Sermon- The Ultimate Prayer Request: Glorify Yourself Lord

Scripture: John 17:1-8 Sunday, January 14, 2018

Have you been in a situation that is so challenging that you don’t really know what to pray? Sometimes I get a prayer request from a really elderly person who has a very serious illness and then the question is should I pray that this person be healed or maybe that God takes this person home and ends their suffering? You know what I mean? Sometimes it is choice of career, should I take up a job with Microsoft or with Google? And very genuinely the two options are equal in many ways and one does not know which direction God has planned for you right? Well, as we begin a new and exciting calendar year, the year of our Lord Two Thousand and Eighteen, we as a community have to deal together as a group with this very question. What is God’s will for our church and how should we be praying about it. .

As I have been grapping with this question I was drawn back into a passage I had only recently preached from, Jesus’ High priestly prayer in John 17. What you will find is that this prayer of Jesus also came at a time when Jesus was himself at a very big transition point in his life and ministry. You see up until this point, Jesus had done everything he needed to do ministry wise firmly in control of his ministry. He had entered ministry at the time and place of his choosing, he had prayed and chosen the 12 disciples His heavenly father had wanted him to work with, he had taught them and others everything he had intended to. Everything that he did, he took instructions from his heavenly Father and was in charge of making it happen on earth. Now he knew he was about to die. That means, from being in control of everything up to this point, Jesus was about to put his very life in charge of the craziest people on earth. And if you are thinking, that was only for a short period of time, well think again, because even after his death and resurrection, when he had completed all his earthly responsibilities he was going to have to hand over everything to his 11 remaining disciples and other followers and tell them I am going back up to heaven. Now I will send you my spirit, but you will have to take it from here. You are in charge of holding on the to victory over Satan that I have won. You are in charge of representing me to the world. You are in charge of revealing the very nature of God to the world that I have revealed to you. You will be in charge of carrying the gospel to every nation on earth.

Now put yourself in Jesus’ shoes. You know how scary that thought would be? It is hard to know in Jesus’ human form how much of the future he could actually see but if he could see the mess his people would make down the road in his name, you can only imagine how much more agony that would put him through.

Death at the hands of crazy people, resurrection, leaving earth and handing over the next chapter of the salvation story to his 11 ragtag disciples. In his human form this was the ultimate period of uncertainly. This is the context in which Jesus prays his high priestly prayer of John 17.

So what does Jesus to pray at that point? That the goof balls who come after him (that’s you and me) don’t goof up too much? But would that impinge on human free will more that God wants to impinge? Or would he pray that God’s power be so clearly revealed in his people that it would shut everyone’s mouth? But would that be too premature because that moment is saved for Christ’s second coming. You see sometimes you have situations that are so complicated and so uncertain that you come to a point where it becomes really hard to figure out what to pray. And Jesus experienced this too at the end of his ministry. So what does Jesus pray in this time of uncertainty?

Now the biggest theme of Jesus’ John 17 prayer is just this. Glorify yourself Father! The time has come to glory yourself. So what does that mean?

Jesus elaborates on the plan on glorying the Father in two steps. Step one, glorify the Son and the Son will in turn glorify the Father. What does that mean? Well, you see all this time the son of God operated in a very low profile low key setting. When Jesus was born, yes a few shepherds and some wise men from a distant land were informed about it. Even King Herod knew about it. But in practice for a royal and divine birth it actually was an incredibly low key event. And even those who knew about it knew only one percent of what Jesus was really like right? Even his own mother only had a glimpse of an idea about who Jesus was. His disciples knew more than others but even they after following him for 3 years also had only a very partial understanding of who he was. And even when he performed his miracles, in the Gospel of Mark he was always telling his disciples don’t tell anyone yet. Keep this all a secret because my time has not yet come.

Many times God’s servants are like that. For years and years, they labor faithfully but they labor in obscurity. Nobody knows about them. Nobody knows about the work that they do. All the famous missionaries you know today worked in obscurity that is hard to imagine for us. Did you know that when Billy Graham first started preaching, he literally used to go out and preach by a lake with some ducks and a homeless man. Most ofthe missionaries who went to remote parts of the world from the west, the many who went to India like William Carrey or Mother Teresa or Paul Brandt or the school teacher Mary Reed whom I preached about a few months ago were absolutely obscure and unknown for a very long time when they were serving God in very difficult circumstances. Which is great, for them, but here is the deal. If God’s servants work in obscurity then it also means that God’s work in and through them is hidden from the world as well. So for those people and organizations who are in the very center of God’s will, there comes a time when what they are doing needs to catch the world’s attention. In Jesus’ case his low profile was blown by his death and resurrection. To die Jesus’ had to hand himself into the control of the craziest people around him according to God’s timing. You know that if anything good happened to Jesus, this much would be evident to the people around him, that there was a power operating from beyond him that was doing the work. So when Jesus dies and is brought to nothing and then is fully restored to life, that is when you can see the Father at work in Jesus.

