

With Him Where He is (Jn. 17.24)  
WestminsterReformedChurch.org  
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12-14-2008

**Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**

### Introduction

In our last message on John 17, we commented on the fact that Jesus has a universal element in His prayer. He speaks of goals that are not only for His disciples but also for the world. In a word, the self-sacrificing consecration and petition of Christ has the certain goal of saving the world: <sup>21</sup> **that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me...that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me** (17.21-23). The idea is that *in the future* when the church becomes one and enters heaven *that will be the salvation of the world, the salvation of the fallen sinful world*. The accent is on the sinfulness of the human family; it is not on every individual, but on the sinful family. Thus, the salvation that Christ secures by His prayer reveals His grace in an astounding way. By grace, He will in fact save the world. So, for communion remembering last time, we spoke about Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Coming now to the text for this communion service, we should note that Jesus leaves the discussion of the salvation of the world and moves to a focus on those that the Father gave Him: **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory** (17.24). With these words in our ears, we come to the sacrament with the primary goal of remembering the Lord Jesus. We come to remember Him in a distinct way because we tend to forget. It is amazing, is it not, that one of the church sacraments would have remembering the Lord Jesus as a primary element? Granted, it is the case that we think about Him every week in every message for truly He is the theme of every page in the book. Yes, but in doing this, we have to attend to things that are to the left and right of the center. We always have the foundation in mind when we look at a building, but we do focus on various parts of the superstructure in order to see how they relate to the foundation, which by analogy is Christ. Thus, we tend to step off the path, to have blurred vision, and to lose focus. Therefore, we need to have regular refresher courses on Christ as the object of the Christian's affection. We have a refresher course every time we come to the Lord's Table. Today, we will remember Him praying for us that we may be "with Him where He is." We will focus on remembering the Lord Jesus by consideration of three things: the posture He takes in this prayer, the affection He expresses in this prayer, and the basis He pleads in this prayer.

### 1A. The posture He takes in this prayer

Jesus begins this petition by orienting Himself to God as a son to his father. This is one of six times that He addresses God as Father in the high priestly prayer. By this address, He takes the position of a son. He acknowledges His sonship and the subordinate place He occupies before God, before the greatness of God. This is covenantal language that speaks of the part that Jesus plays in the *pactum salutis* (the pact of salvation or the saving agreement). His posture in prayer indicates the distance between a father and son; there is authority on one hand and submission on the other. God is in authority and Jesus is under authority. Of course, the use of "Father" in speaking to the Creator of the universe also indicates closeness because father is a term of warmth; if there is respect, it is warm respect; it is loving respect.

The covenant relationship of Father and Son, particularly, of the Son to His Father, reminds us that each member of the covenant keeps His agreement. Thus, throughout His life on earth in covenant obedience, Jesus knew that the Father always hears His requests and grants them (John 11:41-42, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me). Psalm 2 teaches this point (Psalm 2:6-12 <sup>6</sup> "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." <sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. <sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your

heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession...<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling...Blessed are all who take refuge in him). This Son always does the will of His Father and this Father always grants the requests of His Son.

## 2A. The affection He expresses in this prayer

Now, we turn our attention to the word desire. This is a translation of a word that may mean will or desire. "Desire" is a good translation because of the entire context of prayer. Thus, the subject is the Lord's strong desire in prayer or His deep desire driven petition. To translate "I desire" is better than "I ask" or "I petition." He is asking and He is petitioning, but He does so from the depths of His being with strong desire. We should note that the use of "desire" here does not represent some kind of weakness. It is a way of making petition or asking for something in prayer. It expresses the depth of the prayer; it is from deep within His heart. His prayer embodies a deep and strong desire.

The way that Jesus states His desire reveals the remarkable depth of His affection for you and me who walk with Him by faith. For He says, **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am.** Note three signs of His affection.

### 1) His affection is individual and personal

The objects of His desire are the particular brothers and sisters that the Father gave to Him in the eternal covenant. Along with the apostles the people in view are those **whom you have given me**. It is actually quite difficult to grasp the notion of affection for people in some general and conditional way. The affection He has is not lavished upon people in general but upon no one in particular; His affection is not based on the condition that we give ourselves to Him. Indeed, it is eminently personal regarding individual persons whom the Father gave to Him so that Jesus would give them eternal life by giving them knowledge of God and thus faith (Jn. 17.2-3, 8).

### 2) His affection is beneficial

Wonderfully, saying "I want them **with me**" says much more than saying "I want to be with them." If He said He wanted to be with us that would be an encouraging fact and a marvelous thought; it would be something He desires and the answer to the prayer would be His blessing; He would be the beneficiary. He would receive the benefit. But that is not what we have here in the words of our Lord. He speaks to the Father about His desire to have us with Him.

Think of the difference between Jesus being with His covenant family and the covenant family being with Him in an illustration of being present with someone in the hospital. When my wife was in intensive care with a virus, I would go to see her, sometimes in the middle of the night. When she was totally out of it, I realized that I could be with her without her being with me. What would it mean to say to her, "Patricia, I miss you, I want you with me?" She was with me in one sense but not with me in another more important sense: she did not know me; she was asleep and on heavy drugs. To be with me means that she is aware of me, conscious that I am there. She can look up at me and see me. For her to be with me would mean that she is back to health again. That is what Jesus promises to His family of brothers and sisters: He wants us with Him in health healed in body by the resurrection. The Lord Jesus is speaking about being with Him in restoration so that we are aware of Him, conscious that He is there, we can know Him, see Him, and behold His glory (**Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory**).

