

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 Whom Are You Submitting To?

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.”

Submission – what comes to your mind when you hear the word “submission”? A very short and precise definition of submission is this – to yield or place one’s own will or desires under the will or authority of another. Is this good or is it bad? In the New Testament, the word translated “submission” or “subjection” literally means to “to be placed or ranked under.” In the Greek, it was a military term that spoke of one’s rank.

For many, particularly those outside the church, “submission” is a nasty word that conjures up feelings and ideas of restriction, discrimination, de-humanization and even abuse. To be in submission to someone or something, to be under the whims and will of another is seen as inhuman and therefore something to be avoided at all cost.

Now, for those in the church who know the basic idea of biblical submission; the act of placing ourselves under or yielding to the will and authority of another as designated by God; know that such submission is one of the highest callings and is for the greatest good of God’s people. If we were to consider carefully biblical submission, we would find that with it comes a true sense of freedom, of love and of greatest security. And yet, even believers can be a bit reluctant and even resistant when they start noticing in the New Testament the number of things to which they are called to be in submission. Let me give a few. Believers are called to be in submission to God (James 4:7), to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:24); to one another in the church (Ephesians 5:21); to church leaders (Hebrews 13:17); to their masters/employers (1 Peter 2:18); and yes, even to civil authorities or government (Romans 13:1). This is not an exhaustive list. And I am sure that not one of us has any problems with rightly submitting to each of these, right? This is easy, right?

But I share these with you because even believers, who know the idea of biblical submission in theory, can often have a difficult time actually living it out in reality. Is this not true? Don’t you find it your experience that it is much easier to talk about submission than actually being submissive? Isn’t it the parents experience that although they might speak to and even discipline their children in order to encourage them to be submissive, that children yet resist? Isn’t it true that you can find yourself easily resenting an employer or co-worker that asks you to do something that seems to you, beneath you, under you? And here is the truth – *by nature, we simply do not like to be told what to do?*

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Beloved, let me say this to you by way of principle – the issue this morning is not whether or not you are in submission to someone or something, but rather to what are you in submission. The question is not, “Are you being submissive; but rather, to what or to whom are you being submissive?” Every one of us is submissive to someone or something (or some combination). Very quickly, let me tell you that there are three negative and one positive possibilities or categories; for everyone will be in submission, that is place themselves under the will or authority, to some degree or another to one or more of these things; the influences of the world; to the deception of the devil or to the desires of self. Oh yes, I said that there was one positive possibility – as the believer may be and ought to be in submission, under the will and authority, to Jesus Christ. But why? Why is a believer to be under the authority of Jesus? From our text in John 17:5, I would offer you at least two reasons why we are to be in submission to Jesus Christ as opposed to the other three possibilities; those two reason being because:

- I. Jesus is the King of Highest Order
- II. Jesus is the King of Greatest Glory

I. Jesus – the King of Highest Order (John 17:5a)

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself...

Before we look at Jesus being the King of highest order, let me comment that I realize nowhere in this verse or even in the immediate context does Jesus call Himself King. And yet, the very language Jesus uses here in our text clearly points to Jesus’ position as King, as I hope to reveal to you. So first, remember that this whole passage, John 17:1-5, is concerned with one key thing – the glory of God. And so, in verse one Jesus had made a passionate plea or petition, saying, “**glorify the Son, that the Son may glorify the Father.**” Then, in verse four we saw Jesus declare that He had in fact accomplished that petition, saying, “**I glorified You on the earth...**” And now, we have a seemingly repeated statement in verse 5 as that from verse one where Jesus says, “**glorify Me together with Yourself...**” There are a couple of things I would have you notice about this statement. First, when Jesus says, “**glorify Me...**” – He is using the same exact verb and form of verse one. There in verse one; it is clear that Jesus is making a petition, a request. There it was clear that Jesus was requesting the divine aid of the Father to carry out the task. So is verse five just a restatement of the petition, the prayer request of verse one? I don’t think so and let me tell you why. Jesus adds something to this statement. In verse one the petition was “**glorify the Son**” where Jesus refers to Himself in the third person. But here in verse 5 Jesus says very specifically, “**glorify Me.**” It has turned from a broad petition to grant the Son what was needful to carry out the mission of the cross to a very specific and personal command or imperative that the Father now reveal Jesus as the one who is to be highly exalted, highly esteem, recognized as supremely splendid, as possessing all power, all authority and worthy of all praise.

