**A PRAYER FOR GLORY**

John 17:1-26

Key Verse: 17:1

“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”

Have you ever opened someone’s private journal, maybe at first, by accident, but just went with it and kept reading? I have, and it’s sort of uncomfortable, because you’re reading a person’s very personal thoughts, longings, struggles.

Today, we’re going to be opening up and looking at the private journal of somebody. It’s Jesus’ prayer. Now, we hear a lot about Jesus praying; him going up to mountains alone to pray, getting up early in the morning, spending all night in prayer. We get snit-bits of his prayers. He even teaches once his disciples how they should pray (Mt6:9-13). But today’s prayer is unique to John’s Gospel. And it’s really cool, because we get a full record of what Jesus actually prayed . It’s his longest recorded prayer in the Bible, 26 verses; Jesus directly addressing God. It’s a deeply personal prayer.

We can learn so much in this passage about prayer. Mainly, we want to think about Jesus and his prayer, answering two simple questions: (1) Why should we pray? (2) What should we pray for?

**I. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?**

Let’s look at verse 1. After everything Jesus had just said (14-16), it says he “looked toward heaven and prayed.” First thing we notice about his prayer is that he calls God, “Father,” and he does this six times (1,5,11,21,24,25). In verse 1 we also notice that Jesus refers to himself as “Son” twice. And, looking at the prayer in its entirety, Jesus is so dependant on the Father. He talks about being sent by the Father six times (3,8,18,21,23,25), and that anything that he ever did during his life was because of the Father. There’s a clear relationship in this passage: God the Father sending Jesus the Son, and the Son dependant for everything on the Father.

We hear God referred to as “Father” a lot. But actually, in Jesus’ day, referring to God this way was a very different thing. Now, in the Old Testament, God is described as being father-like ([Ex4:22-23](http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible/passage.aspx?q=Exodus+4:22-23&t=esv); [Dt1:31](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/deuteronomy/1-31.html);[8:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/deuteronomy/8-5.html);[14:1](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/deuteronomy/14-1.html); [Ps103:13](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/psalms/103-13.html); [Jr3:22](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/jeremiah/3-22.html);[31:20](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/jeremiah/31-20.html); [Ho11:1-4](http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible/passage.aspx?q=Hosea+11:1-4&t=esv); [Mal3:17](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/malachi/3-17.html)). God is actually called “Father” only 15 times ([Dt32:6](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/deuteronomy/32-6.html); [Is63:16](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/isaiah/63-16.html),[64:8](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/isaiah/64-8.html); [Jr3:4](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/jeremiah/3-4.html),[19](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/jeremiah/3-19.html);[31:9](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/jeremiah/31-9.html); [Mal1:6](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/malachi/1-6.html);[2:10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/malachi/2-10.html); [2Sa7:14](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/2-samuel/7-14.html); [1Chr17:13](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/1-chronicles/17-13.html);[22:10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/1-chronicles/22-10.html);[28:6](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/1-chronicles/28-6.html); [Ps68:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/psalms/68-5.html);[89:26](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/psalms/89-26.html)), but only as a description of his character, never called upon by a human being as their, “Father.” Actually, no where, either in the OT or any other Jewish text, is there any mention of any person calling on God and referring to him as their personal, “Father.” Yet Jesus does here in his prayer six times.

And what’s even more interesting is the way Jesus calls God Father. The Greek word for Father is *pater*. But *pater* is a translation of an Aramaic word, the language Jesus grew up speaking, and the language Jesus would’ve been speaking to his disciples. And this Aramaic word is *Abba*. Abba is a version of “Father” that children called their dads. So in a way, what Jesus is calling God throughout his prayer is, “Daddy.”

Calling God, “Daddy;” are we allowed to do that? Well, Jesus does here. And we see how close Jesus is to his Father. The language is so intimate, so personal, dependent. Jesus approaches God in prayer vulnerably, like a child to their father.

How we view God has a lot to do with how we pray to him. Do you feel close to God to call him, “Daddy?”

Specifically, why does Jesus pray to God? Look at verse 1 again. Jesus shares the occasion of this prayer. He mentions once again “his hour,” which we’ve heard him mention ten times already in John (2:4; 7:6,8,30; 8:20; 12:23,27-28,31-32; 13:1,31). And we’ve learned that this “hour” that Jesus refers to is his death on the cross. And now, the hour has truly come. Right after Jesus finishes this prayer, he’s betrayed, arrested, wrongly accused, flogged, mocked, and crucified naked to a cross where he would slowly and very painfully die (18:1-19:30). Jesus knew this time was coming. He knew what would happen in a couple of hours. And it’s in this time that he prays.

