

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

To Know God, Know Jesus

John 17:1-5

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, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

As we now progress in the Lord's Prayer, I wish to have you consider with something important, something interesting; something that is subtle in our text and yet at the same time important. Having already seen that the priority of Jesus was to glorify the Father in verse one and that God the Father is most readily glorified in the salvation of souls - called eternal life and given by Jesus to those whom the Father had given Him to save; we now draw our attention on verses three through five, which not only define for us what is eternal life – for in verse three we have a formula of sorts, namely that eternal life equals knowing God the Father as well as Jesus Christ, but verses that also give us some wondrous insight into the person of Jesus Christ.

If I were to ask you, what is it that you ought to know about Jesus Christ, what kind of answers would you give me? To be sure, Jesus is Savior, Jesus is Lord; but just what do such terms really mean; how do such titles affect our daily living; what is the substance behind such titles? I find it interesting that in verses three through five of our text, Jesus tells us something about Himself; something about the purposes and roles He fulfilled while on this earth. We sometimes refer to these purposes and roles as the offices of Christ; and there are three important offices that Jesus, the Son of God who became the Son of man, holds; offices that are not just important theological thoughts, but also have important applications to our lives. And so this morning, from our text, John 17:3-5, I wish to present to you the three key offices of Jesus Christ as prophet, priest and king.

Before we look at these more in depth, notice that the key point of verse three is what – that people might "know" God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Here in verse three we see Jesus as the prophet who makes God known in words and ways. This was the role of the Old Testament prophet, to speak God's words and make God's will known among the people. The key point of verse four is found in Jesus stating that He accomplished the work the Father gave Jesus to do – the work of redeeming a people, purchasing them with blood from their bondage of sin. Here we see the priestly work of Jesus Christ. The role of the Old Testament priest was to offer sacrifices, prayer and praises to God on behalf of the people. And finally, in verse 5, we see Jesus requesting to be glorified once again with the fullness of the glory He possessed before He came to earth, the glory of a King. The role of the Old Testament King was to rule over the people as God's representative. These will be the offices we consider this morning; how it is the Jesus Himself tells us He is the fulfillment of these and then what this means for our daily walk as followers of Jesus.

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I. Jesus Christ – the Prophet (John 17:3)

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

As we already noted, Jesus begins by stating what is eternal life saying, ***"that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*** What Jesus is saying here is this – if a person is to live forever in the blissful, glorious presence of God, there are two persons in particular that such person needs to "know". Now the word "know" here means "to understand, to comprehend – to know in an intimate way." Jesus is not equating knowing about God; of being able to state some true facts about God as saving knowledge, rather, the issue is one of relationship – eternal life is about having a personal, regular, ongoing, living, dynamic, and intimate relationship with both God the Father and God the Son (on a side note – such a relationship with the Father and the Son who both dwell in heaven is only possible by means of God the Holy Spirit who indwells believers and connects believers to the Father and the Son). But the question before us is this, do we really know God the Father as the only, the unique and authoritatively true God (in contrast to all other so-called Gods) and do we know Jesus Christ in this same exclusive, unique and authoritative way.

We live in a time of much confusion about God, do we not? We are being told that the god of the Muslims and the god of the Hindus, and even the god of Mormonism and other cults are all the same God. And yet the truth is evident before us – the only way to know the only and true God is by knowing the only and true Son sent by God, Jesus Christ. In other words, to know God, one must know Jesus Christ. There is no other option, no other recourse, no other hope. Jesus said in the most exclusive of terms in John 14:6, ***"I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me."*** Do you want eternal life? Do you really want to know God intimately as Father? Then you must devote yourself; you must give yourself over to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Why, why is it that I can only rightly know the Father by knowing Jesus Christ? Because, beloved, it is the very reason why Jesus came – to make the Father known. Jesus has come to fulfill the role as prophet, speaking to humanity the words, the will and the way of God. Turn with me to John 1, where we see this very idea of Jesus as the prophet presented. Let's begin in John 1:18 where we read:

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (exegeted; rightly and fully made Him known).

We have already considered many verses in John where Jesus speaks of the fact that He does nothing, says nothing and wills nothing but that which the Father had told Him to. But the point is, that Jesus, throughout His ministry, sought to make the Father known, thus fulfilling the prophetic office.

