

Introduction:

- A. Bill Cargill loves to repeat something a friend told him: “*If we knew how much God loves us we would be fearless.*” Reminds me of another quote I heard by W. Russell Maltby, “*Jesus promised His disciples three things: that they would be entirely fearless, absurdly happy, and that they would get into trouble.*” **So how’s that fearless and happy part working for you?**
- B. Jesus, on the last night of his life, after his last meal with his disciples, after telling them there was a betrayer among them, after telling them he himself was going to leave them and they could not follow, and after telling Peter that before morning he would *disown* Jesus three times... after all that Jesus said next, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me.*” Then Jesus taught his disciples the intense and life-changing truths we read in **John 14-16**. He finished by saying, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” I’m so glad Jesus said that but I’ve got to admit, my heart still gets troubled. Sometimes I find peace to be seriously elusive. **Turn to John 17.**
- C. After Jesus said that, John 17 says, “*he looked toward heaven and prayed.*” While Jesus wanted his disciples to hear what he prayed, he prayed because even though he was about to suffer, die and rise again to secure salvation for sinners, there were things yet remaining that only God the Father could do if Jesus was to “overcome the world.” By listening to Jesus pray, we are see the astonishing hand-in-hand work of God the Father and God the Son in securing our peace amidst the hostility of this world.

D. As you can see, Jesus' prayer extends for 26 verses. It is intricate, complex and profound. Yet, if you look for the actual *requests* there are only four. These are the things Jesus is asking his Father to do so that he—Jesus—might overcome the world and we might have peace. We're going to take three Sundays to look at this prayer but the basic requests are these:

1. **V.1** – *“Glorify your Son.”*
2. **V.11** – *“Protect them [Jesus' disciples] by the power of your name... that they may be one as we are one.”*
3. **V.20-21** – *“I pray... for [all] those who believe... that all of them may be one...”*
4. **V.24** – *“I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory.”*

E. Today, I will deal with the first of those requests, in **vv.1-5... Jesus Christ has overcome the world and gives his disciples peace because the Father has answered his prayer to glorify the Son.** As you heard, Jesus states his request twice, in v.1 and v.5, but for two different reasons.

**I. “GLORIFY YOUR SON, THAT YOUR SON MAY GLORIFY YOU.”
(17:1-3)**

A. The language Jesus uses throughout here is of God the Father and God the Son. This is not very much like the relationships of human fathers and sons. For one thing, **God the Son is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father.** Yet, as these verses make especially clear, **they have different roles in saving people.**

Also, **there is a unique intimacy between them in the Trinity.** The Holy Spirit is not spoken of here but he has been in the previous chapters. The actual saving of sinners is primarily the work of Father and Son while the Spirit's

work is in drawing sinners to Christ and indwelling us after we trust the Lord. But you will see this **incredibly intimate reciprocal relationship** here. Later in the prayer we see how believers are drawn into that intimate union.

- B. Now this first request: “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” *The Message* helped me with fresh language for the word ‘glorify.’

“Display the **bright splendor** of your Son

So the Son in turn my show your bright splendor.”

I’ve often said that ‘to glorify’ is to shine a spotlight on. But I see that’s not quite right. It is more like, ‘take the wraps off’ the splendor of the Son. The great unveiling.

The reveal!

- C. This is a real prayer request, not just some ceremonial God-talk. What would have happened if the Father had not answered this prayer? Jesus would have suffered, died and even risen from the dead but no one would have understood it. No one would have *seen the splendor* of it. Salvation would have come to this “country of the blind” and it would have gone unnoticed.

That, of course, is what had been happening regularly during Jesus’ life. Most people saw his signs and heard the teaching yet they remained blind to their need to put their faith in him as God’s Messiah. And Jesus makes clear elsewhere that if they *did* see him as the Son of God it was only because the Father opened their eyes.

So Jesus prayed that the Father would display to the world the full splendor—the glory—in what Jesus was about to do. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came into the church, Peter preached to a great crowd of Jews in Jerusalem and their eyes were opened to the horror of what they had done to Jesus. When they cried out,

“Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” And about 3000 believed that day!

That was God answering Jesus’ prayer. And ever since, the Father is glorifying the Son—unveiling the bright splendor of his saving work—so that people might see and believe.

D. Jesus’ request was reciprocal: “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” Again, had the splendor of Jesus’ death and resurrection been unnoticed, so would the love of the Father been unnoticed. He would have gone *un-glorified*. **But as it is, believers never separate their gratitude for what Christ did from our gratitude for what the Father did:** *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* To glorify the Son we cannot help but glorify the Father who sent him at the same time. Which is just what Jesus prayed.

E. When Jesus prayed this, he was sure God would do what he prayed. The reason is in **v.2**, *“For you granted him [the Son] authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”* Did you catch that: the Father granted the Son *“authority over all people.”* That means that the Son was already ruler over all people before he was born, died and rose again. In theory, he could have brought every person to their knees by his command. He could have demanded anything of mankind—except their repentance, love and worship.

But the Father gave authority to the Son so *“that he [the Son] might give eternal life to all those you [the Father] have given him.”* These are the rebels against God,

those who lived in darkness, those who worshipped other gods and who relished unrighteousness. Yet the Father, Son and Spirit wanted sinners, dead in sin, to have *eternal life*. So when someone puts their faith in Christ for salvation Christ has the God-given absolute authority to convey to that person his forgiveness and everlasting life.

