

Gospel of John - episode 35

Chapter 17 part 2

Welcome to our sharing on John's Gospel. We continue with the Priestly Prayer of Christ from John 17. Let us read 17:1-2. "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you, and through the power over all mankind that you have given to him, let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him". So, 'the power over all mankind' - the particular act of power Jesus wants to be given through his sacrificial Death is to be allowed to give eternal life to all believers. That would prove his union with the Father, and it would prove all his enemies wrong. They will try to put the label 'criminal' onto him; and kill him in in such a way as to destroy any idea of Messiah in people's minds, thus destroying him. So, the Holy Spirit will uncover all that, as we saw in chapter 16. Everything Jesus promised in the first half of the Gospel in terms of life, light, bread and living water, can only be given after the Resurrection.

So, Jesus asks a great act of power from the Father, one they would do together, which is to recreate the humanity in Redemption. So, the Father's glory is tied to that of the Son, because if the Son accomplishes this, it will reveal God as to **who He Is, as THE GREAT I AM** to the world. The Father's acceptance of this prayer illustrates Him underwriting Jesus' work, and, of course, proves what Jesus claimed in the first half of the Gospel is true, that the Father and Son work in tandem for the good of humanity. This shows the inexplicable love of God for us. We don't do anything for him. Most of the human race doesn't show any interest; very few show any gratitude for what God has done for them, and still, we have all of this love coming from God towards us. So, God is shown to be the one who is love, life, grace and beauty, and we are shown up for the ungrateful ones that we really are.

It is in the great wonder of this Passover that these wonderful gifts and graces will be passed on from Jesus to the church. In John 10:30, we read, "the Father and I are one". In 10:38, "the Father is in me, and I in the Father". Jesus only has to close his eyes, and this communication continues inside of him. That's why I said, it's like entering into the Holy of Holies to see this intimacy between them. What we see when we contemplate the Father and Son in dialogue with each other is **THE GREAT I AM** in operation! The I am is eternal love, inexplicable love, infinite love, absolutely self-giving love, self-sacrificing love. That is His nature. Love lives by giving, giving all. God wants to share everything that He is and everything that He has with us, but we show ourselves unbelievably ungrateful. The son's part in the process is to show God's extraordinary love to humanity. In chapter 18, I will show you this at every single moment, no matter what anybody does to Jesus, Jesus' response is **ONLY LOVE**.

Sometimes love demands forgiveness, sometimes patience, or perseverance. Throughout, Jesus loves both God and neighbour, so the events of the Passion unveil him in an extraordinary way. **The I am** will be seen in the Passion and Death of Jesus! When he appears in the Resurrection, it is the final proof of all that he said and did. The Son's part is to lay down his life, to sacrifice himself and to show by all his actions that he is love. The Father's part will be to justify the Son, and therefore raise him from the dead. You will hear in the Acts of the Apostles, "you killed him, but God raised him from the dead": Acts 2:23-24.



What we are looking at is not only a union of wills between the Father and the Son, but a union of action also.

Let's go to 17: 3. Jesus asked for eternal life for us. So, what is it? "Eternal life is this. To know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent". That's what eternal life is. Eternal life means indestructible life; death cannot touch it. Even if the soul is separated from the body that eternal life is present forever. So, it is a quality of life. Jesus says, "eternal life is to know you, the only true God". We have to stop a little bit here. With his universal authority, Jesus wants to give a most precious gift to the human race, that of knowing God. Now, the verb 'to know' in John's Gospel is used in a biblical sense. It has nothing to do with intellectual information, doctrines or anything like that. It's an intimate personal relationship with God that issues forth in the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness etc. We've said that before in the final discourse. What he wants is that each one of us who are members of his Body, branches of the vine, each one of us will have the same relationship with God, the Father, **as he has**, but on our own level.

Now, he told us that already in John 15:9, where he said, "as the Father has loved me, so in the same way I have loved you, that is the way you are to love one another". So, 'to know you, the only true God, and Christ whom you have sent' - that is to have an intimate personal relationship with the Son and the Father in the Holy Spirit, therefore, a trinitarian relationship. It's never just one of the Persons of the Trinity. The Three persons operate as one. This is not head knowledge. This is the heart knowledge of lovers. It is the heart knowledge that comes from opening oneself up to the other person. This is why I've been talking to you about the necessity for all members of the Body of Christ to have a vibrant prayer life. If each one of us knew the heart of God personally and intimately, the world would change very quickly.

