

In that reading from John 17 commonly known as the high priestly prayer, Jesus prays for himself, for his disciples, and for the church.

So, in verse 1 as Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven he prays:

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.

You see on the night of his arrest, the cross is looming large, and Jesus knows that the time's come for him to complete his earthy mission from the Father.

He says in verse 4:

I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father glorify me in your own presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

You see in fulfilment of a promise dating right back to Eden, and all eternity; that God would send his Son to rescue people from sin; the hour has come for Jesus to complete his earthly mission, and then return to his heavenly home.

Now although God says in Isaiah:

“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another.”

It's worth mentioning here that Jesus has every right to ask God to glorify him.

Because he's God, the eternal Son, who's always existed with Father, and the Holy Spirit.

And so, as he faces the cross Jesus prays that he would be honoured; that his divine goodness, would be on full display.

Or to put it another way, Jesus prays: Father the time has come to show the world how great your Son is, so that I the Son, can show the world how great you are.

If Jesus number 1 priority is to bring glory to God even in the midst of suffering, what does that mean for his followers?

Well listen to this:

It can mean nothing less than that the glory of God should be the top priority in your life. Everything you do should have as its purpose for the worship of God. Every single detail of your life is intended to reveal and celebrate his goodness.

And that's exactly what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 isn't it:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Well then in verse 2 we read that Jesus has authority over all flesh, to give eternal life.

Now I don't know what you imagine heaven to be like, maybe it's experiencing eternal bliss, being reunited with loved ones, or sitting on a cloud playing a harp.

Well according to Jesus in verse 2:

This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

In other words, eternal life is having a personal knowledge of God through faith in Christ that start now and goes on forever.

And so, what makes heaven, heaven, isn't experiencing unending pleasure, or being reunited with loved ones.

It's being in the presence of God.

So, the Scottish minister Samuel Rutherford once said it like this:

“O my Lord Jesus Christ, if I could be in heaven without Thee, it would be hell; and if I could be in hell, and have Thee still, it would be heaven to me, for Thou are all the heaven I want.”

Well after praying for himself, Jesus then prays for his disciples in verse 6 who are described as being given to Jesus by the Father.

It says:

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 earlier on in John, Jesus says:

This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.

In other words, its God who gives us the power to believe.

Jesus then prays that God would protect the disciples from falling into unbelief in verse 11:

Holy Father Keep them in your name.

On a trip to Europe once, the American author Mark Twain, was invited to dinner with a certain head of state.

Anyway, when his young daughter heard about the invitation, she said, “Daddy, you know every big person there is to know, except God.”

And so even at a young age Mark Twain's daughter picked up on the fact that that her dad was an unbelieving sceptic.

And you know left to our own devices we'd all be unbelieving sceptics. But because of his grace God gives us the gift of faith, making it possible for us to believe and respond to him.

That means if you're a Christian, God specifically chose you from before creation to have a relationship with him. That's how much he loves you.

Jesus says:

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.

Well then thirdly in verse 11 Jesus prays that the disciples would be united, as they're brought into a new community of faith called the church.

He says: Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. And we're told this unity is to centre on the truth of God's word.

So, for example in verses 6 - 8 it says:

They believed that Jesus came from God. They then received his teaching as God's word.

As a result, the disciples glorified God by being obeying what Jesus said.

Verse 10 says: All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

So, listen to this:

As the disciples embrace the truth, they're brought into this new community of faith called the church. And this church is intended to share an amazing level of unity—a unity that mirrors the unity between the Father and the Son and centres on the truth about God revealed in his Word.

And so, truth is the basis of unity.

But this goes against everything we hear in society, where we're told to minimise the truth and focus on what we agree on, ignoring the rest.

Genuine unity though never comes where truth is discarded because unity is the by-product of each disciple clinging to the truth about God in his word.

In other words, Christian Unity isn't just about having a joint service with the Methodists, being friendly with a Catholic, or inviting a Baptist round for tea; it goes much deeper than that.

You see we aren't united because we're members of Churches Together or some other ecumenical movement.

We should be united in the truth of the Gospel, anything other than that is compromise.

And unity comes through faith in the Son, as we worship the Father, in the power of the Spirit, according to the message handed down to us by Jesus and through the apostles teaching.

That's what unites the Christian Church, faith in Christ, built on the foundation of his word.

Finally, Jesus prays to the Father to glorify the Son, and for the church to be united in the truth.

He says:

Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. Amen