

SUNDAY MORNING 22 AUGUST 2021

Eternal Life - Know the Only True God

We come to the end of Jesus' conversation with His disciples just before His death. These are Jesus' last hours as a human being. Within a few hours from now, He will hang on a cross and die as a substitute for the sin of every human being.

He first ate with His disciples and He told them that He loves them to the utmost, and He showed it by washing their feet. He told them several times that He was coming from the Father and returning to the Father. But so many times He promised them that His departure would be better for them and for us, His followers. He is going to prepare a place for us in heaven. In heaven He is our intercessor with the Father. And then He promises that those who are born again, those who believe in the Son and the Father, will receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will comfort and guide His followers in the Truth and teach them all about Jesus and God.

Then at some point He tells them to get up and start walking, He is on His way to Gethsemane where He would eventually be betrayed by Judas and arrested. On the way there He tells them that He is the true vine and if we His followers abide in Him we will grow spiritually and bear fruit that God will make happy.

Several times He warns them that the world will hate them, persecute them and even kill them because they are followers of Jesus. And then what does He do? He prays!

John 17:1-5

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. 5And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

John 17 is probably the most moving passage in the Bible. Jesus gives His disciples and our God's children a glimpse of His and His Father, our Father's intimate, close relationship.

It feels to me as if we stand on one side and see and hear Jesus praying. He has finished talking to His followers, He is in need, we read He was anxious, He was terrified, He was sweating as thick as drops of blood, now He is praying.

John 17:1

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

The beginning of His prayer must have been very strange to the disciples. Before Jesus, they did not think of God as their Father. God was far away, Someone who had to be feared, Someone whose Name Yahweh, they did not even pronounce. And now Jesus comes and just before He starts praying, He tells them, they will never have to pray through a priest again, but that they now have direct access to God through Jesus and you can call Him your Father. Then he announces four words that refer to the turning point of history, *“The time has come.”*

I see in my mind's eye when this was planned in heaven. Triune God had to break the sinful control of the devil and free His people from the power of sin. It's so different from all the other god stories. The 'gods' have nothing to do with humans. On the contrary, they encouraged immorality. As part of your worship of these gods, you had to associate with temple prostitutes and the more you drink and the more drunk you become, the more you honour Bacchus. Orgies were the order of the day for the sake of your god.

But our God sees how much it hurts people, how broken and lost people were and therefore it is decided in heaven that Jesus, the Son of God, would come to earth as God and be born as a human being. Simply to come and tell people that God is now with people, and that the time of salvation has come. The time of the death of the Son of God was planned in heaven and therefore Jesus says: *“Father, the time has come. The time we talked about is now here.”*

It is a wonderful truth that “the time” Jesus is talking about is His crucifixion. That moment changed the history of the world. Never before has a god died for his people. Never before have human sins been placed on a god to die innocently in their place. A wonderful moment. The time, the hour, the wonderful second of Jesus' death is now here.

Now Jesus is saying something that may sound strange. *“Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.”* Glorified is the Greek word doksa.

to cause someone to have glorious greatness

In John 17 give Me that glorious greatness

raise me up high or give Me great glory in the eyes of

John 17:4-5

I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Glorifying God is not only the theme of Jesus' prayer here, but the theme of the Bible. It's all about the glorification of God. *"It's all about Him."*

Now if you are honest, it is many times and with many people the exact opposite: *"It's all about me!"* I want to do what is right for me and what I like. That's the theme of the world and evil. *"It's your body, you can decide. It's your life, do not let anyone prescribe to you. Especially not God, He is old-fashioned."*

Even though Jesus says here: *"Restore my glorious greatness,"* it is not about Him. He prays that God will restore His greatness as God's Son, so that He can show God's **"glorious greatness"** to the world and all mankind. And God showed His greatness on the cross.

Jesus just wants to remind us again this morning that God is God and He deserves all praise and honour and glory. This is the first lesson He wants to teach us. We were made to display God's glorious greatness, to make it visible. We were made to acknowledge Him in all things as the One, the only true God, who deserves honour and praise.

His glory, His "glorious greatness" must become visible in our family, at work, neighbours, friends, etc. And what Jesus came to teach us is that in spite of trouble we must still focus on God and glorify Him, because He who is Jesus has already conquered the world. *"It's all about the glory of God."* We just think way too much of ourselves. We are nothing without God !!

Then Jesus breaks open the door to eternal life for us. That is where God's heart is revealed.

John 17:2-3

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

It's all about Him!! He has the authority over all mankind. Jesus asks Father to glorify Him, so that He has the authority, to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. Jesus is the Supreme Lord with the highest authority. Hear what is written here, authority over all mankind. And surely His disciples have already experienced this on earth. They saw how He could calm the storms, and how He turned water into wine, how He fed 5,000 with a few fish and sandwiches. How He healed the sick, cast out demons, and even raised the dead.

Everything was made by Him for Him says John at the beginning of this book. Even the highest authority on earth, kings, presidents, must bow before Him. Paul writes in Philippians 2 that every knee will bow before Him and acknowledge that He is the King.

