

## Introduction

John 17 is part of the record of how the apostle John remembers the Lord Jesus. He remembers and He causes us to remember who Jesus is by giving us an account of what Jesus said and what He did. In this passage, we have a special glimpse at what Jesus said to the Father in the high priestly prayer in the very shadow of the cross. This is the hour of marvelous glory, of glory by unparalleled suffering, in the depth of unimaginable humiliation. As I read 17.4-8, consider how these verses direct us to the thought that “Jesus is Our Loving Teacher.”

**<sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. <sup>6</sup> "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup> For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.**

There are two hooks on which to hang all our thoughts today regarding our loving teacher: 1) His teaching has its roots in electing love, and 2) electing love comes to realization in His teaching.

### 1A. His teaching has its roots in electing love

The idea of Jesus as a teacher or prophet comes from a couple of key phrases in this section of John 17. In this role, He manifested the Father’s name (v. 6a, **I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world**), and He did so by giving out the Father’s words (v. 8a, **For I have given them the words that you gave me**).

Thus, Jesus is the Prophet long promised in the OT (Deut. 18.18, **I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him**). Like Moses, this prophet will do miracles in close association with having the words of God in his mouth, and He will be obedient in teaching all that God commands Him. Finally, He will speak to the covenant people (**he shall speak to them**). This fact brings us to the roots of His teaching in electing love. Note how Jesus speaks to the Father *for our ears* through this record in the Gospel of John; here, we learn that He teaches a particular people who are the Father’s elect.

#### 1) Those He teaches are a particular people

Jesus says they are **the people whom you gave me out of the world** (v. 6a). Of course, a bottom line fact about them is that they are sinners; they are **of the world**, they are worldly people saturated with evil. This is a reference to the fallen world, to the human family standing in rebellion against God. It refers to people who are neither willing nor able to return from the wilderness where they are lost outside of the Garden of Eden. The “world” refers to lost sinners who have lost their true humanity. By disobedience to God, lost sinners are a threat to one another; they are become inhuman. Hence, we have man’s inhumanity to man. No one wants to return to the Father’s house from which he flees. No one is able to come to God...unless the Father sweetly draws him into the kingdom (Jn. 6.44-45).

Therefore, the people that Jesus teaches are a particular people that come from the world; they are “**out of**” the world. He is not just speaking about the world in mass. Instead, He is being specific. He refers to a segment of the world, to a slice of the pie. These are people of the world, worldly, lost, sinful, sinners, but they are *particular* people from among the lost that the Father gave to Christ: **the people whom you gave me** (v. 6a). There is an unfathomable depth here because the reference is to the world across time from a vantage point before time. In other words, Jesus takes us in thought back to the pre-temporal (before time) covenant of redemption regarding

history in its entirety. Therefore, the particular people that Jesus teaches are His covenant people that the Father gave to Him to be His own, to be His family, His children, His brothers and sisters. In this covenant, Christ, the Son of God (who was with God “in the beginning” because He was God and continues to be God) agreed to a mission that would take Him into the created world as the redeemer sent by the Father (v. 8). It is because of the people God gave Him that the Father also gave Him a work to do on earth, and it is why He accomplished that work: **I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do** (v. 4).

2) The people Jesus teaches are the Father’s elect

Jesus goes on to say that the people the Father gave to Him are the people the Father originally owned in His electing love: **Yours they were, and you gave them to me** (v. 6b). Thus, the fountainhead of the eternal covenant of redemption is divine ownership. God owned a people as His very own and He gave them to Christ for their good, for their salvation. He did not give them away so that they are no longer His. No, He gave them in covenant agreement to Christ in order to save them; this is electing *love*.

Both of these points, both covenant and election, direct our thoughts to the saving work of Christ on earth for His church. Thus, the apostles are directly in view at first in the prayer (they received *His* words, v.8), but, indirectly, they represent all the “given ones” that will receive *their* words (vs. 20, 24). The apostles are the church in nuclear form.

Therefore, to save His covenant family (the church), Jesus became flesh, truly and fully man, while continuing to be truly and fully God. We get a good summary of this work, which is priestly work, from the writer of Hebrews:

**<sup>11</sup> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>12</sup> saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." <sup>13</sup> And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." <sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery...<sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people** (Heb.2.11-17).

John and Hebrews show that Jesus partook of flesh and blood to fulfill the eternal covenant and to give His flesh and blood as merciful and faithful high priest for the sins of the particular people God gave to Him. He came to earth and went to the cross to save the Father’s elect.

Now with a sense of importance, we should note that this work that arises from the counsel of God in the eternal covenant involves, Jesus tells us here, *teaching*: manifesting the Father by giving out His words. In sum, Jesus is our loving teacher and His teaching has such love because it has its roots in electing love. This fact about our Savior should open a new window for us on teaching and learning in the Christian family. The idea of a new window takes us to the next main point.

## 2A. Electing love comes to realization in His teaching

As we survey this aspect of the story, it should be evident to us that there is an objective side and a subjective side to the Lord’s prophetic, teaching, ministry. This objective-subjective distinction refers to the content there for our learning (this is the objective side) in relation to our actual learning of that content (this is the subjective side). It simply means that He teaches content in such a way as to insure our learning of it. Let us take a closer look at the teaching of our Lord that brings electing love to realization on earth.

### 1B. Objective side

The objective dimension of His teaching comes out in two places that we noted earlier regarding the Father’s name and the Father’s words in 6a and 8a:

**<sup>6</sup> "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me..."**

<sup>8</sup> For I have given them the words that you gave me...