In other words, Jesus is making a divine request to be exalted. But exalted to what? Note what else Jesus says here in verse 5. Rather than asking for glory as He did in verse one “**so that...**” He might be able to do something, Jesus says here, “**glorify Me together with Yourself...**” or literally, “glorify Me by the side of Yourself; or right along side of You.” Jesus here is claiming equality with the Father saying in effect, “Father, glorify Me as one who is equal with

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You; as one who is alone able to stand by Your side; as one who is can be by Your side because I am like You; as one who is God.” In a sense you have God commanding God to glorify Him. And while this may seem a bit strange to us, let us remember that God, who is by definition the supreme being; the sovereign King over all creation; that God must be glorified. We all agree that God, by definition, if He is supreme, must be highly exalted, highly esteemed, recognized as most splendorous and as possessing all power, all authority and therefore worthy of all praise. Therefore we find Jesus presenting Himself as one of Highest Order – being in fact, of the order of God and therefore able to command that He be glorified right along side of the Father.

Is this not the very language of the New Testament? Consider some passages with me that reveal that as Jesus fulfilled His purpose as Redeemer and Savior by dying on the cross for the sins of His people and being raise from the dead on the third day, was revealed as being a King of highest order. First, we read in the familiar passage of Philippians 2:8-11;

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (accomplished work of John 17:4) 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (kingly language)

Again, in Ephesians 1:18-23 we read of kingly nature of Christ's person and position:

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. 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.

Jesus is the King of highest order. There is indeed none like Him. So much so that Revelation 17:14 and 19:16 refer to Jesus as “**King of kings.**” Jesus is glorified like no other. Okay, so Jesus is King, Jesus is to be exalted along side and even as God the Father. So what? A great truth – great theology – so what? What does this mean to you? How does this help us answer the question, “Why should I be submissive to Jesus?” And I say to you, because Jesus is the king of highest order – because He is in charge and in control, because even the Father heeded this request to exalt Him and give Him the name that is above every name; how much more ought we heed every request, every divine decree, every kingly mandate given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ?

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Remember that we said we will be submissive to one of four things, either to the influences of the world, the deceptions of the devil, the desires of the flesh, or we will be under the sovereign Kingship, under the authority and will of Jesus Christ. It won't be to us a question of what do I want, or what will others think, but rather, "what has Jesus asked me to do according to His word?" And so, let me ask you, to whom, or what are you being submissive? Beloved, it is easy to talk about submission to Christ and another to live it in. And, while I know that the world certainly influences me more than it should, and while I am also aware that the devil carries out what Ephesians 6:11 calls his "**schemes**" (**wiles; tricks**) against me, I know that for myself, and what I feel confident to say would be true of most of you, is that the greatest fountain from which you drink in your experience of submission is the fountain of self. To put it another way, when push comes to shove, we tend to submit to our own fleshly passions and desires rather than to anything or anyone else.