Now Jesus says to Father, *"Restore my glorious greatness so that I may exercise my authority, that I may give eternal life to those who believe."*

Jesus has the authority, the right to invite those who believe in Him to live with God forever, in a new glorified body. And He gives this eternal life as Supreme Lord undeservedly, out of love, out of grace because He is a God who has mercy.

2 Timothy 1:9-10

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Do not miss this amazing truth. Everyone, every human being has the seed of eternal life in them, that's the way God created us. It just depends on where you want to spend your eternal life. With God, in full harmony, where there is peace, joy and no tears, pain or suffering. Or with the devil in eternal damnation, where there will always be pain, sorrow and suffering and a weeping and gnashing of teeth.

If you are a believer, this life is the only hell and suffering you will experience, if you die it is just eternal life with God. If you are an unbeliever, this life is the only heaven you will experience, and after your death it is eternal life, in death, where it is hell for the rest of your immortal life.

John 5:24

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Eternal life is not something that will happen one day. Each of us who have accepted the salvation of Jesus is already living forever. Now Jesus says, what this eternal life entails.

John 17:3

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

What is eternal life Jesus says here? That we know Jesus and the only true God. What does it mean to know God? The Greek word used here is the word ginoosko and it can be translated with intimate knowledge.

- *To learn to know a person through direct personal experience,*
- *to become acquainted with, to be familiar with.'*
- *In translating Jn 17.3, it is important to avoid an expression which will mean 'to learn about.' Here the emphasis must be on the interpersonal relationship which is experienced.*

I grew up in the church without this interpersonal relationship with God. My life changed when I realized that God does not want me to practice "**religion**", but to have an "**interpersonal relationship**" with Him. Many people, here in our congregation, do not experience this "interpersonal relationship" with God. They struggle with prayer and struggle to understand the Bible, they struggle to love God.

The danger is that if we have heard so much about God and learned so much from Him and actually be part of a church for so long, that you think you know God, but that you have only taken notice of God, without to know Him on a personal level.

I believe Jesus this morning with all my heart, when He literally says that you can miss eternal life because you think you know God but you actually have no direct personal love relationship with God and you can not testify of a growing relationship with God does not.

To know God gives meaning to our lives. This is what life is all about. Life is not about eternal beauty or many luxuries or good friends. It's not necessarily bad, but it's all transient. The desire of Jesus' heart is that every human being will have eternal life, because that is what life is really about and that is what He came to pay for.

What God asks of Jesus is a search for more of God and a desire to get to know Him better. It is simply to seek a relationship with Him. Do you know sometimes in my relationship with God, I am disobedient, sometimes I get angry with Him, sometimes I am disappointed in Him, other times it goes so well and I am close to Him and I praise Him and I honour Him and I confess my love to Him. I know I have a relationship with Him. And I open myself to the work of the Holy Spirit to teach and guide me to know God, my Father, even better. You and I should pray regularly; *"Father, I would like to know You better, to experience more of You, so that You may be glorified through it."*

I can think of no better position for any human being to be in than to know and be able to know the Only, Living, Holy God and to be known by Him. And to say to Him Abba, Father.

And that it will increase. That is exactly what Jesus is praying for you and me in verse 17.

John 17:17

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth

God not only wants us to know Him, but more and more reflects His "glorious greatness." "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Means: *to cause someone to have the quality of holiness.*

Jesus prays for His disciples and for you and me the children of God, that the quality of our holiness, our distinction from the world, will increase daily. And how do you do that Jesus says? Through His Word.

And the wonderful message from Jesus and from God is that He wants us to know Him, because He knows us before we were born, when we were still in our mother's womb. God knows you!

Isaiah 43:1

But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 49:15b-16a

I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

God knows you and you are important to God. And all He asks is, "Make Me important in your life, so that you too may say, 'God is mine.' What defines us as Christians? That the Living God call us who believe, His children.

No one can know the Father if you do not know Jesus, which is why Jesus says in John 17:3, "that they know You, the only true God."

Jesus can only give eternal life to those who know the only true God. The more you make an effort to get to know Jesus better, the more you will discover about Father.

Jesus has bridged the gap between us and God, and therefore we as broken sinners, like you and me, can now boldly approach the throne of God's grace and call on God as Father, just as Jesus does here.

I close

What do I hear this morning?

- I hear that the most wonderful second was when Jesus said, *"It is finished."* *"What I came to do, is done."*
- I hear Jesus' glorious greatness has been restored and therefore He, as Supreme Lord, uses His supremacy to give eternal life to those who believe in Him.
- I hear we were made to make God's glorious greatness visible.
- I hear that eternal life is to know God. Intimate, close. And to know Him means:
 - To allow the Holy Spirit to teach us about God through His Word and that we will obey His Word.
 - Get to know and love God's character.
 - Love Him with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and strength.
 - It is to ask the Holy Spirit to make you more like Jesus every day. Jesus who was and is full of love, peace, joy, humble and goodness.

The more time you spend in prayer and God's Word and with God's things, the more you will experience God and the more you will want from Him. And the more that happens, the more intimate your relationship with God will become. And the more you have of God, the more visible it will become in the way you act. And that in itself, glorifies God. Deo Gloria - To God be the glory !!