

## **“Do you know Him?” John 17:1-11**

**When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.**

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

**I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 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. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 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. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.**

This time we have for our meditation what is called Jesus ‘High Priest prayer’, actually entire chapter 17<sup>th</sup> from the gospel according John consists of this prayer. Jesus prayed it on the same evening when He was betrayed.

Just a short while ago He had had His last meal together with His disciples, then He had explained them that He was leaving and that He will send us another Helper, the Holy Spirit, to be with us and to dwell in us.

Now, when He said this prayer, this was a moment before He was arrested and delivered to His enemies. What was Jesus doing? He was praying. What was He praying for? What would we pray for in this kind of circumstances? ... Jesus, the Son of God was praying for His disciples, for us.

What a commitment, what a love and care He showed towards His disciples towards us. Try to imagine this situation, He knew what was going to happen, but still was more concerned about us than about His own immediate challenges.

Today we’ll take a look at this part of Jesus High Priest prayer, but especially we’ll focus on what He teaches us about the most important topic, that is, about eternal life, how can we obtain it.

Jesus began His prayer with these words: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.”

Please, pay attention how Jesus is speaking about what is going to follow. Today we know what happened just few hours later. Arrest, violence, humiliation, injustice, torture and death. Death on the cross. How would we describe all of this?

Jesus describes it in a very simple way. “Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.” All that was going to happen with Him, Jesus saw as glory. How can we understand it? How can one call this glory?

Actually, it is not that difficult to understand. Jesus had come to manifest to us God’s nature, His attitude towards us, and this is exactly what He did.

If you love someone from all your heart and mind and soul and strength, what do you want to do? You want to reveal your love to the person whom you love. You can’t help yourself. How can you reveal it?

Telling about it, that’s one of options. Denying yourself and serving this person as sacrificially as you can. Showing that nothing for you is more important than this other person, your loved one.

That there is nothing that you would not be ready to give up for the sake of this person, that there is nothing too difficult that you would not be ready to do, so that only you can show how deep and passionate your love is.

Do you see, this is exactly what Jesus did for us. He explained what He was doing, that He was laying down His life for us. He emptied Himself, He gave up everything He had, even His life so that only He can reveal what God’s love to you is like. That’s why He calls it glory.

That was the moment when He could reveal the whole depth of His love towards you. He showed it not just with words, He showed it with His actions, He did it joyfully, for this was His chance to reveal that His heart is for you. To say ‘I love you more than myself’ both with words and deeds.

There is one more interesting detail in these first words of Jesus. We are tempted to think that we can choose to accept Christian worldview as ours, or choose not to. That is our deliberate choice. That we are in control of this process.

Jesus sees it differently. He knows it is not true. He knows that the Father has given Him authority to grant eternal life to *all whom the Father has given* to Him. Yes, to all whom the Father has given to Him.

To trust Jesus Christ and triune God, to pray Him, to rely on His providence, to accept Biblical worldview as your own, to confess the Creed, it is not our accomplishment, not our choice.

All of these are gifts of God, when the Holy Spirit comes to us, dwells with us, enlightens us and gives us faith. We are not in control, when it comes to our faith in true God, it is God's gift, infinitely precious and undeserved gift.

Now we get to the most important question that we are going to consider today. How does Jesus give us eternal life. How can we receive it? This is what Jesus Himself said: "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." [2x]

What exactly it means, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ? First, let's clarify what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean to know about them. To know about someone does not yet mean to know him.

We sometime can get confused when it comes to knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. Knowing about them really is not enough. One simple distinction could be very helpful. That is, the distinction between inanimate objects and persons. We can know inanimate objects just by observing them and learning about them.

How can we know a person in a proper sense? Knowing of them helps a little, but this is not actually knowing them. We can get to know them only when we are in conversation with them, when they reveal themselves to us. When they speak to us. That's a difference, we can't know a person until this person reveals himself to us.