The day is coming when we shall be like Him for we shall see Him: **Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is** (1 Jn. 3.2). Jesus promised this in the Sermon on the Mount: **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God** (Mat. 5.8). For all of us who trust in Him down through time to see Him means that we must be present with Him in resurrection bodies. We will behold His glory when the very creation is delivered into the freedom of the glory of the children of God: <sup>18</sup> **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation...itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8.18-21). Paul looks ahead here to our restoration by our resurrection: <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8.22-23). He stated the same thing earlier in Romans 8: <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (10-11).

### 3) His desire is emphatic

It seems that Jesus is redundant and repetitive when He says these words that are truly precious: **that they...may be with me where I am**. The strong affection of His deep desire is such that He has to overstate His point and to make it with an exclamation point. He is being wonderfully emphatic; His is giving vent to His affection.

Thus, with personal, beneficial, emphatic desire, Jesus shows us that He holds us in His heart with great affection. He is a tender, loving, and affectionate Savior.

### 3A. The basis He pleads in this prayer

His plea is based on covenantal love: "**glory that you have given me**" and "**because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**" Jesus speaks here of a giving from the Father to the Son, a giving that has its roots in love that goes back to the foundation of the world. As in many places in this prayer, Jesus returns to the plan of salvation that transcends time for He tells us that the giving love of the Father for the Son, goes back to eternity past "before" the foundation of the world was put in place. In other words, go back in time to the very beginning of the world in the six days of creation recorded in Genesis 1-2: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth shaping things in stages so that where nothing existed "outside" of God, the creation came to be. It was not "out of nothing" but "into nothing." It is hard to find the right words. We have to stretch our imaginations to the maximum to try to take this into our thoughts: before the beginning, the Father loved the Son and gave Him glory. How can there even be something before the beginning? We have to be speaking about the beginning of every created thing, the universe, sun, earth, moon, oceans, land masses, mountains, valleys, animal life, and the creation of male and female as His image bearers. He gives us a succinct reference point for every conceivable thing. He gives us a center, an epicenter. He reveals a purpose for which everything exists and toward which everything moves through space and time.

What is this epicenter? Toward what goal does everything move? Everything moves toward the singular goal of the glory of Christ. His glory is for the glory of the Father: He seeks glorification in order to glorify the Father (Jn. 17.2: **Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you**).

This glory was given to our Lord before the foundation of the world as a promise. It was His and given to Him as an inheritance. As such, this glory was "future" before the beginning and when history began, it remained something future. Thus, as we noted earlier, in the OT, the Lord spoke to David prophetically calling him His Son and promising Him the nations as His inheritance (Ps. 2). Now, in our text, Jesus speaks in terms of His position as the incarnate Son of God. He speaks within the creation, within space and time, and specifically in the shadow of the cross. Remarkably, this glory is still in the future because of what He said in John 17.5: **And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed**. We come to the outer limits of our ability to grasp this teaching. Who is the man standing there in the shadow of the cross that had glory in the very presence of God before times eternal?

Therefore, we learn something basic from this text, namely, that no one knows the Son but the Father and we have to do what all the angels do: worship the Son (**Hebrews 1:6-9, Let all God's angels worship him.**) <sup>7</sup> Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." <sup>8</sup>

But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions). This anointing took place as a result of the love of Jesus for righteousness and as a result of His hatred of wickedness. The conduct in view is the attitude and action of Jesus during His life on earth in faithful fulfillment of the "before" time plan of salvation.

When did He receive this glorious anointing with the oil of gladness beyond all His brothers and sisters in the new Israelite family? Clearly, the glory of His resurrection is the glory that Jesus speaks about here in this prayer. The book of Hebrews helps us meditate on this fact: (Hebrews 1:3-6 After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? <sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him"). The day of His begetting is resurrection day (Acts 2.30-36).

These words take us to the edge of eternity past and future, to things mysterious and unspeakable. We have to turn our heads and bend our ears to hear what we can hear of these glimpses of things beyond our reach; these are things "too wonderful for me"; they are things high and lifted up beyond our comprehension. They are thoughts that are higher than our thoughts like the heavens are higher than the earth. Nonetheless, we have a glimpse of these majestic and lofty things; it may be only hints, but it gives us truth about our Savior and it causes us to fall down before His majesty in worship and praise. He is God (thy throne O God); He is God the Son incarnate and glorified for the work He completed on earth, the work by which He holds our redemption securely in His hands.

His posture in prayer and the affection He expresses in prayer are all the more astounding when we add to them the revelation of His person that comes to the surface in the ground of His prayer. The posture He takes in prayer is filial, subordinate, and covenantal. His affection, about which we need a thousand tongues to sing, is deep and strong on behalf of those given to Him by the Father. Then we give reflection to the person that speaks and we quickly come to a loss of words to express the depth, the breath, and the height of the love of God given to us in the person of Christ who being eternal God with all the attributes of deity took the form of a man so as to be fully God and fully man in one person forever. Why did He add human nature to His divine nature? He did this in order to become our redeemer.

## Conclusion

What do we learn about the Lord Jesus from this account? How does John 17.24 help us remember Him? We learn that He is the faithful and obedient high priest of our confession, we learn that He has deep and strong desire put forth in prayer that all whom the Father gave Him, all who believe in Him, be with Him in resurrection glory to behold His resurrection glory, and we learn that our Savior has a profound depth to His personal being as both God and man in two distinct natures and one person by the incarnation and He is that forever; moreover, He is that forever to bring to realization what He desires for His covenant brothers and sisters: He is the perfect high priest as both God and man to bridge the gap between a sinful earth and a holy heaven. He is Immanuel, God with us, to save us in the totality of what makes us human beings, both body and soul through resurrection to glory.

What then shall we say to these things?

- 1) I need Him
- 2) I own Him as my very own
- 3) I own His brothers and sisters as my brothers and sisters