

JESUS' HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

John 17:1-26

Key Verse: 17:1b

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your
Son may glorify you."

Today's passage is about Jesus' high priestly prayer. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the high priest, prophet and the king. Jesus prays first for himself (1-5). Second, Jesus prays for his disciples (6-19). Finally, Jesus prays for all the people in the world (20-26). He prayed right before his crucifixion. The content of his prayer is so deep and wide because Jesus included both God and all mankind in his high priestly prayer. Jesus' high priestly prayer teaches us [how to pray](#) as a priest, that is, as a good shepherd.

First, Jesus prays for the glory of God (1). Look at verse 1a. "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come.'" The words "my time" or "my hour" are repeated as Jesus makes a progression toward the time of his crucifixion. Now the time has come for him to die on the cross as the Paschal Lamb. Once John the Baptist said: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29)

In verse 1 Jesus prays that God would glorify him so that he might glorify God. In this case, the verb "glorify" means "to shine" or "to reveal." Simply speaking, glory is to reveal God's saving grace to the whole world, as the sun shines on the whole world. How does Jesus reveal God's glory? It is through his crucifixion as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world, and it is through his glorious resurrection. It is indeed amazing that Jesus prayed to reveal his glory through his death and resurrection. It is easy for us to glorify God when we can do something for him. But it is not easy for anyone to glorify God through death on a cross and through resurrection. There were two pairs of parents whose four daughters had been molested and threatened to death by teenage boys. The parents were emotionally so upset that they were ready to retaliate against the boys. Their pastor told them to give glory to God through this [event](#). Then the parents called down curses on him, saying, "You can say that because they are not your own daughters. Can you reveal God's saving grace when you are in deep distress?" The pastor was speechless.

What parents don't want to spare their children? But God did not spare his one and only Son to die on the cross as the ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. Even when he had to die on Calvary's tree like a criminal, Jesus was willing to reveal God's glory. At that time, crucifixion was the most cruel way of condemning a person to death. The cross was also a symbol of shame and guilt. But Jesus said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may give glory back to you." How great our Lord Jesus is, that he wanted to glorify God even through his death on the cross!

In his [prayer](#) Jesus reveals his life purpose. For Jesus, to live for the glory of God was everything. In order to glorify God, he could

even die on the cross. Jesus' prayer, "Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you," tells us what all human beings' chief end ought to be. What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (Ro 11:36). To live for God's glory is to live according to man's chief purpose. Also, it is to live for one's own happiness. When we have to live in this world, we are confronted with various kinds of problems which make us fearful and distress us. When we see the situation of the world, we wonder if we can live for the glory of God. But as Jesus showed us how to live to glorify God even through his death, we also must set our life purpose to live for the glory of God. Paul was a selfish person before his conversion. But after his conversion, he said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." We must know that Jesus' people must pray first to live for the glory of God.

Second, eternal life (2-5). Look at verse 2. "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him." In this verse the word "authority" is not a secular word. In this verse the word "authority" means privilege or divine imperative to give eternal life to those who come to him through his death on the cross and resurrection. One smart person really did not want to receive eternal life, thinking that eternal life is a succession of physical life, which is filled with sorrow and anguish. He misunderstood greatly. Eternal life is not the succession of a cursed life. Eternal life is the best gift of God through his Son's death and resurrection. We know that a long life is a blessing. But a long life cannot, at best, go over 110 years. But eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ is the best gift which enables us to live in God's house forever. Verse 3 says, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Simply speaking, to know God and Jesus Christ is the true way of receiving eternal life.

Jesus rendered glory to God while on earth by completing the work God had given him to do (4). His mission was to plant in men's hearts God's love and faith in the Son and the living hope in the kingdom of God. In the course of fulfilling his work, Jesus suffered endlessly. But Jesus did not think he suffered; instead, he thought he was glorifying God. Our Lord Jesus Christ was sure that he has authority to give eternal life to those who believe in him.

Look at verse 5. "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Here Jesus prays to restore the kingdom of God through his death and resurrection. Jesus also prays that the order of creation between God and man may be restored. His death and resurrection was ultimately for the restoration of his kingdom and God's sovereign rule.

Third, Jesus prays for his disciples (6-12). Look at verse 6. "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." Jesus presents to God the disciples God gave him. Jesus had revealed to the disciples many divine mysteries so that they came to know God in heaven. Through his miraculous signs Jesus revealed that he is the Son of God Almighty. By healing the sick Jesus revealed God's compassion

and love. By planting the kingdom of God in men's souls Jesus revealed God's love and his world salvation plan.

Let's read verses 6-8. These verses tell us how Jesus revealed God to his disciples. He revealed God's glory by giving them the word of God. By receiving the word of God, finally the disciples believed that Jesus came from God (16:30). Therefore, one-to-one Bible study is very important. In verses 6-19 we learn Jesus' prayer topics for his disciples. Jesus prayed for his disciples because God gave them to him (9). When we read the gospel stories, we see that his disciples were not friendly to one another. Rather, they were quarrelsome. But Jesus did not think, "They are too mean to be edified." Jesus suffered endlessly to plant the word of truth in them. Jesus suffered endlessly to pray for his disciples to raise them as future leaders. They were not yet spiritual. However, Jesus did not say, "You are too slow to learn." He said in verse 10b, "And glory has come to me through them." Jesus thinks that he was glorified in the course of shepherding them, for God had entrusted them to him. Paul also had this mind of Christ. He had been a legalistic person, but after his conversion he became like a mother to all his sheep. He said in Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown...." Shepherding is a most difficult job. But we must consider it a glorious mission, as Jesus did.

