

The High Priestly Prayer

Part 6

John 17:24-26

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
8/13/2017*

The High Priestly Prayer

Part 6

The Desire of Jesus

John 17:24-26

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶ And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:24-26).

Introduction

I've always, for the most part, enjoyed life. I enjoy where I live, when I live, my family, and the people by which I am surrounded. So for me the idea of going to heaven was always more like a bonus than a deliverance. I say this in contradistinction to the faithful who have spent the majority, if not all, of their lives suffering, pining away for the hereafter. I think of those faithful Israelites who were born in slavery and died in slavery – whose singular hope of joy rested in eternity.

But then, as a young man, I had to wrestle through the untimely death of my father – hitting me like a lightning bolt. I remember occasionally enjoying dreams of him only to wake to reality of his death. I desperately missed my father and wanted to be with him.

Going through that hardship was the first time I began to grasp something that I had known in theory but not in practice – that being the joy of spending eternity in the presence of Jesus. But even this I took on faith. Here is what I mean: I had been taught that the glory of heaven would be the presence of Jesus over and above the heavenly environment. That is not a difficult concept to grasp. Who you are with is generally more important than where you are. The happiest place on earth can be miserable in the wrong company.

But I had a difficult time generating an earnest desire to be with Jesus forever. Speaking in human terms I didn't know what Jesus looked like, what His voice sounded like, or (at the risk of sounding irreverent) if I

would enjoy His company, forever! I remember taking on faith that my intense desire to be with my father pales in comparison to the joy that I am promised in spending eternity with Christ. Hence His prayer-His desire:

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).

The Desire of Jesus

Jesus expresses His desire – His will to His Father. This could almost be viewed as a last will and testament prior to His death. Shortly Jesus would say, “Not my will but thy will” but here He expresses His strong desire – His will. Selfless to the end, it is the desire of Jesus that His followers enter into and see His glory.

It is a matter of great assurance for Christians to know that Jesus prays for their entrance into glory. And because the prayers of Christ always flow from a perfect unity with the Father (unlike the prayers of fallen humanity) Jesus can state **“Father, I thank You that You always have heard me. And I know that you always hear Me” (John 11:41, 42).** This, of course, means the prayers of Christ are answered in a manner consistent with the prayer itself.

When Jesus prays for our entrance into glory, the answer from the Father is always yes. Jesus is addressing a basic human fear of admittance or exclusion from heaven! Jesus is restating in this prayer portions of a dialogue He had after perceiving the troubled hearts of His disciples.

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. ⁷ “If you had known Me, you

would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him (John 14:1-7).

This contains startling claims and a loving command by Jesus. He is claiming to be the one who prepares a place in heaven and claims to be the means by which that place is reached – He doesn't merely teach the way, He is the way. His loving command is **"believe also in Me."** It's like when I order my little boy to hold my hand as we walk across a busy street. It is a command, but a loving command, designed to deliver him from peril.

Beholding Glory

Jesus prays that we may behold His glory which the Father had given Him; for the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world. So it is a glory somehow connected to a perfect and eternal, love between the Father and the Son. To a limited extent, they had already beheld the glory of God (John 1:14). But through no fault of Christ they could not perceive it in its fullness.

**Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;**

The glory of Christ was seen by His followers the way men trapped in a dark cave might rejoice at the thin beams of light flowing through the small cracks – revealing to them how close they are to deliverance. But the prayer of Christ is that we might behold the fullness of His glory. This requires not only the God-given transportation of sinful men into heaven, but the God-given transformation of sinful men into sinless men.

John conveys this in his small epistle as an appeal to Christians to pursue purity.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:2, 3).

My lack of ability, as I said earlier, to enjoy the company of Jesus forever is a consequence of my sinful heart. Sometimes, with or without warrant, we criticize others (or are criticized ourselves) for their lack of ability to appreciate fine food, art, music, etc. I remember walking through a museum with a friend and glancing at great works as if they were the funny papers. I was met with a harsh “Do you have any idea what went into that painting?” I just didn’t have what it takes to be an apprecianado.

