Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

John 17 is a most beautiful chapter of the Bible. Let me tell you why:

A preacher once said, *When a man is going on a long journey, he will find time on the eve of his departure for a quiet talk with his family, and – if he is a man of God – will end by commending to God not only himself and his journey, but also the family whom he leaves behind. [And this will] surely … be so if his journey is the last journey*.

Well, Jesus had spent three years with His disciples. They were His closest companions. But now the hour had come for Jesus to leave them and go to the cross and from there to heaven. So this was Jesus’ last opportunity ‘to talk with His family,’ as it were. And we get to hear His prayer! So that is one reason why this is a most beautiful chapter of the Bible.

Another reason why this is a most beautiful chapter of the Bible is that this prayer includes all who would believe in Jesus in the future. That means that in this prayer Jesus prays for you and me!

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about this prayer is that it is an invitation to enter into the glory of Christ. And that is what we are going to focus on and explore today: What is the glory of Christ? Why did Jesus pray about this now? And having considered these things we shall see that only the glory of Christ can truly fuel Christian living. And when I say fuel, I don’t mean 91 or 95 or even 98 grade fuel, I am talking about methanol *with* nitrous!

Well, the churchy word for the things we ask for in prayer is ‘**petitions**.’ And this prayer has two main petitions – in vv1-5 Jesus asks for something *for Himself*, and then in vv6-26 He asks for things *for believers*. We are only going to consider the first petition today.

And **THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD’S PRAYER IS ABOUT THE GLORY OF CHRIST**. And the two major halves of the sermon will simply be **OUR CONSIDERATION OF THE PETITION ITSELF**, and then we will end with **SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE PETITION**.

