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Eavesdropping: Glorify Me John 17:1-5

If I were to ask you to recite "The Lord's Prayer," I know you could do it. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name..." but what if I said, "That's not the Lord's Prayer; that is our prayer... the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. The real Lord's Prayer comes in John 17." Jesus and the disciples are still together in the upper room, gathered around a table like this. They have shared a meal. Then they have listened to Jesus as he crams into their heads and hearts all the things he wants them to remember after he is gone. Then he closes with this: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

With that, the teaching is over, and the praying begins—actually, Jesus praying and the disciples listening in... eavesdropping on an intimate conversation between Jesus and his Father. This prayer—the real Lord's Prayer—is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. We are told throughout the gospels that Jesus went off early in the morning to pray. But we are never told how Jesus prayed until now. For the next three weeks we are going to "eavesdrop" on the real Lord's Prayer. This morning... some deep stuff!

¹After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time 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 may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing 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.

As I was flipping through the channels the other night I came upon a great, early Denzel Washington movie about the first all-black unit in the Civil war. Do you remember the name of that film? *Glory*. In these first few lines of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, some form of the word "glory" appears five times. Did you notice that? Glory is another of those favorite words of John. He uses it more than all the other gospels combined. We find it first back in the prologue: "¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

When we use the word glory we usually mean “fame” or “distinction.” We have the phrase: “No guts, no glory.” In other words, if you don’t have courage, you are never going to achieve fame. But this word in the Bible means something more. When the Bible speaks of the glory of God, it means his “splendor”; his “radiance.” Glory is the brilliance that shines from a God who is so holy, so spectacular and awesome and pure that mere humans can’t even look upon him. Glory isn’t like Beyoncé on the Super Bowl stage with lights, fireworks and screaming fans. God’s glory isn’t manufactured; it is revealed. When we catch a glimpse of the glory of God, we are simply seeing God like He really is.

When Moses met God on Mt. Sinai, the glory was so overwhelming that anyone else who set foot on the mountain died. God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock and covered him to protect him from His glory. When Moses came down from Sinai, his face was shining so brightly from the reflection of God’s glory that he had to wear a mask to cover the glow. In the Old Testament, glory always belonged to God. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God said, “I will not give my glory to another!”

So if glory belongs only to God, how are we to understand Jesus when he opens his prayer with this request: “Glorify your son!” He repeats it in verse 5: “...glorify me.” Can you imagine us praying like this? What would you think if you heard your pastor pray, “Father, glorify me. Exalt me! Make me great in front of this congregation. Let my splendor shine like the sun.” What would you think? “This guy is an egotistical whack-job!”

So is Jesus on an ego trip? If glory belongs only to God, how are we to understand Jesus’ words here? Well, first we get a glimpse, once again, into the Trinity, don’t we? Back in chapter 1 we read about this mysterious character called “The Logos,” who was with God and was God before time even began. The Logos became flesh and pitched his tent in our midst. And we beheld his (what)...glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father. Here, again, near the end of the book, John repeats the same theme. Before the Son came to earth as a man for 33 years, he lived in eternal relationship with the Father. One of the things he left behind was his glory...glory that rightly belonged to him because he was God. On earth, his glory was hidden. Jesus came incognito.

But now, Jesus asks the Father to give back to him the glory he left behind; the glory that was his as a second person of the Godhead. After 33 years in hiding, 33 years shushing people every time they get a glimpse of who he really is, of healing people and casting out demons and raising them from the dead—stuff only God can do—and then saying, “Shhhhh, don’t tell anyone. Don’t tell anyone what I have done. Don’t let my glory sneak out yet; I’m not ready.” After all this time, finally Jesus says, “Okay, I’m ready. Let’s take off the mask. Let’s show them who I really am, Father. Glorify me!”

