Jesus Prays to be Glorified

John 17:1-26

Key Verse:17:1b “Father, the hour has come. Glorify you Son, that your Son may glorify you.”

Today’s passage is Jesus’ prayer just before he was arrested. This prayer is a parallel of his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, written in the other synoptic gospels. The difference between the two prayers is that here is his intercessory prayer for his disciples and for all the believers in time present and future. So we call this “Jesus’ high priestly prayer.” A high priest in the Old Testament prayed at the temple for himself and for his people as the mediator between God and men and as a representative of his people. We are not sure whether he prayed this prayer in the upper room or in the Garden or on the way to it. We’ll study the meaning, the purpose and the content of his prayer so that we may also pray as he did and that his prayer may be fulfilled.

First, glorify the Son (prays for himself: v.1-5). Look at verse 1. “***After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”*** Here ‘the hour’ was the time when Jesus would be crucified as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29) Jesus had always expected that this crucial moment would come, and now he realized that it finally had come. He prayed to God to glorify him so that he might also glorify the Father God. The word ‘glorify’ is *doxazo* in Greek, which means honor God’s name and exalt Him. How could Jesus glorify God? In verses 4-5 Jesus answers, “***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.***” Jesus could glorify God by completing God’s work which was given to him. Jesus glorifies God by fulfilling God’s work of redemption through his death on the cross and resurrection. His obedience to the cross as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world brings glory to God. In the beginning, Adam’s disobedience brought infamy to God and death to this world. God’s name was defiled by man’s sin. But now, through Jesus’ obedience on the cross Jesus could restore God’s glory.

If children become famous, they are glory and crown to their parents. If they become notorious, they are a shame and anguish to their parents. In the same way we can glorify God through our obedience and spiritual victory. So Jesus said to his disciples on the mountain, “*You are the light of the world….In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Mt 5:14,16)

Our prayer topics are mainly self-centered. When we pray, we usually request rather than listen. We ask God to do this and to do that according to our needs and desires. But Jesus prayed for himself to be glorified through his obedience to God’s will. He prayed that God’s will might be done, rather than his own will. Jesus prayed for himself to take the cross to the very end. He didn’t pray to avoid the cross, but to carry it well. What is our prayer? Some pray like this, “God, glorify your name by answering my prayer.” It may sound right, but pray instead like this: “God, glorify me through my obedience to your will so that I may glorify your name.” Amen!

As for Jesus, glorifying God was not just making him feel good or look pleasant, but giving the world eternal life. The central purpose of Jesus’ glorifying God the Father was to give eternal life to those who believe in him. Jesus said in verses 2,3 “***For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent***.” God the Father gave authority to the Son Jesus for eternal life. Jn 1:4 says, “*In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*” In Jn 4:14 Jesus said, “…*but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life*.” John 6:54 says, “*Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day*.” His message about eternal life continues in 5:21,26, 6:33, 54, 10:10, 11:25, 14:6. Jesus came to this world to give eternal life.

Second, sanctify them (prays for his disciples: v. 6-19) After he prayed for himself, Jesus prayed for his disciples. He had two main prayer topics for them: Protect them and sanctify them. Jesus’ disciples were like sheep among wolves. After Jesus left, they would be vulnerable from their enemies. So Jesus prayed to God to protect them. Look at verse 11. “***I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.***” Here the word ‘protect’ *(tereo)* is not simply to keep them from their enemies’ swords and accusations, but also to keep them faithful to God the Father. Avoiding the sword one time might not be too difficult for them. But remaining in Jesus by keeping their faith under temptations and persecutions might be very difficult. We also pray for our children and students to be protected from this world. We pray that God may protect them and keep them faithful to him in all situations.

Jesus knew that his disciples came from God the Father. He believed that God would protect them because they came from God the Father. They believed that Jesus is the Son of God who came from the Father. They came to know this through Jesus’ teaching and his life. When they heard the words of Jesus, they came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Now Jesus prayed for them to be sanctified by the word of God. Look at verses 17-19. “***Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.***” The word ‘sanctify’ (*hagiazo*) means to purify or to make holy. It also means to separate for the Lord. Jesus prayed for his disciples to be purified by the word of God. Psalm 119:9 says, “*How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word,*” Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:3, “*You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you*.” The word of God is like cleansing water which washes our dirty heart and soul. It purifies our heart to be holy before God. It also helps our soul to grow into the divine character of Christ Jesus. Above all, the word of God provides us wisdom to know the way of salvation and to increase our knowledge of God.

