

The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

"...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end"(John 13:1.)

The Praying Savior – John 17

The Lessons from Jesus' Prayer – John 17:1-26

John 17:1

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You..."

In the summer of 2007 there was a man, a husband and a father of three young children, who was enjoying a time of snorkeling off some coral reefs in the tropics. He was admiring a school of fish that he noticed suddenly moving off. Not thinking too much of it, he turned to find another school of fish to watch when he saw something large and grey moving toward him rapidly. Before he could give another thought, this man's leg was firmly held by a large shark. As he was considering the potentially dire outcome of this attack, all the man could do was to punch the shark's mid-section, hoping he would release. And after what seemed to be an eternity, the shark did let go and swim off. But now, with the leg bleeding badly and the nerves severed, this man had to try to make it to shore using only his arms.

As he made his way toward shore, getting plummeted and battered by the waves, the man saw a family and was trying to head their direction and trying to cry out for help, yelling "Shark, help!" To his dismay, the family was oblivious to him. Losing strength and hope, the man thought this was the end, when all of a sudden he again saw something out of the corner of his eye. As he turned to look, he saw a man who immediately took hold of him and uttered three simple words, words that brought hope and assurance; words that still ring in this man's ear two years later. The rescuer said, "I am here, I am here!" And with those words, the attacked man gave himself over into the care of his rescuer, who took him to shore and got him the help he needed. This morning we begin our in-depth look at John 17, what we call the Lord's Prayer; sometimes called the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. There is a sense in which Jesus, after just telling his followers that they would find themselves in spiritually speaking shark infested waters; being hated and persecuted by others; finding hardship and trials as they would seek to follow Him and even suffering through the effects of their own sinfulness that Jesus comes along side these men; men who are helpless, bleeding out life and completely unable to make it to shore; men were fearful that they would not survive as Jesus spoke of leaving them; that Jesus, in this prayer communicates the truth of that rescuer who saved the shark attacked man saying, "I am here; I am here!" As Jesus prays this prayer to the Father and while praying informs the disciples not only would Jesus continue to be with them in a far better way after He leaves them, but that the Father Himself would also be with them and dwell in them by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Do you know what this is then? Do you realize what is before us in these words, in this prayer of the Savior? Beloved, this is truly "good news" – this is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Before I move on, I wish to tell you that we are going to spend quite some time in these verses. In these words of Jesus we find not only the good news, but also tremendous insights in to great doctrines or teachings of the Bible from Jesus' perspective. Let us marvel, let us savor, let us rejoice in each of these messages as we contemplate the depth and wonder of this prayer wherein Jesus not only prays for Himself, in verses 1-5; and not only for those disciples who were present with Him on the night of His betrayal, arrest and horrific death on the cross in verses 6-

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19; but also, and please note this well, that in verses 20-26, Jesus prays for all those who would believe in Him because of or through their word. Each one of us owes our salvation in part to men like Peter, John and Paul as they, by the Holy Spirit of God, penned the words of life. How many of us can remember verses like Romans 3:23, ***"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.."*** and realized that such words spoke of us? How many of us have heard the words of Romans 6:23, ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** And realized that God had done something for us that we cannot begin to fully fathom and could never express enough gratitude? How many of us have been encouraged by God's Spirit to come to him with the words of Romans 10:9-10, ***"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."*** Beloved, these words and many like these, penned by the disciples and apostles, have been used by the Lord to open our eyes to the spiritual truth of our need of Jesus' work on the cross as our payment for our sins; of our need for the Spirit's indwelling our very lives so that we might know God and serve God; and of our very need for the Father's love and compassion to initiate and bring to completion this work of the salvation of men – of people like you and me. Beloved, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord; if you have passed from spiritual death to life; if you have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son, then know this – Jesus prayed for you on the night He was betrayed. Jesus thought of you when He was about to suffer the most horrific pain and death of any man. And it is as if Jesus was saying to us these 2000 years later, "I am here, I am here! I have prayed for you in the past that I might be present with you in the here and now!" Is this not good news?

Now, in these opening words of Jesus prayer we find in the first five verses Jesus praying for Himself. But even in this prayer for Himself, we find in the first verse, the verse of our focus this morning, that Jesus' concern is not for Himself. Rather we find that He has a chief concern; a primary object to which He is intent on obtaining. This primary object is that which is most important, most impressive and therefore the most imperative for us to grasp and apply – and that object is the glory of God. Jesus begins, ***"Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."*** From these first words of Jesus, I wish to show you two things; first the priority of Jesus and second the plea of Jesus.

I. The Priority of Jesus

"Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."

In our text, the plea actually comes first as Jesus says, ***"glorify Your Son..."*** but I would like to begin with the priority of Jesus as found in the last statement as Jesus says, ***"that the Son may glorify You."*** And so we find here that that which is of most concern and importance to Jesus is that God the Father be glorified. I want you to take note that the ultimate aim and object of Jesus was that God the Father would be highly esteemed, that He would be given all honor; that He would be recognized as supremely splendid possessing all greatness, authority and power resulting in all praise. This is the idea behind glory in our text. Jesus' priority is that in everything He has done, and in everything He is yet to do, be that the pending trial before the Jewish authorities, be that hanging on the cross as the sin sacrifice for His people; be that being

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raised on the third day, as Romans 6:4 tells us is to the glory of the Father – that all things in His life would point people to recognize the majesty, the mercy, the mystery and the magnificence of the Father.