Look at verse 11b. "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." Jesus prays that God would protect them so that they may be one. Jesus does not ask God to take them out of the world, but to protect them. Jesus knows that they should confront the hard world. They needed God's protection. God's work is also to unite and to build up. Jesus prays that his disciples might obey his command to love one another, so that they might be one as Jesus was one with God. When we have God, we are united into one with the love of God. This is exactly what God wants us to accomplish. Jesus wants his disciples to have the most potent weapon--"unity" in the love of God. Satan is happy when we hate one another. Satan flees away from us when we love one another fervently. Each one of the disciples was self-centered. But Jesus has faith in them that they would be united in the love of God. Jesus also has faith in them that they would conquer the whole world by being one in the love of God.

Fourth, "sanctify them by the truth" (13-19). Jesus is going back to God soon, but his disciples had to remain in the world. The world would hate Jesus' disciples, thinking that they were bothering their sinful way of life. Jesus does not want his disciples to run away from the world; he wants them to remain in the world and do God's work.

Look at verse 17. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Jesus prays that God would sanctify them by the truth. In Greek, the verb "sanctify" has the same root with the word "holy"--"hagios." Jesus prays that God would make them a holy people of God.

Why is it so important for them to be sanctified by the truth? It is because God who is holy wants us to live a holy life. How could the disciples be sanctified? They must hold on to God's word, because God's

word changes their inner men. Without God's word, man has no standard. Without God's word, men cannot but live according to the social consensus. For example, in the past a courageous person was known as a good person. But these days a clever or selfish person is known as a good person. So, many a person wants to be a clever or selfish person. There is a problem. Most people just follow the social consensus without questioning it. According to Time magazine, the teenage suicide rate is increasing these days. Why does teenage suicide happen when they should have beautiful dreams and be filled with ambitious spirit? It is because they blindly follow the social consensus and swap their purity and ambitious spirit for immorality and guilty feelings and demon-possession. The result is tragic suicide. As we know well, the Roman Empire was destroyed mainly because of her immorality.

Jesus' people must sanctify themselves with the word of truth. They should grow in their inner persons to be spiritually mature persons. In order to grow spiritually, we must hear Jesus' command. Luke 9:23 says, "Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'" But Satan says, "Enjoy yourself! Don't burn your candle from both ends." God says, "Live a holy life." Jesus' disciples are called to live a sanctified life by the truth of God so as to declare God who is holy through our practical lives. This is the reason Jesus prays that God would sanctify them by the truth. Look at verse 19. "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." Jesus sanctified himself by obeying God's will to die on the cross. In this way Jesus taught us how to sanctify ourselves truly.

Fifth, Jesus prays for all the people of the world (20-23). Look at verse 20. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...." In this verse, "those who will believe" refers to the Gentile believers. Broadly speaking, people of the whole world may come to Jesus and receive eternal life and a living hope in the kingdom of God. In essence, this prayer is the same as the Lord's prayer for all people of the whole world. Jesus prays for all the people of the world so that somehow they may come to know the Son and not perish but have eternal life. Jesus prays that somehow they may come to know God so that they may be happy indeed. In brief, Jesus prays that each person might have a personal relationship with him, and eternal life and a living hope in the kingdom of God. Jesus prays that all people in the world can be saved from their misery and distress. When Jesus prayed for people of the whole world, Isaiah's prophecy was in his mind. All the people who live in the Son will experience heavenly joy. All the people who live in the Son will experience righteousness and faithfulness in God. And people who live in the Son will be glad and happy all the time. Even the calf and the lion and the yearling will be together to share overflowing joy after an intensive basketball game, because our King Jesus who was slain for our sins will rule the world with peace and love (Isa 11:6).

When people love one another in Jesus, they recognize that Jesus is the Son of God and they are the holy children of God. If they love one another in Jesus, the devil loses his power, as the darkness disappears before the light. Here we learn an important lesson. We must not only pray for ourselves, we also must pray for all people of the world to somehow come to know Jesus so that they would not perish but

have eternal life. We must remember that Jesus prayed for the people of the whole world. We must remember that Jesus wants to be with them as he was with his Father (22).

Sixth, "to be with me where I am" (24-26). 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." When Jesus says, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory," he means that he wants them to enjoy the power and glory of the kingdom of God with him forever.

We must pray first for ourselves to live for the glory of God. Next we must love one another fervently so that we may grow in our inner men. We cannot say that we are Jesus' people if we don't grow in our inner men until people know that we have been sanctified by the truth. We cannot say we are Jesus' people if we don't pray for the people of the whole world. When we study Jesus' high priestly prayer, we learn that Jesus wants all his people to glorify God, and that he wants to bring all his people back to his kingdom. May God give us prayer spirit to pray to live for the glory of God and to glorify him through our personal life. May God help us to be one in the love of God.