It's because the world doesn't see us as other Christs, that it continues in its sin, and unbelief. Jesus is aware of the fact that if his beloved disciples, members of his Mystical Body, ever reduce faith down to book knowledge, it's all over. Everyone that belongs to him must have this intimate personal relationship with God. As you are listening to me right now, if you don't have it, get on your knees and ask for it. It's not difficult. When the Lord sees that you are sincere he will give you the very special grace to open up to him. If you haven't had this intimate personal relationship, make sure you don't go to bed tonight without it. It is essential to the church's survival; if the church ever reduces itself to mere book knowledge it is easy for the world to infiltrate its thinking, and therefore, for the world to destroy the church instead of the church transforming the world.

Jesus doesn't want people just writing books or making television programmes. What he wants **is witnesses**. A witness is someone who has experienced something, and therefore, what they say is alive and authoritative in them. This intimate knowledge was promised by the prophets. Here is a little of what Jeremiah 31:31-34 said would happen at the time of Messiah. "see, the days are coming (the time of Messiah) when I will make a new covenant (which is what Jesus is doing in this Passover) ... deep within them, I will implant my law". Now, this implanting of the law is God's Word. This implanting is done in Baptism and confirmed in the sacrament of Confirmation. But it can lie dormant unless you open up to this

vibrant relationship with God. Then it will rise up into your consciousness where you actively live it, and therefore produce the fruits of the Spirit, and become a useful member of the Body of Christ.

So “deep within them, I will plant my law, writing it on their hearts”. When we have this relationship with God, Jeremiah says, “then I will be their God and they shall be my people” in fact, not just in theory. That’s what the Lord wants. This is what Jesus is praying for here in John 17. Then Jeremiah adds, “there will be no further need for neighbour to try and teach neighbour. They will all know me, the least no less than the greatest”. Anyone of any age who opens up to God experiences God opening up to them. It’s that’s simple. Jesus tells us that if we want what he has, we know how to get it.

In 17: 4, Jesus adds, “I have glorified you on the Earth; I have finished the work that you gave me to do”. Now, ‘I have glorified you’. That means I have revealed you in my ministry, and in the way I lived. I have revealed you in my teaching, and in my miracles. I was revealing you all the time, so my work is done. Now it’s for the members of the Mystical Body to continue it. “Father, it’s time for you to reveal me, to glorify me with that glory that I had with you before the world was”. The way the Father will reveal his Son in this mystery of the Passover is to raise him from the dead and lift him in the Ascension back to his right-hand where he came from. Now, at the beginning of the Gospel, in the prologue, we were told that is where Jesus came from. Now Jesus requests the completion of the journey. He descended so he needs to ascend again. Jesus indicates that he’s ready to go back to the Father because his work is done. His anxiety is for his Apostles in the immediate sense, and then his church afterwards.

In 17: 5, Jesus says, “I have made your name known to the men you took from the world to give me”. Now, these men are the Apostles. On a secondary level, they are the 72 disciples, and then all believers. But first of all, this twelve. At this moment It is only eleven until Matthias joins them. By the time John wrote his Gospel Matthias had come and gone. So, “I have made **Your Name**. This is the sacred name of God. We need to understand that the sacred name of God is unpronounceable as far as the Jewish people are concerned. Even to this day, they refer to God as **Ha-Shem**. Hashem means **The Name**. Scholars refer to God as the tetragrammaton because the sacred name has four letters: YHWH. Unfortunately, because we use the Jerusalem Bible, the sacred name is there all the time. I won’t pronounce it because we shouldn’t. We should simply say **THE LORD**, or in Hebrew, **Adonai**.

That is the correct reverential way to speak about God. But when Jesus says, “I have revealed your name”, he says, “I have revealed **you**, because in the Bible, the name is the person. If I call you by your name, I’m not just calling a name, I’m calling a person. When Jesus revealed the name, he was revealing **the Person of God the Father**. This was very important because when Jesus came on Earth, the Jewish religion had locked the Presence of God in the innermost part of the temple where nobody could go into the actual Presence except the high priest once a year. So, I say that God was in a maximum security prison! There were three veils separating God from the people. I like to explain the Incarnation as God breaking out of His maximum security prison and saying, ‘No, I want to be among the people. These are my people. I made them. I want to be among the people’. The extraordinary thing is that the Jewish leadership were scandalised by that. God should be kept in his little box!