1. So we begin with **THE PETITION ITSELF**.
   1. And you will see from v1 that Jesus begins with the ***REASON*** for His petition – He said, “*Father, the hour has come*…”
      1. The Bible explains that before the creation of the world the Father decided to present a love gift to the Son. And that love gift would be a people to be with the Son as His eternal Bride in heaven. But on earth those people would be a fallen and sinful people – lawbreakers/enemies of God/in need of rescue. So the Son’s task was to go to earth and live as a human being and die on the cross to pay the price for their sin. This is how they could have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life.
      2. So the cross was why Jesus had come to earth and now the hour of the cross had come. And so atrocious and agonizing was what was about to happen to Jesus that very shortly, according to the other Gospels, He would pray again and ask the Father if there was any other way for Him to save us other than the way of the cross. And as He prayed, His sweat was “*as drops of blood*.”
      3. Don’t ever think that it was easy for Jesus to do what He did on the cross because He was God. In fact, the opposite is true. It is a mystery beyond our understanding but the Son was about to be forsaken by His Father. Both as a human and as God, the realization of what He was about to endure was agonizingly daunting.
      4. So the reason for this petition of the Lord Jesus was that the hour of the cross had come. He needed the help of His Father in heaven. He could not face this moment without the help of His Father in heaven.
      5. And surely, brothers and sisters, if the Lord Jesus sought the help of His Father when He faced difficulty, then how much more should we? Let us be like Christ and continually call out to our Father for help and guidance.
   2. Well, that brings us to ***THE PETITION ITSELF***, which we see in the rest of vv1-5, “*Father … glorify your Son*.”
      1. So what was Jesus actually asking for? **WHAT does being glorified *mean***? Well, to glorify means ‘to cause the true dignity and worth of a person to be known so that they are praised and celebrated and crowned with honour.’
         1. **School** **prize-giving season has just finished**. And if you are in the audience, you cannot tell just by looking at the students which of them has won a prize because they all look the same. So at the start of the evening their achievements are hidden. But as the evening progresses and the teachers read out the names of those students that have excelled at whatever subjects, then the effort and the attitude of the prize-winning students is made known to you, and you clap and praise them. So as the teachers reveal their efforts and you clap, those students are, in a sense, being glorified.
         2. So what Jesus was asking for was that the Father would reveal His true dignity and value so that He could receive the praise and honour that He was worthy of.
      2. Well, that’s the ‘**WHAT**’ of being glorified but now we need to think about the ***WHY* ofthispetition; why was Jesus asking to be glorified?**
         1. Well, if you look at v5, you will see that **the Lord Jesus had at one time already enjoyed and possessed glory**. He said, “*Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*.” So before creation, when He was in heaven, the Lord Jesus ruled and reigned as the Second Person of the Trinity. And after creation, He received the praise of the created angels as glorious God. But if He had come to earth as He was then, no one would have been able to look at Him.
         2. We see this in the account of the time that **Moses** went up Mt Sinai to meet with the Lord. The Lord told Moses that He was not allowed to see His face, for if he did, he would die. So when the glory of the Lord passed by Moses, the Lord put Moses in a cleft in the rock and covered Moses with His hand until He had passed by. He then took away His hand and allowed Moses to see His back from a distance. And when Moses came down from the mountain, we read that he *“did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him*.” Such was the glory of God that even a small glimpse of His back from a distance left Moses with a type of glory sunburn! And do you remember what Moses did? He put a veil over his face to cover the brightness of the reflection of God’s glory. So the Second Person of the Trinity could not have come to earth as He was.
         3. And that is why in the rest of His **OT appearances** on earth, the Second Person of the Trinity ‘hides’ His glory by appearing as a human or a burning bush or an angel. And that prepares us for how He will come when He comes to live on earth – He was born as a baby; He ‘hid’ His divine gloriousness inside a human body.
         4. So when the Second person of the Trinity was on earth as Jesus, what people saw *with their eyes* was an ordinary human being.
         5. Now, having said that, we need to note that **even though it was hidden from view, Jesus was still all glorious God**. That is the whole point of John’s Gospel! That is why he began His Gospel by telling us that this man Jesus is eternal God; He was with God “in the beginning.” And there were glimpses of Jesus’ glory during His earthly life. There were moments when His glory shone out. Do you know what I am referring to? When He performed His miracles.
            1. The first 12 chapters of the Gospel tell us about the **seven great miracle signs** of Jesus. What was the first miracle? He turned water into wine. And at the end of that account we read, “*This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory*.” So every miracle – water into wine, walking on water, feeding five thousand, healing the sick, raising the dead – all these were glimpses of glorious ‘god-ness’ shining out from His humanity.
            2. But when Jesus prayed this prayer, all of those miracles had been done but they were not enough to convince people that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. Even His disciples, the end of ch. 16 tells us, will abandon Jesus and leave Him alone.
         6. So His divine nature and His miracles alone were not enough to reveal His true worth and dignity. There was **more that He had to do**. And that is what vv2-4 are all about.
            1. In v2 He says that He came “*to give eternal life to all whom [the Father] had given Him*.” And when He says in v4 that He accomplished the work that the Father had given Him to do, that includes the miracles but it is especially about the cross and the empty tomb.
            2. You see, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus that especially and wonderfully reveal His worth and dignity; that make Him worthy of worship and honour.
            3. And this is what you need to remember as you read the account of His arrest and trial and crucifixion and burial and resurrection – this is the conquering. Glorious Jesus at work! This is the power of God on display!
            4. **Romans 10:9** says this about Jesus: “*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*.” It is the cross and the empty tomb that reveal the glory of Christ!