Beloved, sometimes we carry an unbalanced view and practice of the praise of God. In our circles we are diligent to exalt, to rightly exalt the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We declare, rightly, that Jesus is the subject of the Book and He is often the theme of our songs. We rightly bow the knee and confess with the mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. But all the while we do this, we can sometime neglect the person of the Holy Spirit. We might say that the Holy Spirit's ministry is not to draw attention to Himself, but to point people to Christ. How does the Spirit of God – God in us – do anything without drawing attention to Himself? We are told to be filled with the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit to pray in the Spirit. We have one of the longest books of the New Testament entitled, The Acts of the Apostles" – sometimes more fully described as "The Acts of the Apostles by the Holy Spirit" or even just "The Acts of the Holy Spirit". How can you read through the book of Acts without marveling at the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit? We might say that because of the obvious abuses and misrepresentations of the Holy Spirit by other believers and groups we don't want to draw too much attention to the Spirit. But beloved, the Holy Spirit, by our own confession and statement of faith, is co-equal and therefore co-worthy of the praise and adoration we give to Jesus.

But not only is the Holy Spirit sometimes neglected in our worship, praise and efforts to glorify; but we can also neglect God the Father. That's right – we must ask ourselves if our exaltation of Jesus is ever to the diminishing of God the Father. Have we failed to see God the Father as the Almighty, Infinite God who has initiated, directed and even sent His Son to be both Savior and Lord? A moment ago I made a statement found in Philippians 2:9-11; namely that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord – Jesus is Master; Jesus truly is God in the flesh come to be our Savior – but the verse doesn't end there. I believe Paul is echoing exactly what Jesus says here is the priority, listen carefully, ***"and that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*** Beloved, the Father is to be glorified. The Father is to be worshipped and adored every bit as much as Jesus. And my purpose in saying this is not to ask you to lessen in your worship of Jesus; not to diminish your adoration of Christ, but to exhort you to worship and adore God the Father as much; to consider God the Father as much. Jesus said that He wanted to be glorified so that He might what, glorify the Father. This was Jesus priority – the glory of the Father.

And now, let me ask you, is the glory of God the Father, your priority. This was the goal, the aim of Jesus. And I say to you, if Jesus' intent, if His life, if all of His other duties and responsibilities were governed by this, then how much more ought we who desire to be like Christ, who profess to know the heart of Christ, long to live lives to the glory of God the Father. Is this not what we read in those words of 1 Corinthians 10:31, ***"Whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*** Are there areas of your life this morning that you know do not highly esteem; do not bring all honor; that do not recognize God the Father as supremely splendorous possessing all greatness, authority and power resulting in all praise? Do your conversations with your spouse bring such glory to God? Children, does the way you speak to your parents and the things you think about your parents show that you know how God would have you speak to them and think about them. Does your free time have this priority – the glory

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of God; whether you play tennis, read a book, listen to music, whatever it is, is it with this mindset of Jesus, that you intensely desire it to bring glory to God? This is the priority of Jesus; may it become our priority as well.

II. The Plea of Jesus

"Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."

But what of this plea I mentioned. Note again what Jesus says before stating the priority of glorifying God. He says, "glorify your Son..." Beloved, this is the first plea, the first request of Jesus' prayer. Even before anything else is said, Jesus says in effect, "Father, please impart Your glory to Your Son." What is this about? How could it be that Jesus, God in the flesh, would need to request of the Father such glory? Is not Jesus already glorious? Do we not read in John 1:14 that even the disciples beheld the glory of Jesus? Actually John 1:14 more accurately says, ***"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** The origin of this glory is from the Father. Let us never miss this truth, that although Jesus was and is God, as man, Jesus was in constant need of the Father to impart to Him everything needful to glorify the Father. As Jesus prepares Himself and His disciples for His departure, the prayer request here on Jesus part is meant to not only have the Father fulfill the request, but also to show the disciples and to show you and me that any person, be it the Son of God in the flesh, or a newborn believer in Jesus, needs the Father to give Him the power, to give Him the ability to bring glory to the Father in all things. In other words, Jesus wants to be glorified by the Father, given honor and splendor and power and authority, not in order to exalt Himself, but in order to glorify God. Let me show you how Jesus demonstrated this in His life. In **John 5:19**, Jesus clearly states that He can do nothing (does not have the ability to do anything) except that which the Father does and shows the Son. In **John 6:38** Jesus says that He has not come to do His own will, but the will of Him [the Father] who sent Him. And in verse 39, it is the Father who has given Jesus the knowledge and directive of this will, namely to save all those whom God has given Him. And in **John 8:28** we find Jesus saying that He does not even speak a word on His own initiative, but that He speaks only those things ***"as the Father taught"*** Him. As God, Jesus possesses all power, all authority, all glory. But as man, Jesus laid aside some of those divine possessions making himself not only humble before the Father, but also dependent upon the Father to grant Him the ability to do those things that glory God; to speak those things that glorify God; and to know the very will of God that brings to God glory.