We have to be very careful as Christians that we don't keep God in a little box called the tabernacle, that we allow Jesus to get out among his people and allow the people to come to know him personally so that Jesus is walking our streets in us as living tabernacles, and that Jesus is living in our homes, hidden in the tabernacle of the family. That is what he wants. Proverbs 8:31 says that God desires to be with the children of men. He wants to be among us. So, Jesus revealed this about God, and much more, all of which is in the first half of the Gospel. He was able to do this for the people who had committed themselves to him. Those closest to him understood him the most. We see that in John who was a contemplative and understood Jesus much more than the other Apostles did. Jesus says something very beautiful about the Apostles, and of course, the 72 disciples, and all the others who believe in him. He says, "Father, they were yours" - because God is the creator of the universe. Everything is His!

Then in 17:6 Jesus continued, "Father, you gave them to me, and now I'm about to give them back to you". God created the whole of humanity, but it rebelled against Him dirtying his clothes with sin. Jesus, the Son, came to the Earth and purified us in Redemption, washed us in his precious blood, so that the third Person of the Blessed Trinity can come and reside in us. Then 17:7 says, "Father, now I can give them back to you". 'I've cleaned them up'. We are the Father's gift to the Son. Only after Redemption, the Son gifts us back to the Father again in this mutual giving. This mutual giving of the Father and the Son is also glorifying each one and manifests the extraordinary love that God is: divine, eternal, infinite, unreachable, inexplicable love. What God wants is that **love will reign on the Earth**.

We've dealt with that in the final discourse. If love reigns on the Earth, everything that God wants to happen will come to pass. If love doesn't reign on the Earth, it will disintegrate. Jesus is very concerned about his disciples. They must get it. They must understand. The disciples are like a bride that is being prepared for her wedding. The wedding of the Lamb is a major topic in the Book of Revelation. We will deal with that in another episode. Here I would just like you to keep the memory of God being inexplicable, infinite, absolute, eternal, love. When we come to Him in prayer, it doesn't matter what condition we're in, we are meeting this ineffable, infinite love. If we have any sense, we will throw ourselves into the arms of God and surrender.

Thank you for listening. God bless you.

INTERVAL

We continue with Chapter 17:6, Jesus said, speaking to his Father, "I have made your name known to the men you took from the world to give to me. They were yours and you gave them to me. They have kept your Word. Now at last they know that all that you have given to me indeed comes from you". I have told you already in the final discourse that the church constitutes the bride that will be involved in the wedding of the Lamb when Jesus makes this new covenant between God and humanity in his own blood. She is being prepared for the marriage of the Lamb, which you will find in Revelation 19:7-9. Here, Jesus is saying something extremely important. "I have made your name known. Now, the name, as I've told you before, means the person. In other words, to put it very simply, it is essential that the church must know God, and **know the name of the true God**, because if we don't know him and don't know His name, we



cannot those who pass this Name on to others. The Prophet Isaiah in 52:6 gave an important message: I'm just going to give you a summary of it. He says: "My people will know my name. On that day (when Messiah comes) they will understand that **it is I** who says, **I am here. It is I!**". In other In other words, it is only when the Messiah comes that the people of God will realise that **THE GREAT I AM**, the Person behind that unpronounceable name, is actually speaking to them. I want to remind you of what Jesus himself said in John 8:58 when addressing the Sanhedrin, the highest leaders of the land: "**before Abraham ever was, I am**". So, Jesus revealed himself clearly as the I am; the Father is the I am and the Holy Spirit is the I am, it's a trinity of persons. It is extremely important that the church grasps the reality that she alone on the Earth knows who the God is. We can see 20 centuries after these events that there are still pagan religions upon the Earth. There are still people who do not know the true God and follow false gods.

Now, if I was to give you all the references that John has already given to you, I'd be giving you a summary of the first half of the Gospel. I will just simply say that in chapters 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, and 15, Jesus has revealed this to us already. So, what he is doing here is expressing it in intercession to the Father. That's all. So, it is essential that the bride will know her husband, that she will know who it is that she is covenanted to. Otherwise, she cannot pass on this mystery to the rest of the world. It's not possible. You can only give what you have. So, the church and each individual who is baptised into Christ and who's innermost being is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16), must know who God is. We must know the Person of the Father has been revealed through his Son, and that all of Jesus's revelation in the Gospels reveals the true God. We can be completely sure of that.