The reference to the Father's *name* speaks of the attributes of God that set Him apart as God. Jesus put the name of God out in front of the human family for all to see. He perfectly fulfilled the spirit and intent of the third commandment regarding God's name; He fulfilled the commandment in a positive way. He embodied the revelation of God. He is the express image of God (Heb. 1.3, **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**). He revealed God in human terms as **the exact imprint of his nature**. Thus, in His very presence, He manifested the Father's name. As the Word of John 1, He is the speech, voice, the articulation, and revelation of the Father. He came to earth to be the house of God, the place of the presence of God (Jn. 1.51) and in that capacity He finished his work, which was precisely the work the Father gave Him to do. That is how He glorified the Father on earth in this accomplishment (Jn. 17.4).

The content of His manifestation of the Father is not only an embodiment, but significantly, it comes in the form of words. Jesus teaches by His person, work, *and words*. Thus, He says, **I have given them the words that you gave me** (17.8a). When we think about the words of Christ that we have in the Gospels and the words He gave us through the apostles, we should hear them and read them with a special awareness that these words are the very words of the Father and they are saving words because they bring divine electing love to realization on earth.

Of course, we must consider the words of the OT likewise to be the words of Christ to which He directs us; they too reveal the Father. Thus, the sixty-six books of the Bible have a profound quality about them because the words of Scripture flow from the fountainhead of electing love and the eternal covenant of redemption. In the teaching of Christ, we have the very words of God that manifest the Father's name for the saving of our lives, body and soul, now and forevermore.

## 2B. Subjective side

If it were not for the electing love of the Father and the covenantal-electing love of the Savior, then the words of God would shine on the sinful world like the sun shining on the blind. Objectively speaking, the revelation of God is there, it is clear, bright, marvelous, and glorious. However, blind eyes cannot see the glory. For fallen sinners, this is an impossible situation. Jesus came to "His own" as light and life, but they received Him not (Jn. 1). Unless God grants a new birth, no one can see or enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3.3-20; vs. 19-20, they hate the light and will not come to it).

Now it is at this point of despair, of man's utter helplessness, calcified inability, and determined unwillingness, that Jesus is a loving teacher. By His accomplished work, He makes it certain that the Father's elect come to know God in a saving and sanctifying way.

He insures the teaching of His covenant family. That is, subjectively speaking, He insures their actual learning. He sees to it that what He teaches becomes what His people learn from God in the inner perception of their hearts. He gives eyes to the blind so they can see, perceive, and know the Father personally and know His words truthfully. Consider John 17.3 with 7-8:

**And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (v.3).**

<sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup> For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me (vs. 7-8).

That is, He works with His people in such a way by the Spirit and over time as to insure that they come to a saving and sanctifying knowledge of the Father.

1) Saving knowledge includes knowing God and Jesus Christ. This is not some kind of knowing about God; it refers to personal knowledge, to knowing the person. He says to the Father, "the eternal life that He gives to the given ones (v. 2) means, "**they know you the only true God**

and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Furthermore, Jesus tells us that they know that the words of God entrusted to Christ come from the Father (v. 7, **Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you**). They know that Scripture is God’s truth and that Christ is God’s sent one (v. 8, **For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me**). Believing is inseparable from knowing and both are inseparable from obeying (v. 8, they know...they believe; v. 7, **and they have kept your word**).

2) Sanctifying knowledge is knowledge that grows over time. This too is an outflow and realization of electing love. There is no such thing as a stagnant Christian. No Dead Sea Christians exist. Granted, we may have times of stagnation or times of spinning our wheels, but even our sanctification depends fundamentally and ultimately on Him and not on us. To be sure, He considers how we use the means of grace He commands us to use, and He may allow us to go down wrong paths and into stagnant waters for a time. Nevertheless, through trials and stormy waters, and sometimes chastening us by the consequences of our negligence, He causes us to grow in grace and knowledge. By His death on the cross in the place of His covenant family, He secured both ways of our coming to know God, both our coming to know Him in our salvation and our coming to know Him in our sanctification.

Without question, Jesus is our loving teacher. His teaching has its roots in electing love and His electing love comes to sure realization in His teaching. Amen!

What shall we then say to these things?

### 1) I need Him

Without His covenantal love, I would still be lost in the world; I am undone; I am a willful sinner. I need the electing sovereign who fulfilled the covenant of grace with perfect obedience to save sinners. O, Lord Jesus, I need you.

### 2) I own Him

This is the further step of appropriation. Here you partake of His body and blood symbolically. Thus, you own Him as your very own; you commit yourself to live under His sovereign authority as your teacher, and you do so gladly because of His abounding love. Thus, in prayer you may say, O Lord Jesus, I commit myself to be a learner at your feet in a down to earth and actualized way. I am awed at the fact that teaching brings the eternal covenant of redemption to realization in history, in my personal history. O Lord, I commit myself gladly to you.

### 3) I own His family

How can you love as Christ loves? How can you apply His electing love to your duty of love? One way is to love the unlovely as He does.

How can you submit to Him as loving teacher in a practical way? You do so by dialogue for fullest possible leaning and for living, by dialogue with others in the church and with the pastor. This is how He taught and teaches. In this way, you own Him and His for His honor and glory.

This too becomes a prayer in the very partaking and from deep within your hearts. You can each personalize this sense of family by the prayer: O Lord Jesus I own your family as my family; help me to love them as you love me, help me to love them in an edifying way in the truth of your words.