

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 28, 2017

John 17:1-11 (EHV) – ¹After Jesus had spoken these things, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. ²For you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. ⁴I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, glorify me at your own side with the glory I had at your side before the world existed. ⁶I revealed your name to the men you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have held on to 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 received them. They learned the truth that I came from you. They believed that you sent me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All that is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. And I am glorified in them. ¹¹I am no longer going to be in the world, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.”

Introduction

How many times have you left a venue before the final buzzer sounded or the final second ticked off the clock, before the final out was recorded, before the quarterback took a knee one last time, before the last note was struck or sung? Maybe you left early because your child was done performing and there was no compelling reason to keep watching other kids. Maybe you left early because your team was up and you simply wanted to get a jump on the post-game traffic. Maybe you left early because your team was so far in a hole that they couldn't possibly climb out of it. Maybe you've missed a miraculous comeback and wish that you'd decided to stay, but chances are, it ended just as you assumed it would. You've perhaps heard or used the phrase – it's as good as done.

“It's as good as done.” We use that expression in all sorts of contexts, and the Bible does, too. It regularly speaks of future events in a way that would imply that they've already taken place. That shouldn't come as much of a surprise, because God's will is always done. When God sets his mind to something, you can count on it happening exactly according to plan.

Theme: Jesus' Pre-Ascension Petitions Provide Post-Ascension Peace.

Jesus spoke the words of John 17 on Maundy Thursday evening, but they're part of the readings here at the end of the Easter season. Already on the night before he died, Jesus had in mind his resurrection and his ascension and beyond. And in his mind, those events were as good as done. He spoke the words of his prayer aloud, for the benefit of his eleven disciples (assuming Judas had gone). And we disciples will be equally benefited as we reflect on the first part of his High Priestly Prayer. I guess you could say that “P” is the letter of the day: **JESUS PRE-ASCENSION PETITIONS PROVIDE POST-ASCENSION PEACE. Hear how Jesus prays for God's glory. Hear how Jesus prays for your security.**

Part I: Hear how Jesus prays for God's glory.

Throughout the four Gospels, we hear how Jesus regularly spent time in private communication with his heavenly Father – often for hours on end. Although we might make some educated guesses based on the various accounts, we're rarely told *the content* of his prayers. The exception would be the two prayers on Maundy Thursday evening. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we're told how Jesus prayed that he might be spared the cup of suffering that lay in his path. A little bit earlier, he prayed this High Priestly Prayer in the upper room, after instituting the sacrament of Holy Communion. These two prayers aren't recorded to teach

us *how to pray*, but so that we might peer into the mind of Jesus and *receive comfort* from what we find there. And the comfort we find in the first part of his prayer is in knowing that he had the glory of God at the forefront of his thoughts.

The Old Testament believer would have something concrete in mind when he thought about God's glory. The so-called Glory of the LORD was a visible manifestation of his presence. He led Israel out of Egypt as a pillar of fire and cloudy smoke. He enveloped the mountaintop when the people reached Sinai. He so brilliantly filled Solomon's temple at the dedication service that the priests couldn't even perform their duties. He lit up the sky (and the faces of the shepherds of Bethlehem) as his angelic choirs sang of the Savior's birth.

The glory of the Lord in the New Testament usually refers to the honor and obedience that's due him. We're familiar with the Romans passage: **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** But don't we all-too-often fall into the world's way of thinking: we've messed up; we've made mistakes; we've erred in our judgment? God's Word doesn't allow us to skirt the issue – we've sinned. We've offended a just and holy God. We haven't given him the honor due him. And any failure – any falling short of his glorious perfection – earns his just and absolute condemnation.

But listen as Jesus' pre-ascension petitions provide post-ascension peace. He prays for the glory of God – both for his Father and for himself. And especially notice how intricately the glory of God is wrapped up in the work of salvation.

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. For you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me at your own side with the glory I had at your side before the world existed."

In these verses, we learn something about the relationship between the Father and the Son, and also something about the relationship between the two natures of Christ. In the Athanasian Creed, we confess: **"Each person... is distinct, but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory and coeternal in majesty... Within this Trinity none comes before or after; none is greater or inferior..."** And a little later: **"Our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man... equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity..."**

Those words in the Creed help us understand Jesus' words. Although the glory of both Father and Son are constant and full throughout all eternity, Jesus' imminent completion of the plan of salvation – actually, he speaks of it in the past tense – would bring him glory upon glory as he's fully revealed as the Redeemer of mankind. When it comes to providing the full payment for sin, he says that he's been given authority over every single person in that regard. Eternal life – bought and paid for all – is given to those whom God calls to faith in him. Now he was petitioning his Father to bring that plan to its culmination. And then, as the Father answered his Son's petition, Jesus would in turn bring glory upon glory to the Father by allowing the world to see that the only true God has remained true to his promise to deal with the curse of sin.

Therein lies the peace. Listening to this first petition of Jesus, we can see how his mind was fully set on the glorious fulfillment of salvation. Nothing deterred him from paying for our sins, and he's most certainly worthy of all glory – from his own Father and from us, his redeemed.

Transition

There's more peace to be had. In the second petition of his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays for your security.

Part II: Hear how Jesus prays for your security.

“I revealed your name to the men you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have held on to your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they received them. They learned the truth that I came from you. They believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, because they are yours. All that is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. And I am glorified in them. I am no longer going to be in the world, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.”

The astounding thing about this pre-ascension petition, humanly speaking, is what Jesus was facing when he prayed it on the eve of his capture and crucifixion. No one would've thought twice about it if Jesus had simply said "Amen" after praying for himself. But again, Jesus goal in speaking this prayer – and that's why he prayed it aloud – was for the benefit of his disciples. He knew what was in *his* future, and he also knew what the future held *for them*. He considered the anguish they'd feel upon his death. He foresaw the lack of direction they'd have after he rose into the clouds forty-two days later. He looked even farther ahead and saw the persecutions they'd undergo as they served as his ambassadors. And so he prayed for them – and for us.

The security we have comes first of all from the Word. Interestingly enough, at the beginning of his Gospel, John proclaims Jesus himself as the Word of God, who's with God and who is God. Jesus himself reveals the heart of God. **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,”** he told the disciples earlier that Thursday evening. He passes along spiritual truths from the Father, and faith is wrought through his good news. The Holy Spirit works through that gospel to convince us to trust in Jesus as the Father's Savior from heaven.

The security we have also comes from our relationship to our Savior-God. Remember back to last Sunday when we talked about that “mystic union.” Mystic, because all the details are impossible to fathom. Union, because Jesus says that he's in us and we're in him. We belong to the Father. We belong to the Son, ascended to glory and seated as the ruler of the Church.

All that, and more, is included in God's name. God's name is everything we know about him – all that he is, all that he's done, all that he continues to do for us. It's for the protecting power of his name that Jesus prays. So then, be at peace! No adversity is too much, no enemy is too powerful, no persecution is too severe – that the power of God's name is rendered ineffective.

Conclusion

This Sunday wraps up the festival half of the church year, and we do so with a wonderful reminder of the post-ascension peace we have in Jesus. In his pre-ascension petitions, he seeks God's glory and our security. What an amazing Savior we have! Amen.