Let me give you a person example. This last week was a challenge for me to say the least. My wife had asked that we complete a simple project on Monday, that project being the painting of our front bathroom. Now, how hard could that be, a little 5x8 room, most of which is bathtub and mirror? Well, as I was prepping the room, taping off the trim, tub and vanity, I came to the toilet and was considering how best to paint behind the tank. There is no way I want to take the tank off, although that would be best. As I was contemplating all this, I inadvertently knocked off the cap that hides the bolt that holds down bowl to the floor; and to my shock and dismay, there was no bolt there, the bowl was only being held on, at least that side, by the wax ring underneath. I knew what this meant and at first I started to get flustered and anxious, but I offered my little prayer, "Okay Lord, you know." So I proceeded to take the other bolt off, only to find that it was so corroded, I had to cut it off. Then I noticed the bolts that held the tank on the bowl, and they too were corroded; and so we determined that everything except the tank and bowl itself would need to be replaced. The problem was that nothing cooperated, not one of the bolts could be easily removed and I felt myself becoming more and more irritated and becoming shorter and shorter with my family and occasionally even getting louder and louder. This soon was followed by sarcasm and more frustration. And even though I would catch myself; and even though I would pray (and my wife praying for me), beloved, I confess, that I was being submissive to my flesh; I was letting the circumstances of a toilet repair dictate to me my feelings and my emotions. I let a toilet determine my attitude!!! What determines your attitudes?

To make the long story short (or at least shorter), we did get the toilet fixed (after some other issues) and the bathroom was painted; and the one day project that turned into three was completed (well, almost). But the point is, it would have been easy to write off my frustrations as being understandable and therefore respectable; but I say to you I was the most sinful painter/toilet repair man ever. And how easy it is to forget that by giving in to my flesh, I was refusing submission to Christ.

How about you? How are you doing in your submission? To whom or what are you being submissive to? When something doesn't go your way, do you fly off the handle and get angry – that's submission – to the flesh. Do you find yourself more concerned about what others think about you – particularly your outward appearance, instead of what God thinks about you? That's the fear of man – that's submission to the flesh. Do you find yourself always arguing with others? And children, this goes for you as well – to always be arguing with what your parents asks you to

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do – that is obeying the flesh, rather than being obedient to Jesus Christ. How about this one – you’ve been asked to do something, to finish some project, to be prepared for some lesson; to make some kind of presentation – and yet you put it off to the last minute, and rather than investing the time you should have, you do what you must to get by; often times so that you can simply to something else you enjoy – that is submission to the flesh.

Beloved, Jesus is the king of highest order. And while His concern in verses 1 and 4 were that God the Father be glorified; it must be noted with equal weight and importance that here in verse 5, Jesus indicates His concern that He Himself is glorified – that He is highly exalted and esteemed and recognized as supremely splendid. God the Father heeded this request to so glorify Him and now the question is this – will you heed the call to glorify the Son; to live for the Son; to obey the Son? Beloved, it is a matter of life and death. For Jesus, this King of highest order, benevolently grants eternal life to those who believe and obey Him. And what of those who refuse to believe and obey? According to John 3:36, such ones as these are under the wrath of God and if they die while under such wrath, they commit themselves to suffer the wrath of God eternally. Why submit to Jesus as King, because it is a matter of life and death.

II. Jesus, the King of Greatest Glory (17:5b)

...with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

But there is a second reason why Jesus is to be submitted to that we can glean from this verse. It is related to the first, but important enough to stand on its own. For Jesus here is seen also as the King of greatest glory. The next phrase in our text we find Jesus saying, **“with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”**

I believe that that this tells us some about the nature of the glory Jesus possesses as King. Before we consider this, would you not agree with me that in this life there are a lot of glorious things? As a photographer, I love getting pictures of sunrises and sunsets. There is something incredible; something majestic; something glorious about how the sun begins and completes its circuit. Even the Psalmist likens the glory of the sun as to **“a bridegroom coming out of his chamber”** and **“as a strong man to run his course.”** (19:5). In fact, 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon and the glory of the stars. There is a splendor in creation that is to be appreciated and is meant to point us to the fact that there is an even more glorious Creator.

In addition to creation in general, in 1 Corinthians 11 we read of the glory of man and the glory of woman. Just a few days ago we celebrated my son’s 17th birthday. I commented how glorious a thing it was to have held all 21 inches of him in my hands and I find it equally as glorious that his 21 inches have expanded into 72 inches.

