

Bible Study Guide: Week of 5-18-2020

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 17:1-11

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. -----

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

"These words" may refer to the entirety of Jesus' farewell discourse which has been going on for several chapters. Most directly, at the end of chapter 16, Jesus said this: "In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" Jesus consistently reassures his disciples that his coming death will not be the end for him or for them. Jesus' "hour" and "glorification" both refer consistently in John's gospel to Jesus' passion, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension. In John 2 at the wedding at Cana, for instance, Jesus' mother informs Jesus that the wedding is running out of wine. He replies, "My hour has not yet come." When some Greeks come to see Jesus in chapter 12, Jesus replies, "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." This passage kicks off his farewell discourse and his passion. In an ironic twist, the cross—a gory and shameful thing—becomes for Jesus a thing of glory and splendor. Jesus says repeatedly in John's gospel that he will be "lifted up"—both figuratively exalted and glorified as well as literally hoisted onto the cross. Despite the appearance that the cross is Rome's victory over Jesus, it actually becomes Jesus' victory over death. Rather than reinforcing the authority of Rome, Jesus insists that the Father has given him true authority over all people—the power to give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him.

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

We often think of eternal life as "the afterlife"—getting to heaven when we die. Further, we often picture life in heaven as the ability to do whatever we want to do. Here, Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God and Jesus. This knowledge; this life begins here and now. This is why Jesus tells Martha in John 11: "I am the resurrection and the

life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Eternal life begins as one comes to know God and Jesus in this earthly life. Jesus’ promise is that this life will continue into eternity.

4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus here refers to his earthly ministry—he came to give glory to God and to do the work(s) of God.

5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

Jesus expects that the Father will, in turn, give glory to the Son as he endures the suffering of the cross. This verse is remarkably Trinitarian for something written so early. There are certainly many places in scripture that point to what would later become the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, but this verse in particular is full of Trinitarian language. Examples include references to the Father and the Son, the mutual glorification between those two members, and the Son being present with the Father, particularly “before the world existed.” John, more than any other New Testament author, seems to have an intimate understanding of what would later be called “the Trinity.”

6 “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago when Jesus talked about asking for anything “in his name,” the name of a person in the ancient world was more than just what they were called. One’s name was one’s very essence. To ask in the name of Jesus, we said, means that we ask in accordance with his will and ways. So here, Jesus says he “made the Father’s name known to the disciples.” Thus, he has revealed the very nature, essence, and will of God to them. Jesus refers to the disciples as “those whom the Father has given him from the world.” They are literally God’s gift to Jesus. Imagine how it would feel to those first disciples to listen in on this prayer and hear themselves referred to in such tender and loving language! This whole passage indeed speaks of an intimate and abiding love between Jesus, the Father, and those whom the Father has given to Jesus.

9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Here, Jesus asks for protection for the disciples in the difficult hours and days he knows are about to come. Once again, the focus is primarily on unity and oneness. Even though Jesus knows his time in this world is limited, he knows that the disciples will continue his ways after he is gone.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear the phrase “eternal life?” How does your image compare with what Jesus says about eternal life here? (17:3)
2. How is it that Jesus can refer to his coming death as being glorified?
3. Jesus refers to his followers here as gifts of God to him. How does it make you feel to think of yourself as God’s gift to Jesus? Does it make you uneasy? Is it humbling? Is it empowering?