And so we find this plea of Jesus, ***"glorify Your Son..."*** which I take to mean Jesus as saying in effect, "Father, the cross is pending, the very purpose for which You sent Me has arrive, and now, I beseech You, enable Me, empower Me, grant Me Your glorious strength that I might bear this work to Your glory. Do not let me fail You in this. Do not let Me depend upon my humanness for this task for I cannot do this apart from Your majesty, Your authority, Your splendor being given to Me." Isn't that amazing? Not only does Jesus plea such a divine enablement for Himself, but He does this audibly, before His disciples, so that we might know that Jesus truly was man as well as God; so that we might know that if the Son of Man found it necessary to plead for glory in order to glorify God; that we might also then plead for the glory of God to be manifested in our lives so that we might rightly glorify God the Father. Is this your

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goal? Is this your aim? Is your priority the glory of God the Father? Will you follow the example of Jesus and plead that the Father's glory be granted you so that you might glorify Him? This is man's purpose; this is man's chief end, "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." How can you do this? You cannot yourself any more than Jesus could in Himself. We must pray for, we must plead for the glory of the Father to be made evident in our lives. It is not our glory – it is not given to make us look good; for if it is God's glory in you, then it will not be recognized as your own anyway, it will be seen for what it is, God's glory in you.

And putting this all into the context of this Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17 in which Jesus had been telling the disciples of both the good and the bad to come; the promise of the Holy Spirit's coming and indwelling as well as the trials and hardships that await the followers of Jesus; let me make this application. From this discourse as well as from the full accounting of Scripture, Jesus had problems in His life, right? There were people that did not like Him; there were the pressures of trying to provide not only for His own physical needs, but also the needs of His disciples and others. Jesus had many sleepless nights, to be sure not spend in the sin of worry, but certainly in the agony of godly concern. Jesus had problems and yet His prayer was, ***"Father, glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."*** Jesus would not let His problems and circumstances, particularly that of the coming trial of the cross, keep Him from glorifying the Father. What a resolve! And may I ask, do you have this resolve? Is this your concern, that regardless of circumstances; okay, so my finances are not so hot right now; my health is not cooperating, my car always seems to have something wrong with it; the children are out of control; my parents are out of control; that no such things would be used as excuses not to plead for the glory of God the Father to be imparted to you so that in all such things, whether as mundane as eating and drinking, all might be done to the glory of God.

But let me say this as well, Jesus not only had problems, but believe it or not, Jesus was also incredibly busy. Jesus was constantly on the move, constantly teaching, constantly in conflict with the hostile religious leaders, constantly ministering, constantly with people and yet He constantly sought to glorify God. Sometimes our commitments to the Lord are based not as they should be on conviction and priority but rather upon convenience and pressure. I am too busy to read my Bible; too busy to make church meetings; too busy to memorize scripture; too busy to pray privately; too busy to pray with other believers. My job has too many expectations; my family too many activities; my life too many priorities. Beloved, while Jesus did live in an entirely different culture and time; and while He did not have the Internet, TV, cameras, sporting events and the such, I would challenge you to prove to me from Scripture how Jesus was not every bit as much, if not more busy than you. And yet Jesus pleads with the Father that despite His problems and despite the long hours before Him that He would yet be granted the power to glorify God in all these things. Is this your prayer? – Father, glorify me, enable me, strengthen me in the midst of my problems, in the face of my busyness to live in such a way as to bring You glory in it all.

I know that each of us lives in figuratively speaking shark-infested waters. Sometimes the sharks are of our own making, our own sinfulness, our own unwillingness to live God's way; sometimes the sharks are simply outside invaders, seeking to feed on us; and the truth is we've all been bitten; we all at some time or another have been bleeding in the water, unable to move, unable to save ourselves, unable to do it and thinking we are going to die, we hear the words of

The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

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the Savior, "I am here, I am here!" As we will see next week, this is why Jesus came, to save us from our sin; our shark bites; but this morning, if you know Jesus has saved You, know that He continues to say to you, "I am here! I have prayed as the Son of God that the Father would enable Me to save you and to pray for you and to indwell you with My Father by the Holy Spirit." And now I call you to follow His example and make the glory of God the Father your priority, confessing anything that has come to be of more importance than God's glory in your life. And I call you to plead to the Father that He would enable you to live for His glory. I can confidently assert to you that the Father is here, the Father is here. Confess your sins to Him, thank Him for His willingness to save you and to enable you to glorify Him and then let us celebrate that all this has been made possible by Jesus following through on the same priority by uttering the same prayer; let us remember what He did for us so that we might live to the glory of God. Jesus died for us, so that we might live for the glory of God.

Soli Deo Gloria

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January 18, 2009