How much less do we have the ability to appreciate the glory of God, which apart from Christ would consume us? For this reason we must understand that Jesus doesn’t merely transport us, He transforms us. As has been said, “Heaven is a prepared place, for prepared people.” How astonishing will it be when we come to realize the incredible nature of this person we’ve been following-to be able to observe the love the Father has for the Son!

The Father’s Love

Jesus makes this request based upon the eternal love the Father has for the Son. There is a bit of difficulty seeking to understand why Jesus attaches this to His prayer. Perhaps it is the glory of that love which He desires we all see. Perhaps Jesus is appealing to His Father’s love for Him as the basis for the glory which believers will see – as if Jesus were saying the Father’s love for Him is not to be disconnected from the Father’s love for His followers.

We often rejoice in knowing that when the Father looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ. We should also glory in knowing that when the Father looks at the Son, He sees us. As Calvin wrote:

...the only way in which we are included in that love which he mentions is, that Christ dwells in us; for, as the Father cannot look upon his Son without having likewise before his eyes the whole body of Christ, so, if we wish to be beheld in him, we must be actually his members.¹

O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me (John 17:25).

¹Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: John* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Jn 17:26). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Righteous Father

Jesus turns to the end of His prayer with a title He has not yet used – **“righteous Father.”** It appears that He uses this title as a clear demarcation between the darkness of the world and the righteousness of the Father. The world, in its ungodly pursuits comfortably falls into the habit of calling good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20); but Jesus defies the world and its perverted righteousness – true righteousness belongs but to God.

Paul would further address the feeble efforts of man in his letter to the Corinthians, **“the world through wisdom did not know God” (1 Corinthians 1:21).** It would therefore be through **“foolishness of the message preached”** a preaching of **“Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2)** that God would **“save those who believe.”**

Because of sin the world does not know, cannot know, God. But Jesus knows the Father naturally and immediately, without inquiry or reflection, apart from lessons or revelations – the knowledge of Jesus was direct. And it is the God-given ability for men to know that Jesus is sent from the Father that men come to know the Father.

We all know the emptiness of interacting with the wrong person. Whether it’s a courthouse, a bank or some other institution we need an audience with the person who has authority-the decision maker. Jesus is the one with that authority. There is no access to the Father apart from the One sent by the Father, who is Jesus Christ the Mediator between man and God.

And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:26).

Have and Will Declare

Jesus finishes this prayer with the affirmation that He has declared the name of God (a name representing the fullness of the person) to His followers and will continue in that declaration.

The fullness of that declaration, in terms of that which is sufficient for the man of God to **“be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17)** would be given at Pentecost and the subsequent

revelation given through the apostles which would eventually comprise the canon of Scripture.

This can also be understood in terms of the divine expansion of Christ's kingdom from age to age by the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of men responding to the truth of His redeeming work.

True Love

Jesus finishes this prayer with a petition that the love with which He was loved by the Father may be in believers and He in believers. I find myself hesitating to speak of love because it has become such a sappy, undefined, abstract and perverted word in our culture. It is a word used to define our affections for the mundane (like a good meal, a nice day, a good book) or even human perversions (the various brands of amorous which depart from the love between a husband and a wife).

Almost in the same way the followers of Jesus perceived a glimpse of His glory we get glimpses of love in our earthly relationships. Yet the most loving human relationship is woefully inadequate to reveal what the writer of this gospel elsewhere writes, that **"God is love" (1 John 4:8)** – a verse often quoted by the world to justify that which is abominable in the eyes of God Himself.

But God has not left such a glorious attribute undefined. Love is not left up for grabs. True love is so identified with Christ that without Christ one cannot say they have love in any true sense any more than a person can say they have nutrition apart from food. It is for this reason that Jesus prays not only that the Father's love may be in them – but to assure the genuine character and preservation of that love, that He Himself be in them.

Love in Us and Christ in Us

It is the prayer of our High Priest that His life be so identified with our life, His dwelling so blended with our essence, His life so repeated in our experience, His personality so intertwined and unified with ours that the glorious, eternal and unadulterated love with which He was loved by the Father may be known in an undiminished capacity by those for whom He would die. It is this unity, this victory, this preservation and this love

which underlies the theme of this entire prayer given by the One who loves us and gave Himself for us.