Some of us may not think seriously about the importance of testimony writing and reflection. We may also underestimate the importance of Bible study. In fact, repeated superficial Bible study does not bring any motivation or inspiration. Even if you read the Bible 100 times, but do not obey even one word written within, you don’t know the Bible. You don’t experience the power of God until you obey it. Jesus said in verse 3. “***Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent***.” Here knowing God is different from Knowing about God. The word ‘know’ implies ‘experience’. God wants us to know him rather than know about him. In order to know God, we must experience him by obeying his word. Without obeying his word, no one can experience the power of God. Obedience is achieved by practice. In order to know God and in order to experience his power unto eternal life, we must obey his word. Those who calculate only never experience the power of God. I like Mr. Chung, the founder of Hyundai Corporation. He often rebuked those who only say words, but do not put them into practice. He said, “Have you ever tried it?” Are you in trouble now? Pray and ask God. Do you want to experience miracles? Obey his word.

Third, make them one (prays for all believers:20-26) Jesus prayed for all believers in present and future. His prayer for all believers was obvious: let them be one. Look at verses 20-21, “***My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me***.” Jesus continued to pray for them to be one. Read verses 22-23. “***I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one---I in them and you in me---so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*** Jesus prayed for them to be one because it was not easy for them to be one. Indeed, to become one in any meeting, organization, ministry, government, or even in a family is not easy. Last week I attended a multi-racial pastors’ meeting. The meeting was established to ease tension between races and to develop relationships in Christ. However, some pastors didn’t show up at the meeting because there was conflict and discord among the pastors. Even among each race, people and country there are conflicts, strife, and discord. Between a husband and a wife, brothers and sisters, and coworkers in a ministry complete unity seems to be mission impossible.

How can we become one, bringing to complete unity, as Jesus prayed for? Is it possible? Yes! Jesus said in Mark 9;23, “*If you can?... Everything is possible for one who believes*.” When we learn how Jesus became one with God the Father, we can also become one. Jesus, though he is the Son of God, humbled himself, obeyed the Father’s will, and came down to this world. He learned obedience through sufferings and became a sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. (Heb 5:8,9, Ro 3:25) He obeyed the Father to the point of his death. Then God raised him up highly and made him the Lord of lords and King of kings. (Php 2:6-11) Jesus glorified God the Father through his obedient death. Now Jesus was going back to the Father after finishing his work. He was going to become perfect unity with the Father in heaven.

Jesus prayed for believers to be one as he became one with the Father God. According to his word, all believers, regardless of different races, nationalities, ages, genders, characters, and interests, become one when we obey Jesus’ words. We become one when we deny ourselves and consider others better than ourselves. We become one when we forgive others’ sins, forebear their weak points, and love them as Jesus loves us. We cannot become one when we are proud. If you think that you are better than others and will not listen to them, you cannot be one. You become one when you die, crucifying your passions and pride to the cross, and obey Jesus’ word, “*Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*.” (Jn 13:34)

Selfishness breaks unity, but selflessness brings unity. Here is the picture of the unity in Christ. Acts 2:42-47 describes the beautiful fellowship of the believers in this, “*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*” What a beautiful fellowship, *koionia*, the saints in the early church were! They shared everything together and lived together with the same faith, the same spirit, the same mind, and the same hope. I pray that God may make our St. Louis UBF ministry a loving, sharing, praying church in this generation.

Look at verse 24. “***Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.***” Jesus’ second prayer topic for the believers was their complete salvation. Jesus prayed for them to be with him in heaven, to see his glory, without losing any one of them.

In today’s passage Jesus prayed for himself to be glorified. He prayed for his disciples to be protected and sanctified by God’s word. He prayed for all believers in time present and future to become one as he is one with the Father. Jesus prayed for others more than for himself. I pray that we may pray as Jesus did. May God glorify us, sanctify us, and make us to be one in Christ Jesus. Amen.