

John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Now, please say with me the Lord's Prayer.

Today's Gospel is for the seventh Sunday after Easter, the Sunday between the Ascension of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is our Lord's prayer about God and glory. It's almost a bit embarrassing: it feels a bit like eavesdropping on a private family conversation. It feels as if we mortals are hearing something from the realm of glory, something we ought not to be overhearing. And yet, these verses are echoes of familiar Gospel themes: we have heard their like before.

These verses are a prayer. With the disciples, we overhear a prayer of unique intimacy between the Son and the Father. It is very like other prayers we know in fact; it is very like the Lord's Prayer transposed into another key. However, as all of us surely know, in St John's Gospel, there is no exact Lord's Prayer parallel to those we find in Matthew (6:7 - 15) and Luke ((11:1 - 4). Or is there? Look more closely!

Jesus looks up to heaven: he does this when he prays. He addresses God confidently as Father, just as he taught us to do in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven".

"May your name be glorified" means "Hallowed be your Name". It doesn't mean we praying humans are adding anything to God's eternal perfect holiness, to God's glory. Our Eucharistic worship stresses this!

Look in your Book of Common Prayer, page 356. What do we find there?

"Glory to God in the highest...
we praise you for your glory."
And of our Lord,
"For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the most high,
Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit,
In the glory of God the Father".

God is holy: when you and I pray, we look up to God and lift our hearts in praise. We know we are praying to God "in light inaccessible hid from our eyes" but also to God whom Jesus taught us to call "Abba", Father.

Our Lord knows what he asks for will be granted, because his will, and the Father's will are one: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That was Jesus' earthly ministry and it is ours. If we kept on reading to verse 15, we would find, "" Keep them safe from the Evil One", which is the way Matthew's Lord's Prayer (Ch 9) asks, "Deliver us from evil."

This is not the neat formula of the Lord's Prayer we all recite, but the content is there, just put in other words and on another occasion. But what occasion?

The Son says the "hour has come", but this prayer is timeless. When did Jesus say all this? What *was* the hour: what *was* the occasion? Can this really be the earthly human Galilean Jesus being overheard by the disciples, or are we hearing the risen Christ, or perhaps the eternal divine Son, the Word made flesh, of the first Chapter of John's Gospel? "So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence *with the glory I had in your presence before the world existed.*" As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Ah. The hour is now; right now. Jesus prays for us now as he prayed for the disciples then.

All is not straightforward: in verse 11, Jesus says, "And now I am no longer in the world." But if the Lectionary compilers had dared to let us read on to verse 13, we would hear Jesus say, "While still in the world, I say all this." Does this confuse you? Is this a post-Resurrection, pre-Ascension 'farewell address' by the risen Christ? No: it's from St John's Gospel Chapter 17, way before the trial, crucifixion, and Resurrection of our Lord beginning in Chapter 19. This hour is now, "as it was in the beginning, is NOW".

The Son asks to be glorified so that he may glorify the Father. Our Lord asks that he may be an example to us. And more: Jesus' prayer of asking is an intercession on behalf of us, that we be kept safe, but also a petition, rather like "Thy will be done." Jesus asks to be glorified so he may give eternal life to us, to all whom the Father has given him. Eternal life means knowing God, the only true God. That is what God's gift of glory is for those whom he has chosen as followers of Christ.

Wait. Hang on. Don't you hear an echo of very familiar words in St John? Haven't we met these thoughts before? Yes, at Christmas in the Prologue to John's Gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In him was life, and the life was the light of men... to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; *we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*"

Exactly. Jesus always lived the glory of the Father throughout his ministry. At a wedding in Cana in Galilee, Jesus revealed his glory to the disciples (John 2: 11). And on many other situations too. Your homework is to see for yourself: in John 11: 4, and 11: 40, and in 12: 28. There was never a time when the glory of God was not visibly present in Jesus' works, called "signs" in St John's Gospel.

Jesus prays. *But God does not answer. God does not answer in words.* God answers in our lives, lived gloriously (as the old monks said A.M.D.G.: Ad majorem Dei gloriam). "For the greater glory of God": it is the motto of Pope Francis and the Jesuits, but surely also of *our* lives?

Is this what the glory of Christ means? *That Jesus' work does not come to an end with his earthly life but in a real sense only begins with the end of that life.* In his glorification, Jesus will glorify the Father by the gift, to us, of eternal life. This gift will generate for God new children, new daughters and

sons, who will honour him as Father. And that is the promise we heard in the Christmas Gospel.

Now perhaps do we begin to understand Jesus' prayer? What is the glory of God for which our Lord prays?

Us.

We are.

The earthly Jesus, the human Jesus of Nazareth, prays as one in the divinity of Christ, and as one with the Father. He prays that the Father's will be done. He prays as one who, with the Father, will send the Spirit upon us. He prays that the glory of God shall be his and ours. He doesn't pray for the world: that will be our task, our mission. Our homework.

This subtle, beautiful prayer of our Lord should end, "as it was in the beginning, is now, as we fulfill the will of God, and "ever shall be, world without end". Live A.M.D.G.: do the will of the Father: receive the indwelling Spirit: show forth God's glory in the world. Start by praying as we began: say the Lord's Prayer.

Glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

God bless us all.

John+

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