When it comes to knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ, we are talking about persons. Yes, about persons. Not some kind of objects of our inquiry. It is not enough if we only know about them. Most of humanity is in this situation – they know about true God, but doesn't actually know Him.

Then how can we truly know God? When He speaks to us. Through Jesus, through the Bible, today in the Divine Service and in Bible Studies. When He reveals Himself to us, explaining Himself, His motivation, His deeds, opening His heart for us – that's where He meets us.

Jesus came with this purpose, to finish the work that His Father had given Him. To glorify Him, by revealing true God, by revealing how much God loves us. As Jesus said: "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world."

We know that name and person are inseparable linked together. This is Biblical way of saying that Jesus has manifested what kind of person the Father is.

Jesus whole ministry among us was about manifesting the Father. Beginning with His incarnation. We'll never understand what did it mean for God the Creator of Universe, to become a man, a tiny being in womb of His mother. What did it mean for Him to grow up as one of us, two millennia ago in rural Palestine? But He did all of this for us.

When Jesus begun His ministry of restoration, of forgiveness and healing, in the power of the Holy Spirit, His whole life revealed what God is like. Truthful and just, revealing us the truth about our sinfulness and God's wrath, but at the same time coming and helping us to overcome it.

Giving, serving, self-sacrificial, compassionate, merciful. He served us, He explained His mission, to reveal the Father, and to save us from sin and death, taking our sins and our guilt upon Himself, so that we could receive underserved forgiveness.

Now all of this is recorded in the Bible, both Jesus words and His deeds. When we read or listen to God's message, the same Holy Spirit that lead and helped Jesus is at work with us and in us.

He then helps us to know the only true God and Jesus Christ mysteriously joining us together. Thanks to Him we can have our conversation with God in our prayers. Thanks to Him we can know and be sure that God is not simply the only true God, but He is ours, He is your God, your [!] God who lives and dies for you.

"I am glorified in [my disciples] ... I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world...". That's about us. That's really about us. "I am glorified in my disciples."

Remember how did Jesus glorified His Father? Revealing what kind of God He is, both by His words and by His deeds. How are we supposed to glorify Jesus? The same way. Exactly the same way.

We are to manifest people who Jesus is, what is He like, and to help them to get to know Him. Besides, remember, their eternal life or death is at the stake. It could be eternal life or death of your loved ones, of our friend, of our neighbors.

Think about it for a while. That is a scary thought. You have this power to manifest them true God, and lead them to eternal life, or to keep silent and let them perish... We can save them by telling them truth about our situation, we are fallen, sinful, rebellious and heading towards death.

We can save them by telling about what God's attitude and intentions regarding us are. He desires that "all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:4) We can save them by manifesting Jesus in our lives, in a way we serve

others, similarly as Jesus served us manifesting His Father, selflessly and considering others more important than ourselves.

At this moment it becomes a bit uncomfortable. When we hear about God's love, it may sound good, but do we really want this God as our God? For if He loves us that much, if He provides everything for our daily needs, if He takes away our sins, gives us faith and promises eternal life, if He does all of this, where it leaves us?

We owe Him everything. That's true. And that's true regardless whether we are aware of it or not. But if we know it, we are expected to act accordingly. To love Him as He loves us, with all our heart and mind and soul. At the end, this is the first and the highest commandment. To glorify Him, our God and the one whom He send, Jesus Christ. Living not for ourselves, but for others.

As Jesus said, we are still in this world, but this world with its brokenness, idols and temptation is also within us. That's why we may hesitate to glorify Him, that's why to do it we really need all the help that we can get.

That's why Jesus prayed for us: "I am praying for them... Holy Father, keep them in your name ... that they may be one, even as we are one." Jesus prayed for the Helper, for the Holy Spirit.

Yes, we are weak, but then, as we get to know the Father and Jesus, the Spirit indwells in us, He makes us one, one with the Father and the Son and one holy community in the same Spirit, so that we can make the best of this time glorifying God, making Him known to as many people as possible, and receive what the Father has prepared for us, - eternal life.

Amen.