But someone may ask, was Jesus ever meant to fulfill the office of prophet? Yes, indeed, turn with me to Deuteronomy 18. Beginning in verse fifteen, we see Moses predicting another prophet, like himself, but also greater. Let us read –

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die." 17 The Lord said to

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me, "They have spoken well. 18 I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

God promised to bring One who would come with all the words and ways of the Lord and speak them to the people. And beloved, we know that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of such verses; Jesus came to make the only true God known and the only way to know intimately the true God is to know intimately His true Son, Jesus Christ. And in this way, Jesus is much more than any other prophet, is He not. In fact, you might want to note that while Jesus does fulfill this office of prophet, making God known, and while He is recognized throughout the gospel accounts as a great prophet (Luke 7:16; John 4:19; John 9:17), it is important to see that nowhere in the New Testament letters, from Romans through Jude, is Jesus ever called a prophet; why is this? I believe it is because Jesus is so much more than a prophet. For prophets only communicated things about God, but Jesus Himself was the One of whom the prophecies of the Old Testament were made. In addition, Jesus was not simply a messenger of some revelation about God, but Jesus was Himself the very source of revelation. Every prophet had to say, "Thus says the Lord..." but we find Jesus saying things like, "Truly, truly, I say to you..." (John 3:3, 5; see also Matthew 5:22 and following). The whole key to the book of Hebrews is to reveal how Jesus is better or superior over all other Old Testament people and types. And if Jesus was to be referred to as "the Prophet" the greatest place to find that would be in Hebrews 1:1-2. But there we read,

"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son (not in "the prophet"), whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

This first section of Hebrews carries on through the end of chapter 2, and note how Hebrews three does not begin. It does not begin by saying, "Therefore, consider Jesus as the greatest prophet of all..." But what does it say in Hebrews 3:1?

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle (the sent One) and High Priest of our confession;

To know God the Father, one must know personally and intimately God the Son, as the One sent by the Father, to make the Father known. Jesus is our Apostle, who has made the Father known to us, like a prophet, but yet greater than a prophet. All of this reminds us that there is nothing more important, nothing greater than coming to know Jesus by studying His life and His words as given to us not only in the gospel accounts, but also given to us in the New Testament letters. As we grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, as we draw closer to Him, we draw closer to the Father. Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? How do you know Him better today than you did yesterday? How do you know Him better today than you did this time a year ago? Do not grow complacent in your intimacy with Jesus, beloved – to know Jesus is to know the Father and such an intimate relationship to the Father and the Son is the very meaning and essence of eternal life. How is your prayer life; your Bible reading, your Bible study; your meditation; your praise life; your fellowship with the saints? – these are just a few of the means and indicators of how intimate you are with Jesus and therefore how intimate

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you are with God – Jesus ends this prayer with this thought of the intimate knowledge of Himself and the Father (verses 25-26).

II. Jesus Christ – the Priest (John 17:4)

I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

So, we see how Jesus Christ is truly the Prophet of prophets – the Object of the prophets – fulfilling in whole what the Old Testament prophets could only do in part – make God known in man's most needed way – as the gracious Initiator of eternal life; but coming now to verse four we see Jesus as fulfilling the role of priest saying, ***"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."***

Now, the question we might want to ask ourselves is this, "What is the work which the Father gave Jesus to accomplish?" There is no doubt that Jesus has in view the work of redemption, the work of the cross; the very act by which Jesus would, in the words of Matthew 1:21, ***"save His people from their sins."*** But by what means would and could Jesus save His people? Beloved, Jesus would become their priest. Remember that an Old Testament priest was appointed by God to offer up sacrifices to temporarily stay off God's wrath against their sins. Also, the priest would offer up both prayers and praises to God on behalf of the people. Every Old Testament priest foreshadowed or pointed to Jesus who becomes our great high priest. Again, this is a great theme and message of the book of Hebrews, how Jesus fulfills the role of priest for His people. Let us remember that in the Old Testament, sacrifices for sins were offered how often? Continually – the people of Israel were constantly bringing their sin sacrifices to the temple. All this reminds us that sin is not so much about individual acts, but rather about our condition apart from Christ. The issue is this – we are not sinners because we commit individual acts of sin; but rather we commit individual acts of sin because we are sinners. And so, unless or until there was a perfect and eternal sacrifice offered for sin, the best that could be done was a temporary fix. We read in Hebrews 10:4 –

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

And so, humanity needs something different, something better than the blood of bulls and goats. So, God sends His Son to become our high priest, the one that would not only offer the sin sacrifice, but also He Himself would be the sin sacrifice for all those who believe. Listen to the words of Hebrews 9:26 –

...but now once at the consummation of the ages He [Jesus] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Jesus, we are told throughout the book of Hebrews, offered Himself as the once for all, final and complete sacrifice for sin. Consider the truth of Hebrews 10:10-12

10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD...