We speak of such things as glorious and I do not think it is wrong to do so. However, we *must take care to ascribe to Jesus the glory He ascribes to Himself*. And His glory is not like the glory of creation, or the glory of earthly kings. Jesus qualifies His glory telling us that His glory is equal to the glory of the Father, for He had it with or along side the Father; His glory was uncreated, being **“before the world was”** indicating that it is not something manufactured, it is not attained or acquired. The glory of God is simply a part of who God is; it is an attribute of God and therefore God cannot rightly be any more or any less glorious than He is. Now we often vary in our appreciation and understanding of His glory; but God has always been the most highly

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exalted, most esteemed, most supremely splendid and therefore worthy of all praise Being. There has never been any Being that rivaled or could ever rival the glory of God. And here Jesus says in effect, “Father, in order to accomplish this work of redemption; in order to provide for those who believe the only means of salvation, I set aside the fullness of the glory I possessed in eternity in order to be covered with flesh; in order to become for man His sin sacrifice. And now, as I am about to complete that task, as I have lived in this flesh entirely for Your glory, I am ready to come back to My right place, by Your side, and to experience once again the fullness of the glory; being worshipped by both angelic and earthly creatures as Creator, as Lord and as King.”

Beloved, no other man, indeed no other creature is as glorious, is as marvelous; is worthy of all praise as is Jesus Christ. As the King who has conquered sin; and as the King who has conquered our hearts, we ought to desire to praise Him and to live for Him in light of His exalted position. Beloved, take all that awes you, all that inspires you, all that fills you with wonder, all that makes you marvel and ask, “How, or why?” And even if we could combine all these together to make one tapestry of glory – we would not even begin to paint the fullness of the glory of Christ.

And so, in light of our question, why should we be in submission to Jesus Christ as King, let us answer, “Because there is none like Him!” Let us respond with the Song of Moses saying (Exodus 15:11),

***Who is like You among the gods, O Yahweh
Who is like You, majestic in holiness
Awesome in praises, working wonders?***

Of course, there is no one else like this. And, as Jesus walked this earth, He did in fact perform miracle after miracle, healing the sick, turning water into wine, feeding the multitudes, restoring sight, raising the dead and even laying down His own life so that He could raise it up again – beloved, who is like Jesus? And why did Jesus do these things and why did Jesus say the things said about God, life, death, sin and salvation? The bible answers this question for us. In John 20:30-31 we read,

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Jesus is the King of greatest glory – He is to be believed; He is to be obeyed for He is both from God (the Christ) and is indeed God (the Son of God - John 3:36). As we close then, let me make one final application. What is an appropriate response to Jesus as this glorious King and as King of highest order? Obviously I just said we are to believe – and to believe is to obey all that Jesus said. But what does that look like? What does it look like to live for Jesus as this high and glorious king?

Jonathan Edwards, the great American preacher and theologian whose work was used by God to bring about what was called the first Great Awakening in the mid 1700's, when he was seventeen and eighteen, wrote 70 resolutions – 70 commitments by which he would evaluate

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whether or not the life he was living was lived to the glory of Christ. And I would like to read for you just one of these resolutions; number 63 – and just listen to it – it is verbose and I will simply it; but I think it captures for us how we might rightly respond to Jesus as our King of highest order and greatest glory. He writes:

On the supposition, that there never was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, who was properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true luster, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part and under whatever character viewed: Resolved, to act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one, who should live in my time. (January 14 and July 3, 1723).

This may sound very elaborate and lofty, but in effect he is saying simply this, “*I will strive to live as the very best Christian alive!*” Because Jesus is glorified; because He is and is to be highly exalted; because He is the King of kings and worthy of praise – I will seek to live my life; I will seek to see my heart, my mind, and even my emotions be brought to a place where they all glorify Him. What else has your heart today? What else has your mind today? What else moves you today?

May today be your time – your time to confess to the Lord, to call upon the Lord and ask Him to in fact be your Lord – your Master, Your King. Ask Him to teach you afresh, or even for the first time, what it means to be submissive to Him. Ask Him to let you experience the freedom that comes by submitting to Him.

2 Corinthians 6:2

Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION”...

Soli Deo Gloria

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