Why do we pray? My nephew David has recently learned how to pray before meals. So he closes his eyes, more like squints so he can see if people are listening, and folds his hands. And he can’t fully form sentences yet, but he tries by filling it nonsense in-between words; “Na-na-na…” He learned to pray for what he’s supposed to be thankful for. Usually it’s, “God, Umma, Uppa, Grandma, Grandpa, … Na-na-na… Abie, Joy, Minnie (the dog),” and maybe regretfully his little sister, “Alice.” But then, after that, he prays for what he wants, his voice gets more enthusiastic as he prays for his favorite toys and movies and the chance to play with them; “Tractors, trains, fire truck, Wall-E.” The way David prays is cute, but after thinking about it, we all approach prayer the same way. We pray for what we’re supposed to, we fill in a lot of “Na-na-na’s,” and then we get to the list of what we really want.

We pray because we’re uncertain, we need direction. We pray to God with our lists; like we’re filling out a request form. I recently filed my taxes. I put in my W-2’s and all my personal information, listed everything. In return, I’m getting a little refund. Now, imagine if the IRS, instead of a refund, sent me back a little pink envelope with a scented note that said, “I love you!” That would be weird. That’s not how our relationship works. I send in my information and needs, and I get something back. We see prayer that way; “God, this is my current condition, this is what I’ve done, this is what I need. Now, give me back what I deserve—love, blessings, etc.”

But for Jesus, prayer was different. He wasn’t praying with a list, or with needs, or in uncertainty. He knew his hour was upon him; whether he prayed or not this was going to happen. So, the occasion of Jesus’ prayer was not for God to give him anything, or with an agenda, but Jesus prayed that he would better align to what God was already going to do. Not for God to conform to what he wanted, but for what he wanted to be the same as what God wanted.

I think we sometimes view prayer as a vitamin supplement. We eat the meals we want and then get some extra vitamins with an extra prayer or two. But Jesus saw prayer as food. He approached God not just for additional nutrition, but depended on God for nourishment and life. God was Jesus’ food.

Why do you pray? Is it like filling out your taxes? Or do you spend time with God like a child their Father? Do you seek God for life and sustenance in prayer? Do we pray to think of how to conform our lives to God’s plan, rather than asking him to conform to ours?

**II. WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?**

We first learn from Jesus why he prayed. Now let’s think about what he prayed for.

**1. Jesus prays for Glory** (1-5, 24)

Let’s read 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.” The “hour” of the cross was upon Jesus, and he asks God to “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” Jesus is praying here, “Let me die, so that I may glorify you.” This is pretty remarkable.

The word glorify can be translated in many ways. But where it comes from is this idea of cladding, or encasing something with gold. So, “glorify” means to adorn, or cover with “luster” or “splendor.” Jesus is asking God that, on the cross, that he would be adorned with luster, that even though it would seem like a shameful and defeating death, that he would shine, so as to display the full splendor of God.

This is really amazing. The cross was Jesus’ mission, his main goal on earth. It was really the biggest sacrifice anyone ever gave. He was giving his life in payment for everyone that ever lived. And no one would really get what he was doing while he did it. The only person who could really see the great significance of Jesus’ “hour” was his Father God. And yet, Jesus asks God to glorify him, not for any affirmation or comfort, but for the purpose of revealing the full splendor of God.

This week, while working on this message, I spent a good amount of time at Starbucks. And in line getting coffee, the lady in front of me forgot her wallet and was a dollar short. She felt embarrassed and everything, so I gave her a dollar. She was so thankful, she wanted to somehow pay me back eventually. The guy at the register thanked me too, said how nice it was what I did. It was just a dollar. But you know what? It felt good. I sacrificed something for somebody else, I got thanked for it and it felt good. In trying to understand Jesus, what if I gave a dollar and the lady took it, and then spit in my face. Then, everyone at Starbucks then spit in my face. That’s what Jesus was facing on the cross, and even worse. Yet, it wasn’t just a dollar, it was his life. Yet to the only one who would acknowledge what he was doing, Jesus asked that he would be glorified in his action, so to display God’s glory.

What is this glory of God? What is this splendor that somehow the cross would display? Why was it so important to Jesus, to God, that his glory be revealed through the cross?

