

## Remembering Our Great High Priest (Jn 17.1-26), Part 3

### Our Priest as Obedient Son (Jn 17.1c)

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#### Introduction

Today, I am continuing a series of communion messages on the view of Jesus that John gives us in chapter 17 of his Gospel. The title of the series is “Remembering Our Great High Priest.” We come now to the last part of verse 1 (1c, **Jesus...said, Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you**). When we preach communion remembrances, we give special priority to the gospel remembrances, the Gospels of the NT, in order to focus in a distinct way on the Lord Jesus. Approaching verse 17.1c in this way is like putting on sunglasses that color everything we see. We put on the “remember me” glasses and they cause us to see things we might not otherwise see, or to accent things we might not otherwise accent. These glasses take us from blurred to clear focus for communion remembering.

For example, this text (and John 17 as a whole) is a *locus classicus* (a classic text, an important location, a key place in Scripture) on the extent of the atonement, which seeks to answer the question, “for whom did Christ die?” The extent question is by and large an emphasis on the nature of the death of Christ as a priestly offering. If we approach the text wearing “nature of the atonement” glasses then our focus could easily be the glory of the atonement or the glory of our Lord’s priestly offering. The outline of the passage beginning with 1c could easily be: His offering is glorious, sacrificial, covenantal, and effectual as we move down in thought to include verse 2. These are good thoughts and they help us wrestle with the nature of the death of Christ, with the nature of the offering He presented to God as a priest described in this text.

However, if we approach the text wearing “remember me” glasses, then our emphasis shifts from concentration on the high priest’s offering to the high priest. It means that we look at the passage with our eyes focused on the one who made this glorious, sacrificial, covenantal, and effectual priestly offering. In this way, we come to the heart and core of communion preaching and communion remembering.

If we come to the text seeking to remember the Lord Jesus in a distinct way, what title can we give to the passage and what outline emerges from the text? The title is “Our Priest as Obedient Son.” As to the outline, no outline is final, but this one seems to move in the right direction: our priest, the obedient Son submits to the Father’s will (for redemption and glory, for humiliation and exaltation) and seeks the Father’s glory (His glory is for the greater goal of glorifying the Father).

#### 1A. The Obedient Son Submits to the Father’s Will

We do not want to lose sight of the fact that this chapter records a high priestly prayer and that it is as our great high priest that Jesus is the obedient Son who submits to the Father’s will.

On the surface of these words (of 17.1c) is a statement of fact: the hour has come. It is time for something to happen. However, we should note some things that show us that this is much more than a mere statement of fact regarding the timing of an event.

1) First, this is a statement of fact addressed to God in heaven (lifting His eyes to heaven, He said...), to God almighty, maker of heaven and earth, the God of the ages, who is ruler of history and all its time sequences and happenings. Hence, He is saying, “this hour is your hour; this time is your appointed time, the time you have planned, and I submit to your plan.” It is “the” hour, *the* appointed hour.

2) Second, this is a statement of fact addressed by Jesus to the Father. This is no ordinary statement of timing because Jesus speaks of Himself in relation to the Father in heaven as “your Son.” In other words, Jesus addresses the Father in unique way from within a unique relationship.

Therefore, the acknowledgment of the hour is much more than a bare statement of fact; it is a statement of submission to the Father’s will. It is a short version of the commitment Jesus expressed earlier as He saw the hour approaching and was exceedingly troubled:

**<sup>27</sup> "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name" (Jn 12.27-28).**

The place of the question marks in this passage help us get at the depth of our Lord’s tension in the fullness of His true humanity. He addresses the Father twice, and by locating where the questions occur, we can put our finger on a consistent reading. Now, in a consistent reading, if we put a question mark after “Father, save me from this hour,” then we should put one after “Father, glorify your name.” However, that does not work for the second address to the Father, and this leads us to conclude that there is only one question, “What shall I say?” More can be said to make this point stick, but for now here is the point based on one question: Jesus gives two answers and they reveal the depth of His soul trouble. First, we have “now is my soul is exceedingly troubled. And what shall I say? I shall say with every ounce of self-preservation in my being... in the face of the looming darkness of suffering... that I sense here in the shadow of the cross..., ‘Father, save me from this hour!’” Second, Jesus commits Himself to the hour of suffering on the cross with resolve and determined purpose when He says, “but this is what I must say, it is for this purpose that I have come to this hour, therefore, from the depth of my heart, I must say, ‘Father, I submit to your will to receive glory in this way, Father, glorify your name!’”

