

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.³ Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

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.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. (John 17:1-11a)

This Gives Glory to God

Who are your heroes? I spend a lot of time poking around in bookstores and I’ve noticed that some people get a lot more written about them than others. There are tons of books about Roosevelts. A new book comes out about either Teddy or Franklin almost every year. Most of them are positive. Certain other presidents are just as popular: Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson. You couldn’t read all the books about those guys. But it’s almost impossible to find a current biography of William Henry Harrison or William McKinley or Benjamin Harrison. So why do presidents named Roosevelt do so well? With Teddy, it’s partly because he had such an outsized personality. But also, there was this mystique of challenging big, evil forces and fighting for the little guy. With Franklin, there was leading the country through the Depression and the Second World War, some of the greatest challenges our country ever faced.

Some people would call all those approving biographies, while other presidents are forgotten, glory. Is all that glory deserved? The people who write those books certainly think so. Whatever you think of any president of the United States, whoever your personal heroes are, even if they’re sports figures or actors or musicians, as a Christian, you know that our true hero is Christ. He’s the one we look up to. He’s the one we want to copy. And he has certainly had more books written about him than any other person who ever lived. Yet, all those books are not his true glory. There is a much greater glory that he and the Father receive. This morning, we want to consider that glory. My friends, **this gives glory to God:**

I. His work of salvation.

II. His care for his disciples.

I.

For the third Sunday in a row, our gospel lesson during the Easter season comes from Maundy Thursday. Jesus had a long talk with his disciples that night. It started in the upper room and continued as they walked to the Garden of Gethsemane. Just before they entered the garden, Jesus stopped and prayed the prayer that makes up chapter 17 of John’s gospel. This was not the prayer where he asked God to take the cup away from him and then sweat great drops of blood. That happened in the garden itself. But this prayer has been called his high priestly prayer, because in this prayer, Jesus went to his Father on behalf of his disciples.

But he begins with where he was in his work. He said, **“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”** The Father gives glory to his Son. The Son gives glory to his Father. What was Jesus talking about? A little later he said, **“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”** Now, Jesus wouldn’t actually complete the work God gave him to do for another sixteen or hours or so. But he knew what was about to happen. He prayed to his Father as if he had already taken the final step in his journey to the cross. That was the work God gave Jesus to do. Before the world began, God asked him to come into this world and take our place in life and death.

Why did God do that? Because we needed it. In the course of this prayer, Jesus prays for his disciples and for all those who will believe because of their testimony. He’s careful to say that he is not praying for unbelievers. He’s praying for those that belong to God by faith. That makes us feel good, right? After all, we

are those who believe. Jesus prayed for us just as he was about to enter the Garden of Gethsemane and begin his torments for our salvation.

But don't think for a minute that we believe because we're better than all those people who don't. That attitude crops up in the church again and again. It's only going to get worse as our society flees from what God says is right and wrong. We live in a world that embraces gay marriage, a world that sees nothing wrong with sleeping around, let alone living together, a world that revels in drunkenness and even drug use. If it feels good, do it is the prevailing attitude of our day. We live in a world where lies are almost automatic for some people because our society no longer believes in absolute truth. Rightly, that causes us distress as we look out our windows or watch our televisions or surf the internet.

But there is a very serious spiritual danger there for all of us: the attitude of the Pharisee. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were the church-going people of the day. They looked around and they saw how many people were casual about their morality and it genuinely disturbed them. But their solution was to create laws that God didn't give and then to hold everyone else to their standard and then to condemn everyone who didn't live as good a life as they thought they did. In many cases, the sins they condemned were real. But the pride of their hearts made them just as sinful as the prostitutes and tax collectors, the liars and cheats and sexually immoral people that they condemned. Jesus condemned them because they were so sure they were right that they weren't willing see their own sin. And they had no pastoral concern for anyone who they deemed a sinner. Today, as we hear Jesus' high priestly prayer, we must be very careful that the pride of the Pharisee doesn't claim our hearts. Yes, the world is full of sinners and, yes, Jesus did pray for us. But he prayed for us because we trust in him for forgiveness.

He prayed for us as he was about to go and win that forgiveness. And what he did to win it is his true glory. What did he do? First of all, he left behind the glory that he had with the Father in heaven. We can't even imagine what life was like for the Son of God in eternity. But it had to be good. Jesus willingly left all that behind to be born in a stable and grow up as a carpenter's son. He went from being the lord of the angels to being a traveling teacher and preacher who experienced far more hatred than love. He came here to live a perfect life so that we sinners who love ourselves and who think we're doing so well might live. He was humble where we are natural Pharisees. He did all that in our place so that God could count us as perfect.