- F. The wording here raises questions: Jesus “give eternal life to all those you have given him,” implying, of course, that some people are *not* given to him for eternal life. There is a mystery there but I can tell you some things for sure:
1. God sent his one and only Son into the world to save sinners—a sacrifice beyond imagination—so he is certainly not tight-fisted with salvation.
 2. Jesus is eager to give eternal life to all whom the Father gives him. He suffered and died for them. He *invites* all to come. He sends his servants out into the highways and byways to bring people to his Great Feast.
 3. Jesus dispatched the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, its deadly self-righteousness, and its mistaken judgment about who Jesus is, all so that people might repent and be saved.
 4. **2 Pet. 3:9** says that God “*is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*” Jesus taught that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. God takes no delight in those who die in their sins.
 5. Clearly, all through Scripture, the responsibility to turn to God is upon man. God moves heaven and earth “*so that you might believe.*” And God would not require what a person could not possibly do.
 6. Yet, there is a line we cannot cross. There is a mystery we cannot question. **Rom 9:19-21** says,

One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

And there we bow in silence. We are out of our depth.

- G. There is an extraordinary wonder in v.3, *“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”* Eternal life is that simple! A mortal, destined for death and judgment by the Holy God, can instead live forever in the love and presence of that God, completely sin-free and ennobled beyond imagination **simply by knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.**

And how can we know God and Jesus? It is a free gift given by Jesus Christ, by the will of the Father, to anyone who will turn from sin—from going your own way—and ask God to save you—to give you eyes to see the glory.

Illus.: I came across an article this week by Mark Shepard titled, “Surprised by Jesus: how he found me at Harvard.” Shepard grew up in a Jewish home but by the time he went to Harvard he was an atheist. He writes, *“I believed faith was the opposite of reason—and therefore to be avoided... Into this state, God broke in.*

“My first surprise was meeting Christians who actually believed their faith—and in a thoughtful, intelligent way. ...

“My second surprise was in the power of the Bible, and particularly Jesus, to make sense of the world, and to move and inspire me. As I read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount for the first time, I was blown away. Here was the most

beautiful, powerful expression of moral truth I had ever encountered....

“My third surprise – which still surprises and challenges me to this day – was finding out that I am a sinner.” <http://www.veritas.org/oxford-atheism-to-jesus/>

That is God at work, using the Christians in Shepard’s life, but ultimately the Father glorifying the Son, and the Spirit convicting of sin.

Now in vv.4-5 Jesus repeats his request of the Father but for another reason. **Vv.4-5.....** Do you see the contrast here: earth and heaven. Jesus has prayed that God would glorify the Son on earth—that the world would see the *bright splendor of the Son*. Now he prays,

I. “GLORIFY ME IN YOUR PRESENCE.” (17:4-5)

- A. Jesus Christ was born to display God’s splendor to in this dark world. John began his book, in **Jn 1:14**, by saying of Jesus, *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* **Heb. 1:3** says, *“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”* But in order to display God’s glory in the world, the Son laid aside all his glory— all his divine rights—and took on the very nature of a servant, and then served sinners by dying in shame for them. Nothing has so displayed the glory of God as Jesus’ death to save sinners. *This is love... that he first loved us.*
- B. Now Jesus prays that when that work of salvation is finished God the Father would glorify the Son, as the Son had glorified the Father. Whereas the Son displayed God’s glory on earth, he now asks that the Father would display

the Son's glory in heaven, "*the glory I had with you before the world began.*" Jesus, on his last, dark, death-heavy night, prayed that his Father would add the glory of the Son, bright with saving love and inestimable sacrifice, to the glory of the Father in heaven. The prophet Daniel was given a vision of this in **Dan 7:13-14**: "*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*"

In John's great Revelation, he too was given a glimpse into heaven. He saw the LORD God Almighty seated on his throne, surrounded by mighty beings who worshipped, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*" Then he saw "*a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne,*" likewise surrounded by the mighty worshippers of heaven. Listen to **Rev. 5:11-14**:

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and
strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”*

*The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the
elders fell down and worshiped.*

The Father answered the prayer of the Son, not only restoring the glory they had enjoyed together since *before* the creation of the world, but *adding* to it the bright splendor of the Lamb who died for our sins. **No wonder heaven has no need of sun or moon to give it light!**

Conclusion:

Jesus promised his disciples peace that last troubled night, *“Take heart! I have overcome the world.”* But for us there is often a kind of disconnect from that when we’re facing things that trouble us. You can read all these words from Jesus and, in a sense, not find anything directly to help you when you’re afraid about your job, or when a relationship is full of conflict, or when you’re depressed.

Illus.: Let me help you see the connection. As most of you know by now I’m having shoulder surgery on Tuesday. A couple weeks ago I was having trouble with that. I wasn’t afraid exactly. I was sad; bummed. I don’t think that sadness like that is a sin but I wanted to know God’s peace. Yet, I didn’t have the ability to just buck up, to “not worry about it.” I prayed, admitting my weakness to the Lord. In prayer, I said what I knew to be true about God’s love and care; that *“no harm could come near me.”* I told the Lord I’d only get my equilibrium if he gave it to me. And the next day, his peace came. It came as a kind of quiet spiritual common sense: *all will be well. Of course, all will be well.* It was a confidence anchored in the God whose splendor I’ve seen here in Scripture, in you as brothers and sisters, and in my own experiences with Jesus.

Those assurances, that inward quiet and steadiness, traces back to Jesus' assurance here and the prayers God answered for him. I am not calm because this is no big deal (tho' that may be) but because I am safe in Jesus, because the real dangers of life in this world cannot harm me. *"If we knew how much God loves us we would be fearless."* **And we are re-anchored to how much God loves us when we hear the promises and prayer of Jesus.**