         7. And it was seeing the risen Jesus that convinced the disciples that He was the Son of God and their only hope for eternal life. When John wrote in **1:14**, “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,*” that confession of faith certainly included the miracles of Jesus but it was especially about His death and resurrection.
2. The petition of the Lord Jesus was that the Father would help Him to endure the cross and to rise from the dead so that He could return to heaven and be glorified. And His prayer was answered! Ephesians 1:20 says that the Father raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. His glory is not hidden anymore! He receives the worship of angels and human beings. So let’s now consider three implications of this petition – the ‘So what?’ of all we have learned, thus far.
   1. The first comes from within the petition itself: v3 – “*And this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*.”
      1. We generally think about eternal life as life in heaven with Jesus. And we will come to that in a moment, but **eternal life begins** **now**. What Jesus asked the Father for here is something you can have *now* – you can know the Father and the Son now!
         1. **John 14:23** puts it like this: “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him*.” If you love Jesus, the Father and the Son come to you and make their home in you. Immanuel – God with us. Isn’t that incredible? Relationship! Togetherness! Fellowship!
         2. Perhaps you are wondering: How do I know if the Father and the Son have made their home in me? Well, **1 John** explains that those who know the Lord love to obey His commandments and they love their brothers and sisters in Christ and they love the truth about who Jesus is and what He came to do on the cross. Can you see these things within yourself?
         3. If so, the amazing thing is that none of these things are about your abilities and your effort; they are about the Holy Spirit. **1 John 4:13** says, “*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit*.” It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to know that the Father and the Son have made their home within us, and to want to obey God’s commandments and to love others. It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to love the preaching of the truth about Christ.
   2. So the first implication of this petition is that we can know the Father and Jesus Christ now, by faith. But the second implication is that one day we will be with Jesus in heaven! In verse 24 Jesus prayed, – “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*.”
      1. Here Jesus is praying for the day when we are in heaven and we get to see Him and spend eternity with Him. **1 John 3:2** says, “*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we will be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is*.”
      2. Isn’t that an amazing truth to ponder? One day, we shall see the glorified Jesus! And consider this, He still has His human nature! Everything that you are now, as a human being, apart from sin, is already in heaven in the person of the Lord Jesus. The Heidelberg Catechism describes one benefit of Christ’s ascension to heaven as being that “we have our own flesh in heaven, a guarantee that Christ our head will take us, His members, to Himself in heaven.”
      3. In a few days a new year begins. And I don’t want to be morbid for the sake of it but the calendar is a daily reminder that with every passing day we are all one day closer to death. And I also don’t want to minimize the awfulness of dying, but if we truly believe that one day we will be with Jesus in heaven, then when someone talks about death, we can say, So what?! We can join the Apostle Paul who said, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*.” And when we struggle with physical or mental illness, because of our weak and frail human bodies, we can say, So what?! My body will one day be a glorified body in heaven because that is where the glorified body of My Saviour is today!
   3. So we can know God now and we will be with Jesus in heaven one day, and that brings us to the third and last implication of Jesus’ petition, which I will put to you in the form of a slightly curious question: Having heard all that has been said about the glory of Christ, and in the light of our earlier reading from 2 Samuel 6, **are you a David or a Michal**?
      1. You see, the ark was the symbol of God’s glorious presence among His people and David was God’s anointed king. And David danced in the presence of God’s glory. But as Michal saw David dancing in front of the ark, all she could see was her half-naked husband making a fool of himself. Her problem was unbelief. She just did not believe in the glory of God that the ark and King David represented.
      2. And when she challenged David about what he was doing, He replied, “*I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes*.” And with these words he was prophetically pointing forward to Jesus who was crucified, naked, on a cross. What an abased and contemptible sight He was. And many people are like Michal – their response to Jesus and the cross is unbelief; they refuse to see His glory!
      3. Could this be you? Are you like Michal? I hope not. You are a sinner in desperate need of salvation. You know that you will die one day. You need Christ! He is God with us! He is salvation. He is your only hope for eternal life in the joy of heaven. Don’t put Him off one more day. Enter into the glory of Christ today by taking hold of Him in repentance and faith.
         1. But if you are a David, meaning your heart is filled with the glory of Christ, then my question to you is: Are you glorifying Christ? In **v10** Jesus said, “*All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them*.” **Jesus Christ is glorified in you and me!** In **chapter 15:8**, Jesus said, “*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples*.” So to ‘dance in front of the ark’ today is to bear much fruit. That means striving to live a holy life. It means an eagerness to obey all of God’s commandments. It means being committed to sexual purity. It means being not just a hearer of the word but *a doer of the word*.
            1. I once heard about a man who had an unbelieving wife. He would go to church and she would stay home. Well, one day he was home much earlier than usual and she was surprised! She said, is the sermon done already? He said, No, it has been spoken but it has yet to be done.
            2. Is that your attitude to the preaching of God’s word? I must go from here and do this. What I have just heard needs to affect my marriage and how I parent and my attitude at work.
         2. B&S, YP, and B&G, Jesus Christ is all glorious God. He rules now in heaven and one day He will come to take us to be with Him and to share in His glory. But we are to proclaim His glory now with our thoughts, our words, and our actions. May God make each one of us those whose lives are lives of dancing! Amen.