

Topic	Jesus' High Priestly Prayer
Reference	John 17:1-26
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It has to be said that there are a lot of terminologies that is used that is pretty uncommon to us in our day and age, biblical terminology that is. For example, when we use the word 'High Priestly', I wonder what comes into your mind because what comes to our mind could be significantly different from what occurred into the minds of the people back in the day.

For example, we used words like kingdom as one theologian puts it, Jesus did not come to bring out the republic of God, he came to bring about the Kingdom of God and when we use the word kingdom today, our understanding of kingdom is not quite the same as the biblical ones. We have a monarch today, which in no mean is the same in which the Christ is described as a king. The king nowadays is a constitutional monarch, he is bound by the constitution, Jesus is not bound by any constitution. So, there is a difference that must be pointed out, even before we engage the text between our understanding and the biblical understanding and we use the word, high priestly prayer here in engaging this.

Now I am going to explain the term high priestly as we go but just a quick brief introduction to it. It is the role of the high priest to basically make atonement. This is another word, which brings unfamiliarity. The atonement is basically to pay for sins that have been committed. So, if sins have committed against God, God expects payment for the sins that have been done. So, when you look into this text today, you are looking at a high priestly prayer where Jesus is acting as the high priest in making this prayer, but at the same time he prays it unlike every other high priest who prays for the people who have been put under them. Jesus is not going to sacrifice lambs, sheep, bulls and goats. The sacrifice that is offered by this high priest is none other than himself. So, as we look at it, it is a bit different and as we go through it, I believe that the Lord will share to us.

CONTEXT:

First of all, this is the prayer of all prayers. It is what is appropriately should be called the Lord's Prayer. Now when you look in the gospel of Matthew and Luke, you will find what is often referred to as the Lord's Prayer but when you examine them you will realize they are not really the Lord's Prayer but rather the disciple's

prayer. It is the model by which Christ is instructing his disciples to pray and how they basically should commit their things to God. When you come here, we are actually been given a sneak peak, eavesdropping if you like into a discussion that God himself is having within that Godhead.

So, it has to said that Jesus in his lifetime prayed, which is an understatement because if we look at it, the disciples in the morning would find Jesus disappeared, he would be praying. In the night, he would go off by himself to pray. You just wonder when was Jesus not praying. He was always praying. Now because some people would say, if he is always praying, he can't be God because why would God pray, but that clearly is a misunderstanding because we believe in the doctrine of the trinity where there is a discussion and a communion within God himself. So, Jesus here constantly prays but what we have in the gospels is really not a complete picture of the prayer made by our Lord. We have snippets here and there. For example, we have Jesus when he was praying prior to the raising of Lazarus, Jesus prays and says, Lord I thank you that you have heard me and basically just raises Lazarus from the dead. It is a statement we have from Christ.

For example, we have the prayer of Jesus in different places, when the Greeks approach him, he says I thank you father that you have glorified me and basically the father responds. You have snippets when you look at the prayers of Jesus Christ everywhere else in the gospel, but here what we have before us is really a discourse. It is the longest passage where we actually get to benefit from hearing what Jesus says to the father.

God manifested in flesh and he is going to have a discussion with his father. The lessons that we learn out of this is going to be significant for shaping the way we think. Now the other thing that I want to point out before we begin is that this comes in the context. This is not a vacuum. John 17:1 tells us that when Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes.

So basically, the context of all of this is that Jesus has given a lengthy discourse to the disciples in John chapter 14 to 16. So, Jesus giving a lengthy discussion between John 14 to 16, the fact that this phrase here when Jesus had spoken these words mean, basically they point to the fact that Jesus is connecting this prayer to the teachings he has taught them. There is a connection between the teachings of Jesus and the prayer that is about to follow and that actually leads me to my point which is the middle point that this is not Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane, you see a prayer where Jesus humbles himself before the father and he says, not my will but thy be done. This is not that prayer. This prayer is made publicly that the disciples may hear.