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Did you catch that last statement... ***"having offered (as a Priest) one sacrifice for sins for all time (Jesus did something no other Old Testament priest could do in his service), SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."*** In other words, to borrow from what Jesus said in John 17:4, ***"I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished (having finished once for all) the work which You have given Me to do."*** And so, as our Prophet, Jesus told us the way of salvation, that intimate and relational knowledge of God by or through an intimate and relational knowledge of Him; and as our Priest we find that Jesus did it all, paid it all, finished it all – that salvation is complete in Him. Luke, in Acts 4:12 says it this way,

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name (the name of Jesus) under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

Jesus Christ is eternal life, you must know Him intimately and you must know that He offered Himself in your place on the cross; that He died for your sins so that you might no longer live for yourself, but for Him who died and rose again. Do you know Jesus as your great high priest, who opened the way to you of drawing near to God? Again, is this not the question of Hebrews 3:1 which says...

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest (both in offering and being our sin sacrifice) of our confession;

And by way of application...how might you know if Jesus has become your high priest? I might ask you about your behavior, about the things you do and even think about doing. Are your actions glorifying, honoring and a testimony to the power and purity of God? Consider 2 Corinthians 5:21, those familiar words; allow me to paraphrase, ***"God the Father made Jesus who knew no sin (was not intimate with sin in His being) to be our sin sacrifice (our payment) so that we might become the righteousness (living, loving according to God's intended way) of God."*** Beloved, Jesus offered Himself as the believer's sin sacrifice so that that believer's life might be one of excellence, of glory to God, of pointing people to God. This is what Jesus accomplished...this was the work of Christ as our priest, that we might ***"Keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that...they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."*** Beloved, there is a connection, a correlation between the death of Christ on the cross for your sins and your holiness. If Jesus is your Priest who offered Himself on that cross for your sins, then you will desire and greatly pursue His holiness and righteousness to be manifest in your life. How are you doing?

III. Jesus Christ – the King

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Finally then, we have seen Jesus in verse three as our Prophet, in verse four as our Priest and now in verse five let us see Him as King. We read, ***"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."*** To begin with, it is obvious from this verse that Jesus existed prior to His coming to the earth and that this existence was glorious. In heaven, Jesus was honored, worshipped and adored. When He came to earth, the vast majority of people had no knowledge of Him and even of those who did, the majority of

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those did not receive Him but wanted Him gone at best or dead at worst. And yet, when Jesus came to the earth, He came to restore to man what man lost at the fall of Adam, that earthly dominion. In the Old Testament, the king was given authority to rule over the nation of Israel. When Jesus came to the earth, it was said in Matthew 2:2, that He was born King of the Jews. Even as Jesus began His earthly ministry, He proclaimed a kingdom, the kingdom of God. But the truth of the matter was that Jesus came not to simply be king of the Jews, but truly the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus came to be the king of a new people, not just of Israel, but over all humanity.

Just a few days prior to Jesus making this plea to experience again His rightful glory, Jesus had been hailed by the people, making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, what did the people say? They said, ***"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Luke 19:38).*** Jesus was indeed King, but He had yet to rule with all the glory and honor He had possessed in heaven upon the earth and so He prays for that glory to be restored.

After the resurrection of Jesus, consider what is said of Him by the Father according to Ephesians 1:19b-23 where we read,

19 These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

After the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Jesus was accorded all the power and prestige of a King, a King who would rule over all things, all the universe, but would be especially King or Head of the Church, the body of Christ. In other words, the Kingship, the rulership of Christ begins right here, in our hearts, as we submit ourselves to His authority and live our lives according to His commandments. But what we see and experience now is only partial, for the authority of Jesus over all thing and the church will be more fully recognized by humanity when He returns literally and personally to the earth to reign with great power and great glory. We see a part of this glory revealed at His coming in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 where we read...

6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

This earth will be governed under the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was given the fullness of His glory back as He accomplished the work of salvation upon the cross (1 Peter 1:21). When Jesus reigns on the earth, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him as Lord...not simply a prophet, or a priest, but truly as the King of kings and Lord of lords and all to the glory of God the Father.

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And so, in light of Jesus being the glorious King, how ought our lives to be lived. Does a King have a right over His subjects? Does a King not have the right to rule and govern as He sees fit? Is it not the responsibility of the subjects of the kingdom to obey the King? And so, where do you find yourself this morning? Are you a loyal subject of the King? Could it be said of you, by the conduct of your life, by the words that you say, even by the things that you dwell on, that your heart, soul and mind were devoted to Jesus as King? Or are there strongholds, areas of your life that in which you seek to maintain Lordship? Oh, beloved, confess those, put them away. In the words of 2 Corinthians 10:5, let us be ***"destroying speculations and every lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God and [be] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..."*** and to the glory of God.

Beloved, have you considered Jesus? Do you know Him intimately? Are you growing in Him so that you might be drawing near to God? Is He your Prophet? Have you considered Jesus? Has He become your sin sacrifice so that you might live as the righteousness of God? Have you considered Jesus? Is He your King, your ruler, your master, your authority? Eternal life is bound up in such knowledge of Jesus and in such a manifestation of such knowledge of Jesus in your life.

Soli Deo Gloria

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