So when Jesus says, glorify me so that I can give the glory back to you, what he meant was, Father make your power so evident in me that something amazing happens to me, something that everyone everywhere can see and when whey examine it closer they will see your unmistakably hand and glorify you. “Glorify me so that I can return your glory back to you”. All that was step one.

The step two to Jesus’ prayer request was in verse 22 which says “I have given them the glory you gave me”. Who is the “them” he was referring to? Well he was referring to his disciples. And remember his disciples are the fruit that Jesus has borne. So in other words Jesus’ glory goes not just up to his Father but down to his disciples as well. And just like Jesus’ own work is validated when the Heavenly Father’s power is visible in Christ’s earthly ministry, so also the work of his disciples is validated when the Heavenly Father’s power is made visible in the ministry of his disciples.

So when Jesus stands at the end of his earthly ministry and faces the extreme uncertainly of crucifixion and handing over ministry to his disciples, what does he pray? He prays that in his powerlessness and uncertainly to follow, that He is glorified in a way that glories his disciples to follow as well and in turn both his and his disciples glory ultimately serves one purpose, to peal back the curtain to reveal our Heavenly Father’s glory.

Now that brings us to our own super critical year as the Argentine Mennonite Church in 2018. The question is how should we be praying for ourselves when we don’t know what is going to happen and what God’s will for us is?

The first thing is that God glorifies himself in a very special way through our church this year.

What should that look like? Well, I tell you this. God cannot be glorified in secret. If God is doing something, it needs to be made visible. For 91 years we have been faithfully operating in this neighborhood. We have been doing God’s will, serving the children who had no where else to go and we served and we served. But who knows about the existence of Argentine Mennonite church except those people who have been part of Argentine Mennonite Church? Well, not too many people. In fact we have mastered the art of being invisible, to the point where sometimes I have myself missed our church and driven past. When we as a church are invisible, then the work of the Father and the work of the Son and the work of His Holy Spirit in our church is also invisible. We need to pray that whatever God is doing in our church is made visible to our neighborhood, throughout Kansas city and maybe even other parts of the world. So pray that God glorifies himself by something happening in our church community this year.

I want to push this one step further today. You see when Jesus prayed that prayer, and he said glorify yourself, what was ***the*** thing that he was expecting to happen specifically that would cause Him and our Heavenly Father to be glorified? Well, it was going to be his death and resurrection. So I want to warn you that as we pray this pray, it might be so for us as well. We might have to be willing to go through death to experience a resurrection. It is not easy, but only in the resurrection will God be fully glorified. In John 2:24 Jesus says this, [*Truly,*](http://biblehub.com/greek/281.htm)[*truly,*](http://biblehub.com/greek/281.htm)[*I tell*](http://biblehub.com/greek/3004.htm)[*you,*](http://biblehub.com/greek/4771.htm)[*unless*](http://biblehub.com/greek/1437.htm)[*a kernel*](http://biblehub.com/greek/2848.htm)[*of wheat*](http://biblehub.com/greek/4621.htm)[*falls*](http://biblehub.com/greek/4098.htm)[*to*](http://biblehub.com/greek/1519.htm)[*the*](http://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm)[*ground*](http://biblehub.com/greek/1093.htm)[*and dies,*](http://biblehub.com/greek/599.htm)[*it*](http://biblehub.com/greek/846.htm)[*remains*](http://biblehub.com/greek/3306.htm)[*only a seed;*](http://biblehub.com/greek/3441.htm)[*but*](http://biblehub.com/greek/1161.htm)[*if*](http://biblehub.com/greek/1437.htm)[*it dies,*](http://biblehub.com/greek/599.htm)[*it bears*](http://biblehub.com/greek/5342.htm)[*much*](http://biblehub.com/greek/4183.htm)[*fruit.*](http://biblehub.com/greek/2590.htm)

But Jesus’ plan to glorify the Father was not only by his own glorification. He also prayers that His disciples be glorified as well. When it comes to our church our prayer too, needs to be that God glorifies the work of the disciples of Christ who are birthed by our work. This might happen in many ways. It could happen through people who have been impacted by our church and are now in different cities doing wonderful things as servants of Christ. We need to be praying that God would bless their work and glorify to Himself through them. We should pray that God would glorify Himself through our lunch buddies and venture Club kids. We can be ambitious and pray that one day we might plant another church somewhere and God would be glorified through that church. Sounds like a moonshot. Maybe it is. The point is if we are alive we will be created disciples who are gloriying God in all kinds of places in all kinds of ways. And it should be our sincere prayer that God actually glorifies his name by what happens both in our midst and also through the disciples of Christ we have birthed or will birth this year.

But whatever happens, let what God is doing here be kept in a small circle no more. The world needs to know so that God can be glorified. Let this be our strongest prayer request this year. Glorify your name Lord!