There are four things that are going to go on here. I will divide them into two categories. To the father, this is a petition, and this is a proclamation. Jesus is going to ask the father for certain things and we need to again eavesdrop as to what Jesus is saying. On the other hand, Jesus is going to proclaim certain things to the father. It is almost like he is giving an annual report of what he has done, maybe in his case a three years' report. He is reporting in a very proclamation way the works he has done and at the same time going to make a few petitions in the process. That is with respect to the father, but to the disciples bear in mind that this is said loud and clear that the disciple, particularly John could record down the words that Jesus was speaking. To the disciples, it was an instruction and revelation. Instruction in the sense, sometimes I am not sure whether you notice this, you may be, if you have been in church for a long time that sometimes when people pray, they tend to give instructions as they pray.

1. High-Priestly Prayer for Himself (vv. 1-5)

In John chapter 17:1-5 is Jesus basically focusing on himself. In the process of making the high priestly prayer Jesus begins by praying for himself. Now this is going to be really interesting. Why on earth would Jesus pray for himself? The first thing he said, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said father, the hour has come.

Now if you have been following the Gospel of John, you will realize many times Jesus would say the hour has not come. What hour is Jesus referring to? It is the hour of his glory. So, Jesus in the process of his life on earth looked to the cross, not as if it was going to be a picture of his pain, not as if that is his dome, he looks to the cross and said, it is his moment of glory.

When we approach suffering and that really is a big thing, atheists say if there is a good and loving God out there, why is there suffering? The interesting thing in our text is that the loving God himself is suffering and yet does not look at suffering as if it is a sort of tragedy in the Greek way of looking at it but that it is his moment for glory and if we were to look to our sufferings with that same light. Looking at it in the way that Christ did. So, Jesus is going to say here, father the hour has come, telling him that this is the moment of glory, because everything else in verses 1-5 points to the word, glory. Jesus has only one petition to the father. The one petition that Jesus has, that is that the father glorify the son.

Now glorification of the son is the only petition we have here and at this point the Muslim objections come in, because when you have the Muslim objections, they look to verses 3 for example. they take this very same prayer where Jesus is asking for the glory, they look through verse 3 and they say, they say it says in verse 3 and this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God. They stop there and they say, why do you Christians worship Jesus when Jesus himself says, that the father is the only true God. It seems to be some sort of a contradiction that we are not aware of, the way it is brought out, but if anyone were to look at this context, you would realize that no human beings could utter the words that Jesus is about to utter. So, Jesus prayer deals with his glorification. Five times it is written here, the word glory is used in different ways.

I want to highlight three points:

A. Jesus' glorification reverses His humiliation

Jesus as a man was in a state of humiliation. Jesus at least on two occasions in the Gospel of John is seen to have been almost running away, escaping. When Jewish leaders were trying to kill him, Jesus escapes from their midst. This is the God of glory, this is the God who by the breath of his mouth called the stars, formed the stars, formed the universe and now he is running from mere man. This is the state of humiliation that Jesus was in. He suffered for a lifetime and now that it was coming to an end, his prayer deals with the reversal of this state of humiliation. He is reminding the father that the state of humiliation is over. That's what he means that the hour has come. The picture that Jesus is painting here is that, you have given me authority and I am in the state of humiliation, reverse it.

B. Jesus' glorification glorifies The Father

It is not as if Jesus is saying glorify me as a stubborn child cries out, but rather he makes it very clear, glorify your son that the son may glorify you. Very often we are in the pursuit of self-glorification. It is unescapable, we love the moments that a little bit of credit is thrown our way. As much as we try and strive to be humble, we have to be honest with ourselves. It is almost that we bask in it, but we don't want to be too open about it. Of course, we push it way which is false humility, but the heart says, come on man. What's going on here is that Jesus is giving us a model, the glory that is meant to go to him is not just for him. It is meant to bring glory to the father. It is not an end to itself. The father is glorified in the glory of Jesus. Now if I want to go even deeper, the glory that Jesus is going to be

referring to is his death on the cross. It is the moment through which the Justice of God shines so clearly and yet the love of God matches it.

