's found in **Jeremiah 31:33-34**, where God says – *[33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days* [spiritual Israel, the church]*, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* [No longer on tablets of stone, but hearts of flesh] *And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* We'll have a relationship.

[34] And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' [know God] *for they shall <u>all</u> know me* [all my people]*, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

600 years before Christ, God promised that under the New Covenant we would *all* know him; not just the priests. And we won't have to be *taught* to do so. We won't have to *do* certain things or say certain things. Because under the New Covenant, knowing God is automatic he says. It comes with the territory. It comes with belief.

And Jesus says, in John 17:3, *that's* eternal life. That knowing God, under the New Covenant, is the same as having life forever and life to the full. *This <u>is</u> eternal life* [he said]*, that they <u>know</u> you.*

So may our thinking be forever changed. From now on may we think of eternal life less in terms of time, and more in terms of relationship. Less in terms of living forever, and more in terms of living with God.

And finally, living with Christ. The eternal life Jesus gives is a life of knowing God and . .
• **A life of knowing <u>Christ</u>**
Both and. V3 – *This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, <u>and</u> Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* Jesus Christ, because he goes hand-in-*hand* with the Father. Jesus Christ, because he's the only *way* to the Father. The only way to know him and *have* a relationship with him.

Knowing the Son is the way to know the Father, and knowing both is the essence of life forever. And praise God for it. Because a life without relationship is life of loneliness. A life of hell.

So whatever you do . . .

Make sure you <u>know</u> God and <u>truly</u> have life

Make sure you know him and know him personally. Make sure Jesus is your Lord. Make sure you've repented and believe. Make sure you talk with him, and look to him, and love him. Make sure eternal life is yours for the keeping.

Summary
Because when you get right down to it, that's what Jesus lived for, died for, and prayed for. He prayed for glory, because he accomplished his glorious work, to give us glorious life. So make sure you have it, and make sure you live it. For his glory, and your joy.

<u>Prayer</u> – Father, thank you. Thank you for the power and authority you gave Jesus, to give us life. And thank you Jesus, for giving your life to make it happen. Find us equally faithful to accomplish *our* work, our calling. For your glory, and our good.

You Are Loved