These are astounding words. God has come to this earth taking the form of human flesh and blood. He is fully God and fully man. He is God the Son. Therefore, it is as God, as the eternal all-glorious, perfect, immutable God the Son that Jesus entered into the realities of human life and experience as a man to face the greatest suffering that any man could ever face. That was His purpose before the incarnation, before He took flesh and blood. His purpose was to take flesh and blood because His people, His brothers and sisters, His children partook of flesh and blood and they needed a Savior:

**For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <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 (Heb 2.10-15).**

The writer of Hebrews gives us much about Christ as our high priest and he gives us commentary on John 17. Here, in Hebrews 2, he tells how fitting it was that God who made all things for Himself (by whom and for whom all things exist) bring many sons and daughters to glory. He tells us how fitting it was that in saving them, He would do it by making the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. The founder, of course, is Jesus. He is not ashamed of us; He is not ashamed to praise God in our midst. He is not ashamed to sing the praises of the Father in our midst. He is our singing Savior; He is our singing sovereign (He is our example for public worship). In this context, the writer tells us why Jesus took flesh and blood in the incarnation. He did this because His children, His people, His covenant brothers and sisters partook of flesh and blood (that is why He “partook of the same things”). Why did He become God incarnate in flesh and blood in union with His brothers and sisters? It was to go through death on the cross to destroy the evil one, the devil, and to deliver his brothers and sisters from

slavery in sin. Marvelously, we were His brothers and sisters before He came into the world. He came with the resolute purpose to take our flesh and blood, fully and truly, in order to die for us and to deliver us from slavery in sin.

**My sins, o the bliss of this glorious thought  
My sins, not in part but the whole  
Were nailed to the cross  
And I bear them no more  
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

Therefore, the Lord Jesus (our risen Lord, universal sovereign, and Sabbath king) is “Fairest Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, Son of God, and Son of Man.” He is all these things and more in working our redemption because He is the obedient submissive Son as our high priest. He does more than acknowledge the fact that the hour has come; He acknowledges that the hour has come from the Father’s hand and thus He places Himself for life and death into the Father’s hand with complete submission: Father this is your hour, and I am your Son, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do your will O God my heavenly Father (cf. Heb 10.7). What a joy to think of our high priest in this way as the obedient Son, but there is more here: the obedient Son seeks the Father’s glory.

## 2A. The Obedient Son Seeks the Father’s glory

Interestingly, in both John 12 and 17, the ideas of obedience and suffering converge with the idea of glorification. In John 12, Jesus submits to the hour of deepest trouble by resolutely saying, “**Father, glorify your name.**” In John 17, Jesus commits Himself to the hour that has come by saying, “**glorify your son, that the Son may glorify you.**”

1) We have here what some people call the paradox of glory. Paradoxically, Jesus submits to the deepest conceivable humiliation, the suffering of the cross, by saying, glorify your son. How can the cross be the place of glory? How can Jesus look at it this way by seeking to submerge the humiliation in a display of glory? The reason that Jesus can focus on the shame of the cross and submit to it as the place of His own glory is because there His perfection as God the Son comes to expression in a public, matchless, and permanent way. There He displays in the eyes of a fallen world, in the presence of angels, and for time and eternity His obedience, His righteousness, holiness, justice, grace, and truth. There love and mercy, loving-kindness, flow from His head, hands and feet. There He shows in an unparalleled way that He is the embodiment of righteousness, justice, and wisdom for us. Paul pulls some of these things together in 1 Corinthians 1.27-31:

**But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."**

2) However, we must not miss the relationship here between a subordinate goal and an ultimate goal. Wonderfully, even perhaps surprisingly, the glory He seeks as our great high priest is a subordinate goal. That means that receiving glory and displaying glory in His obedience as the Son of God has a greater goal beyond it. The goal that Jesus had in front of Him that took all other goals into it as the end of all ends was the goal of glorifying the Father.

Seeking His own glory has a greater goal beyond it of “glory to God in the highest.” This fact leaps off the page. Seeking the glory of the Father is the Son’s chief and ultimate end. It is what He seeks above all other goals; every other goal He had is inferior to this superior and chief goal, to glorify His Father. Every other goal is a subordinate goal in relation to this ultimate goal. Glorifying the Father is the Son’s ultimate goal in His coming, His life, His ministry of proclaiming the gospel by word and deed, and it is the ultimate goal of His death. This is what

sustained our Lord when He was overwhelmed with apprehension of the darkness of Calvary. This is what guided His steps each day of His life. As the obedient Son, He organized everything in His life in accord with the great, chief, ultimate, and singular goal of all goals to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

In the end, He will deliver up His kingdom to God that God the Father may be all in all. **(When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor 15.28)**. As the redeemer of the Father's elect, the obedient Son and high priest displays the glory of the Father in the perfection of all His attributes, revealing them in a matchless and permanent way. Through learning obedience as a Son, Jesus displays the wisdom, power, holiness, righteousness, wisdom, knowledge, and truth of God both as to His attributes and His being (cf. the WSC 4, God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth).

To Him be all glory now and forevermore. Amen.

What then shall we say to these things?

1) I need Him

I acknowledging my sin, my failure to image God and to glorify Him as I should. I need the body and blood that Jesus partook of and gave on my behalf. I need the benefits that flow from His saving death on the cross.

As a prayer: O Lord Jesus, I need you.

2) I own Him

I own Him as my priest, my mediator, clinging for forgiveness, trusting His priestly work; I commit myself to living with this great, chief, ultimate, and final goal ever in front of me: to gloryify God and enjoy Him forever.

As a prayer: O Lord Jesus, I cling to you as my very life.

3) I own His family

I own His brothers and sisters as my brothers and sisters. There is one loaf, Christ, and we who are many are one body in Him. To partake of Him, I must also commit to love for His family. I have to keep asking myself, "how can I get out of myself and my selfishness to love others in the Lord?"

As a prayer: O Lord Jesus, I own your family as my family and I commit myself to you and to them to love them as you love me.