C. Jesus' Glorification Reveals His Pre-Existence

It says in verse 4, I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you have given me to do. Verse 5, now father glorify me in your own presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

How could anyone take this verse to talk about the humanity of Jesus when He can stare up to heaven, look at the father and say, give me the glory that I had with you previously. Jesus had a preexistence. Jesus did not just begin to exist, Jesus had a preexistence and glory he is taking here has a parallel. I glorified you on earth, glorify me in your presence. It is almost as if Jesus is saying to the father, give me what is due to me. No human being could ever utter such words. This addresses the divinity of Jesus more than anything else, but he is not going to stop there. His prayer for himself is that his glory be given to him.

Paul actually presents a picture of Jesus humility

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Philippians 2:5-11 (ESV)**

The humility of Christ is what leads to his glory. **What is our response to Christ?**

If Christ is asking glory from the father in the manner in which he has asked, what more does he demand of us? Sometimes I feel we have a very diminished view of Christ in our minds. We see Christ as far smaller than what he actually is. If there is any instruction to be derived from the words of Jesus here, it is that we need to have a much higher view of Christ. We need to glorify Christ in the things that we do. Look at the glory that he is demanding from the father. It is the same glory that he has achieved through basically glorifying the father here on earth. The point I am trying to make here is this. When we do everything, do we

do it for Christ or do we do it for our own glory. That is the question we are going to have to ask but we will reflect on this as we go on.

2. High-Priestly Prayer for The Disciples (vv. 6-19)

I have manifested your name to the people you gave me out of the world, yours they were and you gave them to me and they have kept your words.

The focus shifts from the father to the glorification of Jesus to the glorification of the disciples. Jesus uses 'I have' and 'I am', a total of 11 times in this passage. The first 'I have' Jesus uses

I have manifested your name to the disciples. The name Jesus literally means, Yahweh saves. If you look at the way in which the angel phrases the name Jesus, you get a better picture. The angel says, call his name Yahweh saves for He will save.

The name Jesus is the of name of Yahweh and if you look through the Old Testament, you find that as I mentioned earlier, God gives his glory to no one. Here we have a man with the name of the father, asking him to share his glory with him. He is God manifested in the flesh and the point that Jesus is making here is that the name of God was given to the disciples. They have been familiarized with the name of God himself.

The second thing that Jesus says is that,

He has given them the words you gave me. Verse 8, in other words the teaching that Jesus gave is not from himself, it is derived from the father's authority. Sometimes, when we teach, particularly as teachers and preachers, we try to be a little bit creative and that's not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to realize if the teaching is not from Christ, if it does not originates from God, there is no power. If the preaching is not derived from the power of the Word of God, it will bring no effect. It may create temporary excitement but that will be it. The power really comes from God's word. When Moses goes to Pharaoh with the help of Aaron and says, let my people go. Pharaoh's response is 'no', but because the word did not come from Aaron or Moses, the word originally came from God, so it had the power to transform the mind of even the most stubborn man.

The teaching that Jesus gave was not from himself, it was derived from the father. Jesus says to them, it is almost the proclamation that Jesus is making, he has given them the teaching of the father.

The next thing, Jesus says, he has guarded them (v12).

It is an interesting verse because on one hand he is saying he has guarded them, on the other hand he seems to be implying something else. He says while I was with them, I kept them in our name which you have given me, I have guarded them and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction that the scripture might be fulfilled.

The prayer of Jesus here is specific, it is not a general prayer that he prays. When Jesus prays, the prayer is specifically for his disciples. Do we pray for our church members? Do we pray for our children? Children are in the midst of leaving to go to college, where they are subjected to be exposed to a lot of things that are contrary to the scripture. Now we say a lot of people departing from faith due to these exposures. We need to pray. Jesus is the greatest shepherd but if Jesus feels the need to pray for his disciples, how much more you and I need to pray for those God has entrusted us. It needs to be there. Jesus is God in the flesh and even then, the need is there to pray for those.

The other thing is, Jesus says to them, verse 14, he has given them your word.

In other words, the word that is spoken here is a very same word that is used in John chapter 1, verse 1 himself. Jesus did not just give them a teaching, he gave them himself. The final thing is that, Jesus says on top of all this, it didn't stop there. Verse 18, he also sent them into the world. The Jewish understanding of a messiah was a victorious one, was a triumphant one and the moment the Messiah is killed, you know, he was a false Messiah. Jesus prayer to the father for his disciples is heartfelt. He is going to send them to the world, they have to have his prayer covering them.

