

“This is eternal life!” 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.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Imagine... The darkness is descending upon the Earth. Your eyes can still catch the last warm beams of the setting sun. That is the last sunset you will ever see. You know that in a few hours in the thick of the night you will be captured by armed violent men.

That you will be falsely accused, mocked and severely beaten and tomorrow will be your last day in the land of the living. You will be executed, suffering the most excruciating of death invented by human beings.

The death on a cross. The sun is already low, and now you have a few moments to pray. What would you pray for? Who would you pray for? Likely for those whom you love the most. Those who take up the largest place in your heart.

We have this very special privilege to hear what Jesus prayed on that last evening. He prayed to His Father. He prayed for His disciples. He prayed for the Twelve. But that was not all. He prayed for all whom the Father had given Him. In Jesus own words:

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.” Do you see what this means? Jesus, the Son of God was praying also for those who will believe through the proclamation of the apostolic message. On that night, in that prayer, Jesus prayed for those He loved the most. He prayed also for you. For each one of you. And what did He pray for? There is too much in this prayer, we can't

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possibly cover it in one sermon, so we will focus on this very special part of Jesus' prayer. He prayed that you may have eternal life. **"This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."**

What is eternal life, or what gives you eternal life? If you know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. That is what gives you eternal life, life everlasting. Life in New Heavens and New Earth. Life in abundance, blessedness and joy. Life in the very presence of the Triune God. True life.

It is yours, if you know the only true God, and if you know Jesus, His Son, the Redeemer of the world. This brings us to the obvious question, doesn't it? How can we know God? How can you know the only true God and how can you have this life eternal?

There are two ways people can choose. We can name them - the wrong way and the right way. Let's see how they work. **First, the wrong way.** That is how we all naturally think about God. That's right. Remember, when we learned about the tragic events described for us in Genesis 3, the Fall of Humanity.

What was the temptation? If we stop listening to God, then we will be like gods ourselves. And surely, we can recognize that we are puny gods, and on our own we are not capable of being much in charge. But... we still believe that if we can grasp something with our minds, we are kind of in control. And if we can't grasp something with our minds it makes us feel uneasy. You know the feeling...

The same is true about our knowledge of God. We want to grasp Him with our reason. How do we do that? We observe the world around us and our own experiences and then we try to conclude what we can learn about God, what kind of God He must be.

And what picture can we get? Surely, we can conclude that He is powerful. Just look at this vast universe! That He has a good sense of humor. Just look at some of His creatures! If our lives go well, we may conclude that He is a God who blesses and makes happy good people. Like us. We behave well and all is well. What you sow, that is what you will reap. We may think that way if everything goes well.

But... What if not all is going well? What then can we conclude? That He is a God who allows terrible things to happen in our lives. He takes away our loved ones. He sends terrible illnesses and tragic accidents. Besides, the longer we live the more we see that there is so much injustice, so much suffering in this world.

We may conclude that He is a God who doesn't care, who seems to be rewarding the arrogant and ruthless, and to punish or forget about ordinary people. That He is a God who allows so much evil in the world as the famous observation goes.

That He is a God who tolerates wars and senseless massacres of millions. That He is a God who sends terrible plagues and famines that wipe out nations, young and old. And we could go on and on, we all may add other painful examples from our lives.

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That is one way to try to know what kind of God He is. And even we as Christians often fall into this trap. Trying to grasp divine things, who God is and what His attitude towards us is through speculations of our fallen reason. But there is no way we can thus know who the only true God is, or what His heart's attitude towards us is. Besides, isn't that interesting how we often try to blame God for the manifestations of our own sinful condition...

And then there is the right way. Think about this, - if there exists an eternal and all powerful Being who created and still sustains everything that exists. How can we possibly know who that Being is? We are so limited; in time, in space, in our abilities.

There is only one way we can know the only true God. That is, if He comes to us and reveals Himself to us. But how could that happen? How could He communicate with us so that we can understand Him? Think about it, what are the only creatures we can clearly communicate with? That's right, human beings.

That is exactly what the only true God did. He came to us as one of us. As Jesus from Nazareth. The only true God came to us as a human being so that we can know Him as He is. Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity came to us so that we can know the only true God and thus can have eternal life.

We cannot truly know God in any other way, except through Jesus. For every other way will be just our attempts to construct a picture of God through our own efforts. But what kind of God is revealed to us through Jesus from Nazareth? What do we know about His attitude towards us?

Through Jesus, God's Son, we know a very unusual God, indeed. So counterintuitive, so, so not like us. In the Gospel according to John Jesus regularly speaks about "the hour". He is referring to the moment when He will fulfill His mission entrusted by the Father and will reveal to us what kind of God the only true God is.

Jesus is referring to His crucifixion. He speaks about the moment when He will be hanging on the cross naked, suffering excruciating pain while being mocked by those who find satisfaction in pain and sufferings of others.

Jesus speaks about that moment as a moment of His greatest glory. As about the moment of God's greatest glory. As about the most vivid revelation of both, the depths of our sinful corruption and about the heights of God's undeserved grace and mercy. **"I have manifested your name to the people."** Yes, He did!

On the cross of Jesus to us is revealed the very heart of God the Father and His attitude towards us. He is a God who out of love molds us in our mother's wombs. He is a God in whose books are written all the days of our lives, before there is even one.

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He is a God who from the foundation of the world knew that we would fall to the deception of our archenemy. He knew how much it would cost Him to regain our trust, and yet, He was willing to pay any price so that only He could give us eternal life.

No one wants you to have eternal life more than the Author of Life, the only true God. He is a God who promised that He will come to rescue us from our ruthless enemies. From the unholy trinity of our sin, of death and the devil himself.

He is a God who keeps His promises. Always. He is a God who in the fullness of time came to fulfill what He has announced in the very beginning. He came to lay down His life so that you may have eternal life. He is an incredibly stubborn God.

He ignores our neglect of Him. He keeps caring for us, He keeps calling us to Himself, even when we let Him down again and again. Even when we refuse to listen to Him, He refuses to stop speaking to us.

He is a God whose love and commitment knows no boundaries. Even our unbelief, our rejection, our arrogance can't scare Him away. He is a God who wants to be your God, and He wants you to know Him as your God. So that you could live with Him forever.

That is what kind of God Jesus, our Redeemer, reveals to us. He reveals this God with His actions, and He reveals Him with His words. **“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.”**

Jesus manifests the Father's heart in sacrificing Himself for us, and He speaks the Father's words to us, revealing what it is that He has done for us. This is eternal life, when you know this God as your God. As your Creator and your Redeemer.

There is one more step, though, that we need to mention. We were not there with Jesus on that evening. We were not at the cross, we didn't see Him ascending to the Father. How can we know the only true God? How can anyone know Him today?

This is how in Jesus' own words: **“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them [Jesus' disciples] into the world.”** We all have heard the message that the Father gave Jesus; we all have heard it from someone whom Jesus had called and sent. That is why we are here. For someone helped you to know this God. Thanks for them! Now you have received this message and God forbid that this message would stop with us!

On that evening, as the sun was setting, Jesus prayed for you, and for all who still don't know Him and don't have eternal life. For all those who are yet to learn about the only true God. May we join Jesus' prayer for them.

May He help us to glorify Him as He glorified His Father. May the Holy Spirit enable us to manifest the only true God both with our lives as living sacrifices and with our words, helping others to know the Father and to have eternal life. May Jesus' work continue through us and bears much fruit. Amen.