

Easter 7 John 17 Jesus Prays for Us May 24 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

Jesus prays for us! Alleluia! Jesus told His disciples, “in the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

⁶ “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Consider the things that God is telling us in this prayer:

- Christ has the authority over all flesh, especially the authority to give life;
- Christ has manifested the Father’s name and revealed Him to the people;
- Jesus provides an example for us of giving glory to the Father;
- We are God’s people because He has chosen us for Jesus to deliver;
- Now we know that everything is from the Father through the Son.
- Jesus is glorified in His death for us and His resurrection.
- Jesus prays for our unity – with him.

Christ prays for us. There is a great comfort in that simple truth. Jesus gives us here a preview of what that prayer sounds like today. Do we really need to say much more than that? Jesus prays for us. We may be lousy at praying, but Jesus has that covered too. Even in our best moments, we need Jesus helping us. Even when I pray, I am not getting this right. Jesus prays for us and the Holy Spirit speaks on our behalf when words fail us.

Jesus speaks of glorifying the Father and of being glorified. What does it mean to be glorified? The Hebrew word for “glory” is actually the word for heavy or fat, which later came to mean significant. Deriving from the fact that only wealthy people could afford the extra calories required to become fat, and that they also could afford the finery associated with wealth, it came to mean glorious as we usually use the word.

When Jesus is glorified on the cross, he becomes “heavy” or “significant” for the world. You almost have to think like you are in the 60’s here – Jesus is “heavy.” But that works when Jesus is glorified in us, he becomes significant, heavy, important to the world.

Which of course lets us enter into a wonderful place for a Lutheran to be: Theology of the Cross vs Theology of Glory

We should never leave the word “glory” out in an effort to preserve the theology of the Cross. That would be a serious mistake. Jesus shows God’s glory and is glorified on the cross, lifted up as a sacrifice for the redemption of the world. To say that God is glorified in us is a wonderful statement of the theology of the cross. God has indeed brought us into a glorious light through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We tend to hear the word “glory” and think of light and majesty and power, etc. But when John uses the word earlier in the text, he is clearly referring to the crucifixion of Jesus – remember the history of Moses and the bronze serpent. And yet the lifting up of Christ on the cross is also prelude to Christ being lifted up in glory at the ascension. John is like that; he tends to make your mind bend in new and revealing ways.

The ancient Christians were often forbidden to kneel in prayer during Easter. They were so focused on the penitential aspects of the season that their bishops would demand that they stand up, reflecting the reality that they are now children of God and do not need to kneel in his presence. Have we gotten so used to saying that we are worthless worms that we have forgotten how to rejoice in the amazing sonship that God has bestowed upon us?

The key here is that the intrinsic value that we have is passive, it is completely a gift that is done to us. A tight rope needs to be walked here; the value is not in our selves, but it is in the gift which Christ has bestowed upon us, and so we can say it truly is in us.

Jesus says that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His **name** to all nations. – In Mediterranean World, name meant much more than a word or even a reputation. The creatures called “Ents” in book II of the Lord of the Rings cannot recount their Name because it takes three weeks to say. It is the summation of everything they are and have done. And so we see that God would not reveal His name to Moses at the burning bush. But Jesus has made the great “I Am” visible to the world. He has revealed the very nature of God, His very name, and has done so by living in the flesh with His people, by miracles and by great signs which have pointed to the Father.

Jesus has the authority to give life. He is Life. We are used to authority in the sense of putting people in jail or levying a fine. We are used to authority exercised negatively in our lives. But Jesus’ authority is a life-**giving** authority of the Creator, not the life-**taking** authority of the state. Jesus exercises this authority in us every time we forgive, every time we baptize, every time we commune someone, every time His kingdom breaks into this world, healing, comforting, preaching, teaching, loving and forgiving.

Now Jesus has accomplished that for which He came, the great cosmic deed is done. The holy blood of God’s only Son has redeemed the world and His resurrection from death has demonstrated his victory over death. But there is still something to pray for. He looks forward to His resumption of His heavenly place, but these disciples, this church, these who have believed in Him, they will remain here on earth. He prays for them. He prays for **us**.

His prayer is that we would be included in the perfect unity of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the union of the Trinity. How will this happen? When the third member of that Trinity is poured out upon us, takes up residence in our lives and through His indwelling, incorporates us into the very essence of God.

The unity for which Jesus prays is often misunderstood to be the unity which was fractured by the Reformation or the Great Schism between eastern and western Catholicism. Indeed, the fractious nature of Christians has done much to impede the Gospel proclamation and given occasion for scandal in the world. But the unity for which Jesus prays seems to be the unity of the believer with God, this is accomplished through Holy Baptism and the indwelling of the Spirit, regardless of the denominational boundaries which divide us from one another. Indeed, we can call anyone who is gathered under that cross and filled with that Spirit a fellow Christian and find that we are in truth united with them.

We have this unity. God creates this unity. He has done so by pouring out his Spirit on all flesh. God the Father heard Jesus' prayer and answered it on Pentecost by sending the Holy Spirit. He unites us with himself through adoption by the washing and regeneration of water and Spirit on your Baptismal day and my Baptismal day. He unites us with Himself as we eat and drink His very body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins. He continues to hear our prayers and unites people in forgiveness, love, and service through Confession and Absolution. Now that's a unity which cannot be broken.

Dear brothers and sisters, you have been prayed for...by Jesus. In Him, unity is accomplished. And these are the fruits of those petitions: the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit abides with you to life everlasting. Amen!