We learn that from the glory of Jesus we realize that everything we need to do needs to bring glory to Christ. The second thing that we see here, we need to pray for those that Christ has given us. When you look at the 'I am' phrases here, Jesus repeatedly says that he is praying for the disciples and that's what really the High Priest ministry is. Jesus is not done. Jesus is in heaven, interceding for his people.

3. High-Priestly Prayer for the Believers (vv. 20-26)

Here is where you and I come in

John 17:20 "...those who will believe in me through their word"

Now the petition of Jesus makes here is that:

The first thing is found in verses 21 and repeated in verse 22. Jesus uses the phrase 'that they'.

That they may be one (21 and 22)

Also may be in us (v21), may become perfectly one (v23).

The idea in the ancient world was that when a person repeat something again and again, he is trying to make a point. This was uttered in the presence of the disciples, you get the message that what Jesus is trying to drive here. Jesus is simply saying, he wants the church to be one. Now I wonder if Jesus was setting the bar too high, because if you look at the church today, you will realize that we are comprised of different people who think differently, who dress differently, speak differently, come from different languages, cultures, tribes, tongues, how on earth do we achieve oneness. It seems like a virtual impossibility and specifically when Jesus utters in verse 23 that they may become perfectly one. That itself is Mission Impossible.

What is Jesus getting at here today?

The prayer of Jesus focuses on the unity of the church and here is where if there is anything we could draw, the king of glory takes himself wraps the towel around himself and starts washing the feet of the disciples. That is the context in which Jesus is speaking about these things.

If we look through the gospels, every time Jesus mentions his death, the apostles would end up fighting about, how is going to be the greatest. It is certainly disgusting. Jesus overcame that by wrapping himself in a towel and starts washing feet to give the illustration that he who is greatest must be the least.

We have to consider the example that Christ himself has sat down for us. If we were to consider others greater than ourselves, this would be achievable. The problem is that we have a too high view of ourselves and perhaps a wrong perception as to who Jesus is.

There are two knowledges here, the knowledge of who we are and there is a knowledge of who God is. The problem is, I don't know which of these comes first but they seem to be coming together, one leads to the other. In other words, if I truly know who God is then I truly know who I am and if I truly know who I am then I truly know who God is.

If we have a high view of ourselves, we look through the prophets Isaiah for example who gives us a good model of this. He said, I am a man of unclean lips and I come from a group of unclean people. He further says, for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of host. Isaiah understood how depraved he is when he saw the Lord of host. As long as we are looking at each other, the problem is even the worst among us, we compare ourselves to one another. We compare our strengths with other's weaknesses. We always finds a way of showing ourselves better than others. The moment I look to Christ and I realize that in his light how depraved, disgusting, wild, wicked, self-deceiving that I can be, I immediately realized that he is everything and that I am nothing. Paul gives us an example of his boosting. When Paul begins to boost, you wonder what this man would boost about. He boost in the Corinthian epistle, 2-Cor 12-13, let me boost like a fool.

He says I have been whipped, I have been shipwrecked, I have been into troubles so many times. Paul is comparing himself to Jesus Christ. You come to that state where in your Christian walk, you no longer compare yourselves with other people, that even if you are going to boost, you want to pit yourself against Jesus Christ and boost. That is where we ought to come to and when you do that, you find there is unity in the church because I must decrease and he must increase.

CONCLUSION:

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Philippians 2:5-11 (ESV)***

When we do all things, it should be for the glory of Christ. Just as even in Philippians 2 Paul shows us how the glorification of Christ leads to the glory of the father. The second thing is that we need to pray for those that God has entrusted below us. Finally, learning to compare ourselves with Christ as we walk and anticipate it. Jesus says in verse 24

Father I desire also whom you have given me maybe with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the foundations of the world.

I look forward to that day and I today pray that each and everyone of us will be filled with nothing other than the glory of Christ that we lives in anticipation of that glorious day.