The glory Jesus is talking about in this passage is the splendor of God’s love. The full glory of the love of God had never been seen before, and hasn’t been fully seen since. This glory comes out of the dark and foggy story that God actually created us, made us to be with him. But we accepted the lie that life would be better without him. The agony of God was that in his holiness, he couldn’t be with us who were unholy. We separated ourselves from him, it was simply impossible for us to be together again because God, who’s righteous, had to rightly kill us in a just punishment for living apart form him. It’s like a judge in love with a convicted murderer. Yet, despite all these things, this love of God, this splendor and glory of God, is the full display of his love, because he himself, the judge, took the death penalty of all of our convicted sins, knowing that some people might want to be in love with him again. And he did this because God is crazy in love with each of us.

But for God’s amazing love to be displayed, Jesus had to actually go through with it, not just in action, but we see that in the deepest parts of his heart, he had to want all glory to go not to himself, but to God.

We see how different we are from Jesus. We’re always looking to somehow glorify ourselves. We’re all trying to display our own splendor in something—in the main thing we’re giving our lives to; our majors, our jobs, even church and ministry; these things define us, they’re our splendor. I honestly hope one day a Wikipedia page will be written about my life. Even in little things, we want people to notice, the sacrifices we made, that awesome note we sang, that understanding, that knowledge, how interesting we are, really anything we want for our own glory to shine. But in this selfish, overcast world, the small splendors of our little glories are never enough, and we all know this, but we still grab onto these things in desperation for significance.

But Jesus lived his life differently. He was always trying to give credit for what he was doing to God (4; cf. 8:54). We think of Jesus, and we think of all the amazing things he did. Yet, in this prayer alone Jesus acknowledges being sent by God six times (3,8,18,21,23,25) and also acknowledges being given glory (1,5,10), authority over all people (2b,6,9,24), all the work he did on earth (4), his name (11,12), his words (6-8a,14,17), his capacity as God (7,10), his message (21,23), his love (23,24,26)—all these things he gives credit to the Father.

Great job Jesus! You go! The extent of his desire to reveal God in his life is so sick. We could think, we’ll Jesus is the guy. But that’s Jesus, that’s not me.

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it begins by saying; “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” We’re actually created to glorify God. It’s what we’re made to do. And our separation from God we live in called sin is this idea that life is better in living to glorify ourselves. But you know that aching feeling of unhappiness, of unsatisfaction? No glory in this world can satisfy that longing we have, because it’s all a dull splendor. We’re made to reveal the full, lasting splendor of God, made to be encased in the splendor of his love.

What does praying to glorify God look like? I want to tell you briefly about this guy named Albert Schweitzer. He was a pastor’s kid. He was prodigy organist and organ builder, touring Europe, shredding on the organ. As a young teenager, Schweitzer was struggling in school. So he prayed, “God, if you help me get through school, I’ll give my life to glorify you.” Well, Schweitzer did pretty well in school. By his mid-twenties he was the head of the theology and philosophy departments of one of Europe’s best schools. He wrote a lot of books, books about Bach and organ building and animals and Kantian philosophy and books on theology, like the classic *The Quest for the Historical Jesus,* which started a movement.The guy’s brain was just amazing. One day, he was reading about the Congo, about French missionaries there, about all the horrible things that Christians had done there, and about the suffering and the need for medical care. Something clicked in Schweitzer. He stopped everything he was doing, dropped his prestigious teaching positions and organ concerts, and applied for medical school as a student. Everyone thought he was crazy, even his parents disapproved, the first time he applied for medical school, the director of the school took his application and gave it to a psychiatrist. People were angry. Schweitzer’s response was this: “For years I have been giving myself out in words but this new form of activity would not be merely talking about the religion of love, but actually putting it into practice.” After the long road of studying medicine, Schweitzer moved with his wife to the Lambarene in the French Congo, a dangerous place for many reasons and very hostile to westerners and Christianity, to build a hospital and to show love to those there, to display God’s crazy love not just with words, but with action. It was a very rocky start, but the hospital was built and Albert Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, not for anything he wrote or theology or philosophy, but for his humanitarian work, how he helped the people of the Congo and showed God’s love to them.

Later on in life, Schweitzer famously said, “Everyone must find his own Lambarene.” What is your Lambarene? What is your hour? When we pray to glorify God, we have to be willing, like Schweitzer, like Jesus, to give up all of our own petty glories if it means to better reveal God and his love.

**2. Jesus prays for his disciples.** (6-19, 25-26)

Looking at this prayer, Jesus actually doesn’t pray that much for himself. Most of the prayer, he prays for his disciples (6-26). This point alone, just the amount of time Jesus doesn’t spend praying for himself, but for his disciples, in this prayer right before his death, tells us so much about him.