Then Jesus died for our sins, for our pride and for our failure to see ourselves as we really are. He died and he paid for all the times we judged others and ignored our own sin. Jesus endured hell itself on the cross. He endured physical pain that we can't even imagine. Then he died – his soul and body separated. He suffered all that because that's what we sinners deserve. He suffered all that because that's what his Father sent him to do. Jesus won glory by willingly laying down his life for our sins.

But he's not the only one who has glory in that sacrifice. It gives the Father glory, too. How? First of all, because the Son loved his Father enough to obey his command. He honored his Father – he gave him glory. The Father gave his dearest treasure. He sacrificed his only begotten Son so that we sinners could live. How many of us would be willing to let our children even be hurt so that someone who hates us would live? God sent his Son to suffer hell and to die for us. God put us ahead of his own Son. That is the glory of his love.

And when Jesus had suffered hell itself and died, God the Father glorified him. He gave him back the glory of heaven. When Jesus died, he went to heaven. When he ascended, he returned to the right hand of God where he rules all things for us. God gave him that glory because he completed his mission. On Easter morning when he pointed to Jesus as the victor who conquered our sin, as the hero who brings us eternal life, as the king who will judge the world. Jesus glorified his Father by dying for us as his Father commanded. God the Father glorified Jesus by raising him to show us the way home, as his Son requested. Together, they did everything we need to there. For that, we will praise the Father and the Son for all eternity. **This gives glory to God: his work of salvation.**

II.

But of course, even Jesus' resurrection isn't the end of what the Father and the Son did for us. In truth, we would not be able to give him eternal glory if the story ended there. There is one more step: revealing it. Jesus talks about that, too. He says that God granted him authority to give eternal life to all those God had given him. And then he says, **“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”** Eternal life is faith. It's knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ, his Son. So that means that no one who is not a Christian has eternal life. But in what sense is faith eternal life? In

the sense that when we come to faith, a new life starts inside us. God makes us new and he lives with us. When this life is over, that new life will continue with God in heaven. Even if these bodies are destroyed, they will rise on Judgment Day and that life we enjoyed here and in heaven will continue without a break forever.

Jesus prayed in these verses specifically for the eleven disciples he still had. He points out that they belonged to the Father and the Father gave them to him. What he says about them does apply to us. We belong to God – he chose us to believe before the world began. He knew us by name and he ordered our lives so that we, like the apostles, would hear the good news about Jesus and believe it. Through that faith, we now belong to Jesus.

But how did that faith actually come to us? Jesus said about the disciples, **“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.”** The Greek literally says, “I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world.” Now, the disciples knew God’s name before they ever met Jesus. They were Jewish believers. They had the Old Testament. What did Jesus mean? He goes on to say that he gave them the words that God had given him and they believed them. God’s name is more than just the names and titles that we find in the Bible. God’s name is every truth he reveals about himself. First and foremost, it is the truth that he is the God who loves and saves his people. All those words that came from God are his name. God built his power into those words, the power to take an unbelieving heart like the one I was born with and the one you were born with, and make them hearts of faith. God made the disciples believers through that name, that gospel. And he does the same for us.

Jesus prayed for those disciples. He was not praying for the world, but for those who believe. Again, what he says about those eleven also applies to us. Jesus said that while he was in the world, he protected them. The devil didn’t want them to believe. Jesus’ enemies didn’t even want to let them live. But he kept them safe. Now, he was about to leave and they were going to stay in this world. Jesus prayed that his Father would guard and protect them until they reached heaven. And all that is true for us. We are still here. We don’t see Jesus on a day to day basis. We have to struggle with sin and temptation and the hatred of an unbelieving world. We have to face the rising tide of sin and opposition to all that God says for as many years as God gives us here. But Jesus is with us. God the Father is with us. They will protect us until life’s end and they will bring us home. That love and care for us is one more reason why we will praise the Father and the Son for all eternity. **This gives glory to God: his care for his disciples.**

Every year, new biographies come out. I can’t keep up with all the ones I want to read. But you know what? Every one of them will eventually be forgotten, if not in this world, then in the next. When we get to heaven, no one is going to care who was president of the United States and when. No one is going to read that history anymore. The only history we will care about is the history of Christ. How our Savior defeated sin and death and hell to give us life. How he claimed us and gave us faith. How he guarded and protected us from this world until the next. That we will sing about for all eternity. Let’s praise God for that love with our lives and with our lips for as long as we live here, too. Amen.