

John 17:1-11 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. 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. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from 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. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

1. Jesus prayed for glory he had before
2. Jesus is glorified by completing his work
3. Jesus is glorified when we believe in him

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. In the years after the Civil War various towns and cities had begun holding springtime tributes to the fallen soldiers of the war, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.

On May 5, 1868, General John Logan, called for a nationwide day of remembrance later that month. The 30th of May, 1868, was chosen for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the Civil War. He chose that date because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle. By 1890 all the northern states had made Decoration Day an official state holiday. In 1971, Memorial Day was changed to the fourth Monday of May and became a federal holiday.

No longer just a holiday to remember the Civil War dead, Memorial Day honors all Americans who have died in defense of our country. Parades are held. Flags are placed on graves and other traditions mark the observance of Memorial Day. That's how we honor those who died for our nation. (History.com)

The seventh Sunday of the Easter season is also about honor. This Sunday after Ascension Day focuses on Jesus' glory. God honors Jesus with glory. May we join in that glory. A Hymn of glory let us sing.

The gospel lesson today is the first part of a prayer Jesus prayed on the night before his death. In these verses Jesus prayed for his glory and he prayed for his disciples. Jesus said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” The hour has come. This is the hour which God himself had set before the great clock of time began to run off its hours and days and centuries. It's the most significant hour in all the vast sweep of time. The eternal destiny of mankind is about to be determined.

At this time Jesus prayed for his glory. Jesus had put aside that glory in order to die for our sins. The Apostle Paul put it this way: “Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8) Jesus set aside the full use of his glory and power as God to live humble and die viciously.

Now, his prayer is to have his glory restored. *And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.* Jesus' humiliation is all but over. The dreaded suffering and dying of God's Son for us sinners lie just ahead. Confronted by this grim fate, what does he ask of his Father? “Glorify me,” he says, “with the glory I had with you before the world began.” He prays that his Father will uphold him on Good Friday, celebrate with him on Easter, and on Ascension Day whisk him back to the heavenly grandeur that he shared before the world existed. (Meditations, May 29, 1990)

The man, Jesus, is now in glory. Sitting at God's right hand he is everywhere because God is everywhere. That's what he promised before he ascended, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20) And because the man Jesus is now everywhere with God, he could make another promise to us. In the Lord's Supper He gives bread and wine, but he tells us, “This is my body,” and “This is my blood.” Through the sacrament of Holy Communion, Jesus gives us the very body and blood that earned our salvation on the cross, giving us the personal assurance that our sins are forgiven. We have Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper because as God and man he is present everywhere.

But we don't want to think that Jesus' glory is restricted only to what happened after Easter. Jesus has glory in finishing the work he was sent to do. *I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.* What is that work Jesus was giving to do? His task was to live perfectly, to be rejected by the people, crucified by the governing authorities and die on the cross.

Does it ever happen to you? You are stopping at the store on the way home from work. Your wife or your husband texted you to pick up milk, but it's not on your list. And so what happens? You walk in the door and realize you forgot the milk. If Jesus had left one stone unturned, forgotten to do one thing, then Jesus' sacrifice would not have tasted right in our holy God's mouth. If Jesus had forgotten one little ingredient of love or joy or forgiveness, God would have thrown Jesus back down to the earth on Ascension Day and said, "You're not done yet. Get back down there!" If Jesus had forgotten one thing, God would spit us out of his mouth on Judgment Day. But Jesus said he completed the work he was given so now it's time to return to glory.

"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. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For 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." Then he adds, *And glory has come to me through them.*

When biographers write about people, they often try to focus on one or two achievements or defining moments of their subject. I have been listening to a biography of Alexander Hamilton. His big achievement would probably be writing most of the Federalist Papers that convinced states to ratify the Constitution. Or it could be his work as the first Treasury Secretary when he established the capitalist system as we know it today.

What about Jesus? What is his big achievement? Suffering and dying on the cross seems to be the big thing. But what about turning water into wine, walking on water or raising Lazarus? Aren't these big achievements, too. But what did Jesus say in his prayer was his big achievement? That he gave the word to his disciples and they believed him. They believed who Jesus is and that he came from the Father.

That faith brings eternal life. *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.* Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God. Eternal life is not just a moment in time when one trusts in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Eternal life begins with coming to faith and continues throughout eternity, as one comes to know God. And since God is infinite, infinitely wise, infinitely loving, gracious and so on, then we will never come to know him fully in this life. It will take all eternity to know him fully. This is why we are not only called to faith, but to discipleship. We are called on to keep growing in our knowledge of God.

Such faith honors Jesus. How do you honor someone? Sometimes we build monuments or name buildings after someone. How do we honor Jesus? By believing in him. They believed God's Word when it told them they were sinners. They believed God's Word when it told them Jesus was their Savior.

Isn't that how we too glorify Jesus? We glorify Jesus when we read the truth of God's Word or hear it proclaimed to us in church. We glorify Jesus when we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, believe what God's Word says about our sin and about our Savior. We glorify Jesus when we, out of gratitude for what he has done for us, live our lives for him.

Jesus found glory in bringing God's Word to his disciples and preserving them in faith. What does that tell us? The most important thing in life is bringing God's Word to those whom God has entrusted to you. Luther once said, "Vain glory has ever been the most widely spread disease in the world" (What Luther Says, #1626). Look around. Then look at your own life. Here's the sad truth: Luther was right. If you are more ready to work on your child's pitching than his relationship with his Savior, you've caught the disease. When you look forward to a TV show that you really want to see but studying God's Word in a Bible study is a chore or a bore, you've got the bug. If you consider your greatest success and hope in life as anything other than knowing Christ crucified, you're sick. If you consider success in life as retiring with a fat pension and a healthy retirement account, you don't have much time left.

The most important thing you can do is know God and share that with the ones God has entrusted to you. But what does it mean to know God? To know God and Jesus Christ is really to have an intimate relationship with him.

If we do have that close relationship with Jesus, we will desire to spend time with him. We will desire to worship him with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will want to listen to him and try to understand how he wants us to live our lives. His words and commands matter to us because he said them. His promises will mean more to us than anything else we could ever hear.

On this Memorial Day, we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. It is fitting that we do so. Let us also honor Jesus who made the ultimate sacrifice for us. Let us give glory to him by striving to know God better and better and by believing his Word. May that be our hymn of glory.