Now, to go into the background of this, you have to go back to Moses at the time of the Exodus. Moses asked God, 'tell me your name'. 'I need to know who you are. If I'm to go back to Egypt and call a whole people out of Egypt; if I have to tell people who are mixed up with false gods that you are special, that you are **the only God**, I have to give them a name'. God said, **EGO EIMI; I am**. The revelation of the great I am goes right back to Moses. The chosen people referred to God as the tetragrammaton, because the sacred name has four letters in it, YHWH, and they didn't put in the consonants. It was the unpronounceable name. To this day, they refer to the Lord as **Adonai**, meaning **the Lord**, or **Hashem, The Name**. But we have the great privilege of not just knowing Him, but having a personal relationship with him. Of course, it's only when Jesus is lifted up on the cross and then lifted up in glory that this Christian witness to **the great I am** will be given to the rest of the world.

In 17:7-8, Jesus says, "now at long last, they know that everything has come from you". That reminds you of course, of when the disciples said to Jesus in 16:29, "now you're no longer speaking in metaphors, we actually understand, and we know that you come from God". Jesus said, "you mean you believe at last?" The wonderful thing is, even though Jesus knew they would all go into crisis and fail him in the terrible trial about to begin; in spite of that Jesus knows that he has planted this knowledge in the depths of their being. So, he says to the Father, "actually, at long last, they do know that all that you have given to me comes indeed from you". Now, there is something behind that that you mightn't suspect. If you go back to the Synoptic Gospels, you will hear the Scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus of working miracles through the power of Beelzebub. In other words, they accused him of using Satanic power: Cf. Lk 11:15

So, when Jesus says that the disciples know that everything he said and did came from God, it means that they know the truth. It's very important. At long last they have the truth. Jesus has given them the knowledge that they need to go forward. Now, because they know that everything Jesus said and did comes indeed from the great I am, that it comes from God the Father... because of that and because of the fact that Jesus is going to give them the Holy Spirit to indwell them, they will be able to go out and teach the world with authority, as Jesus taught Israel with authority. They won't be like the scribes. They won't be needing to quote one another and give long arguments. They will just be able to state the facts.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the facts, and he did not argue with anybody. He just proclaimed the truth. He got a fantastic result because he was teaching with authority, and the Holy Spirit was residing within him. So, if they know that Jesus is really sent by God, they know also that they must obey him. Now, in the Farewell Discourse Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my Commandments". When they reach the point of knowing that Jesus came from God, and this knowing is interior, they grasp this in the depth of their being. It is then they can go out and proclaim Jesus for who he is.

Since this has happened, Jesus goes to the second part of the wonderful Priestley prayer, to intercede for the disciples. Here is 17:17: "now at last, they know that all you have given to me comes indeed from you. For I have given them the teaching that you gave to me, and they have truly accepted this". This is the acceptance in the depths of their being that enables them to go out and preach with authority. "They have truly accepted this that I came from you, and they have believed that it was you who sent me". So, there you have John giving you a very clear statement that, in spite of all the reactions the Apostles give during the Passion of Jesus, they have this in the revelation depths of their being.

So, they will recover and they will be able to receive all that the Lord wants to give them, as we will see when we go on in the text. Jesus says, in 17:9 "I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those that you have given to me because they belong to you". **They belong to God!** "All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine, and **in them I am glorified**". So now Jesus turns to intercede for the disciples who are going to continue his mission to the ends of the Earth. At a later stage in the prayer, he will intercede for the rest of us. But it is absolutely essential that he pray this group because if they don't come through, the rest of us are never going to get it. It's a bit like saying, 'I'm praying for the teachers in the school. I'm not actually praying for the students'. Because if the teachers get it right, the students will get it, because the teachers will take care of the students. Or you could say, I'm praying for the doctors in the hospital. I'm not actually praying for the patients, because if the doctors get it right, the patients will be okay. That's the way Jesus is thinking. If I pray the Apostles through, the rest of the world will be okay.