Jesus had called his disciples his “friends” (15:15), and really that’s what they were, his friends for over three years. But he wasn’t just their friends, Jesus had been giving them his Father’s words, had shown them love, not for himself, but to better point them to God the Father. Look at verse 6a. “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.” Even in his friendship, in his ministry, Jesus didn’t want his disciples to just be attached to him as friends, he wanted them to believe that he was sent from God, to believe in what Jesus’ life meant, and that it would point them to God (6-9).

And now that he was leaving, Jesus is concerned for his friends. He asks the Father several times, to “protect them,” to keep them safe (11b, 15). He asks that they might have the “fullness… of joy” within them (13). He asks that they would be sanctified by the Father’s words of truth (17). He closes this pray asking that God’s love would remain in them.

We can learn a lot from Jesus about praying for others. We may see our friends, our family, the people around us, and we may think we know what they need—“Lord, ‘So-and-so’ is so messed up in this way. Please change them. Amen.” We may be praying that people might come to know God through us, through our ministry or through Bible study, and we pray for that. But we see that Jesus’ love for his disciples was simply that they would come to know God’s love through him. That’s what he prayed for, that’s what his friendship meant, that’s why he gave them his father’s words, and that’s what he hoped would continue to remain in them—God’s love. Prayer for others isn’t problem management. We learn from Jesus that our prayer for others is a prayer that they may better come to know God’s love through us.

Do we pray that for our friends? (Do we even pray for our friends?) Do we actually sit down and think about our friends, bringing their names to God, thinking about them and asking our Father God to guide us in showing them his love?

In Jesus’ prayer, he also asks that his disciples would go and be those who revealed God to others, that they would lead others to God.

At this point, a lot of us put on the brakes; “Er… me ‘make’ disciples?” Yeah, that’s not my job, that’s the pastor’s job, that’s what the missionaries do. That’s not me, I’m just a student, I’ve got things going on, I’m not qualified.”

Well, the thing is, sharing our faith with others in hope that they too would follow Jesus isn’t the job of a certain few, it’s Jesus’ prayer for anyone who follows him. We’re all called to help other people grow to follow Jesus (Jn14:12).

I think a way we can look at Jesus desire for us to bring others to God is like if our best friend liked a certain girl or guy. They’re like in love, they’re obsessed, but they can’t go up to them and talk to them, so they ask us to. What if we went up to that guy or girl, and instead of talking about our best friend, telling them what a great guy or girl they are, what if we just talked about ourselves?

But who can bring others to God? “Look at me, I’m a mess. I’m barely staying a float here.” Or, “I’ve been trying for a while. I’ve tried helping people with their problems and try to get them to come to church events or to Bible studies, but it never lasts very long.” How can we do this?

Jesus’ prayer shows us what he did. He didn’t try to micro-manage anybody, he wasn’t trying to hold onto people until they changed in a certain way, he drew people always to God and he gave them God’s words. That’s it. That’s all Jesus did. He pointed people to God and not himself, he gave them God’s words, and he loved them with God’s love. I don’t care who you are, anyone can do that. Jesus is praying that we, his disciples, we do the same. And what’s great, is that this is how we can fully allow the splendor of God to be revealed in our lives.

**3. Jesus prays for unity** (20-23).

Towards the end of his prayer, Jesus prays for unity among those who believe in him (20). Let’s look at verse 23. “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 unity among believers. I’m sure he knew how hard this would be. If you just read the book of Acts, you see how it was so hard for the Christian Jews and the Christian Gentiles to get along and agree on things. But Jesus prays for them, and says that when they love each other, the world would know Jesus came from God and know God’s love (23).

In this room here, we have a group of very different kinds of people. People from very different backgrounds, people who value very different things, even raised to see things differently. And it’s really easy to get into arguments amongst believers coming from different backgrounds as to what’s “right” and what’s “wrong.” But Jesus says that our prayer is that we would be unified in love for one another, because each of us has Jesus with us, God sees each of us equally as his sons and daughters. So we should also see each other the same way, as brothers and sisters. And we should not try to fix each other, but accept each other and love each other. And when we love each other despite being so different, Jesus says the world would know that God’s love isn’t just a nice idea, or something we think about, but something we live out in action with each other. Jesus prays that people would then see us, and see God’s glory, see his love.

Let’s read 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.” Let’s pray this. Let’s live this way, glorifying God. Let’s pray for it in the decisions we make, how we view people who don’t know God, and even how we view each other—that God and his amazing love might be known.