But let's dig a little deeper. When Jesus says, "The hour has come—it's time to glorify me..." what is he saying? "It's time to make me famous? It's time to allow me to shine like the sun so that all the mean religious people and mean Romans will be terrified at a glimpse of who I really am and will fall on their faces before me?" What does Jesus mean when he says, "My hour has come; glorify me?" What was his hour...and what was his glory? The cross! It's not spotlights and fireworks and fame. The glory Jesus asks for is his death on the cross. "Father, this is what you and I discussed when I was still with you in heaven. This is our plan. It has been our plan from the beginning that I would come and die for my creation..."

That's what Jesus means when he says, "Glorify me." "Give me the privilege of doing what we agreed on; dying to save the world I love." But that's not the end of it. He will also be glorified through his resurrection. The ultimate glory of Jesus is revealed when he rises from the dead, conquers Satan and all his enemies and offers a glimpse of his heavenly splendor to his disciples. Jesus will be glorified both through the tragedy of the cross...a horrible thing...and through the victory of the resurrection...the most wonderful thing in all of human history.

And there is something else. WHY did Jesus want to be glorified? So that he could finally drink in the praise of people? No! He wanted glory so that he could give glory back to the Father. "Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you." And again in verse 4: I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. The reason that Jesus seeks glory is so that he can bounce it back to the Father. He doesn't want to cling to the glory; he wants to reflect it back to God whom he loves and with whom he has a perfect, joy-filled relationship. Remember the first petition in the "other" Lord's Prayer? "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done." Jesus lived his whole earthly life in complete submission to the Father. Any glory he received he didn't hoard; he reflected it back.

Most of us wouldn't mind a little fame. Wouldn't mind being recognized as a big shot. We may not be comfortable praying, "God, please glorify me!" But we wouldn't mind if He did. One of my longings as a young pastor—which I never prayed and I never admitted to anyone else—was to walk into a room of large church pastors from across the denomination and have them know me. Recognize me. Point and whisper, "There's Mark Toone!" I wanted to be known. I never prayed, "God, glorify me." But I wanted glory. I wanted to make a name for myself.

I wonder how much glory I would have wanted if it was Jesus' type of glory? "God, I want to suffer and be shamed and killed for your sake." Jesus' idea of reflected glory is very different from the world's. And believe me, those are very empty calories.

Earlier in the service you saw a video from the Eubank family, our missionaries in Burma. We've watched those kids grow up before our eyes, and now they are teaching us! Incredible! Welcome them! This morning when we are talking about what it means to bring glory to God, I thought I'd invite my friend Dave Eubank to join me in that conversation.

Questions for Dave:

-Dave, Jesus is about to die on a cross, and he describes it as his "glory." When we think of glory, we think of triumph and success. But Jesus speaks of the cross as his glory, as well as his resurrection. Can you share how you have seen God glorified in Burma, both through hard times of pain and loss as well as in miracles of deliverance?

- The first question in the Westminster Catechism, one of our most important theological documents is a familiar one: "What is the chief end of man?" In other words, what is our primary purpose on earth? The answer? "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This links the idea of glorifying God with deep joy? Do those two really go together? How?

-People sitting out here are going to say, "Yeah, it's easy to bring glory to God when you are a Super Christian like Dave Eubank. But I'm just a housewife, I'm just a businessman, I'm just a teacher, I'm just a student. There is nothing glorious about my life." What would you say to such people?

If your primary created purpose in this life is to bring glory to God—and by doing so, enjoy Him—how are you doing? When others look at you—your words, your actions, your witness; when they see the way you deal with victory, and when they watch the way you deal with pain, death and loss—do they catch a glimpse of a glorious God in your life?

We are going to pray together that our lives, our church might bring glory to God.

Sermon Questions

- REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER: Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- PRAY TOGETHER: Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- DIG DEEPER
 1. Why does Pastor Mark call this the "real" Lord's Prayer? Read the entire prayer out loud. What stands out for you?
 2. How would you define "glorify"? What does Jesus ask of the Father in verses 1-5?
 3. How, specifically, did you glorify Jesus in the last week? Why is this important?