Therefore, what he deals with the priority of getting the foundations of the Kingdom of God stable. Jesus has given them all the training that they need, and protection during his own lifetime. Now they need protection going forward. That protection will come through their relationship with the Blessed Trinity and the indwelling of the Spirit. In other words, they must live the reality of the I am amid the contamination of the world, but they must not pick up this contamination! That's like saying you're living through a time of pandemic, and you want to make sure you don't get the infection. It's one thing to pick up a physical

infection but quite another matter to pick up spiritual infection, because spiritual infection is very difficult to see, or to discern. It's also very difficult to deal with, and it will have done massive damage before anybody would see it. Jesus wants to keep them secure, so, he says, "I want you to keep them true to your name. I am in the world no longer, but they are in the world, and I'm coming to you. So, I want you to keep those you have given to me true to your name. In other words, he's praying that the church will always stay faithful to the truth that has been revealed to her and stay faithful to the lifestyle that the Lord has given to her, because if she falls for the infection of the world, it will be dreadful.

John also wrote some letters to the church. Here is a taste of what he said in 1John 2:15-17, where he addresses the Christians at the end of the first century: "you must not love this passing world or anything that is in the world. Because the love of the Father cannot be in any person who loves the world". Now, John is completely clear about this. Loving the world means that you are thinking the way the world thinks, and acting the way the world acts, that you identify with it. He says, "the love of the Father cannot be in a person who is immersed in the world. It's not possible. He continues, "because nothing the world has to offer - which is the sensual body and the lustful eye and the pride of possessions - none of that comes from the Father". I'm not reading every word of it; understand that this world is passing away.

Everything in this world is ephemeral. It will pass away. **Sic transit gloria mundi**. You can be in a thriving city, and then a volcano bursts, and the city is destroyed. You remember the city of Pompeii? Or you can have an earthquake, and the whole thing is destroyed and you may have put everything into that. That's what John is saying: 'put all your attention and your energy into what will last forever, not into something that will disappear'. Therefore, What the Lord is very interested in is that the Apostles will be protected as they do their mission in the world, while not actually of the world. It's extremely important. If they know the name of the Lord, if they call upon the name of the Lord, then the Lord will be with them. It is very important for us to remember that if you call upon the name of Jesus, he becomes present to us. If you call the name of the Father, he is present also, and therefore, calling on him in vain is a great sin. Let's look at Proverbs 18:10. "the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and those who are upright run to it, and they find their safety there". This is what Jesus says in this prayer, that if the church in all its members would run to the Lord as our strong tower, we will be safe spiritually from the contamination of the world. All future beloved disciples find their security there.

Now, there will be an incident in chapter 18 where Jesus will surrender into the hands of his enemies and allow himself to be arrested and taken off for the terror of the Passion. John points out something that the others don't really emphasise, and that is that Jesus refused to surrender until his disciples could go free. He made absolutely certain they all left. Then he surrendered. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and those who run to it will find safety".

So, let's read 17:11-12: "I am not in the world any longer". In other words, when John wrote this, of course, Jesus was already in heaven. But if you go back to the time of the Passion, Jesus is saying, 'Look, I'm gone; in 24 hours, I'll be in heaven'. "I'm not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you". Jesus will then protect us from heaven also. The letter to the Hebrews 7:25, says that he is at the Father's side ever living to make intercession for us. "Holy Father", he said, "keep

those you have given to me true to your name". "Keep them safe, close to you, so that they may be one like us. I'll deal with the unity of the church at the last part of this prayer when he prays for unity. They may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you have given to me close to your name. I watched over them, and not one was lost except the one who chose to be lost". This is very interesting. We are talking about Jesus praying for protection for everyone; he provides everything. He provides the strong arms of the Father to protect the whole church going through the night of history. He provides this interior relationship to keep our souls completely in that river of life so that we can continue growing to perfection.

But we are people of free will, and we will always have free will. God will never, ever override our free will. Therefore, it is actually possible for us to choose to be lost. We dealt with this in chapter 3, that some people choose the darkness over the light because their deeds are evil. It has been mentioned a number of times in all the controversies that Jesus had with the leadership, but at this particular point, John is hinting that Judas Iscariot was lost, not because of anything that anybody else did. It was his own choice. We have pointed this out before, but it is very important for us to realise that Judas **was not condemned by Jesus or by the Father**. He was not condemned by the Sanhedrin. He was not condemned by anybody except himself. He chose to be lost. That is the frightening power of free will.

Thank you for listening.. Goodbye. God bless you.