

John on Jesus - Profane Church

August 4, 2013

Good morning Faith Church. It is good to have you worshipping with us. As a church, we are studying through the Gospel of John. Last week, we finished Jesus' final words in the Upper Room Discourse in John 16. Next week, in John 18, Judas betrays Jesus and the Christ's crucifixion begins to unfold. This week, we are in John 17 which is a saddle chapter sandwiched between these two big movements in this Gospel. John 17 is Jesus' closing prayer in the Upper Room Discourse.

It is Jesus' longest prayer that we have in the Bible. It is a prayer with a lot of deep theology. To give you an idea of the depth in this chapter, let me tell you how other pastors preached on this chapter. The Puritan, Thomas Manton preached 45 sermons from this one chapter. I know you think I am long-winded, but it won't take me 45 sermons to preach through the entire book! Martin Lloyd-Jones, one of my favorite preachers from the 1950s, preached a sermon series from this chapter. It lasted multiple years. In preparation for this message I downloaded the transcripts of his sermons on just this chapter. They were 600 pages. No, I didn't read all of them before Sunday.

I tell you this so you know that if we wanted to get everything out of this chapter, we would be here seven days a week until next year. That is without bathroom breaks! We are covering this chapter in one week. We will study it in approximately 30 minutes. We are taking this at a high level. If you want to dig into the chapter, there is plenty to talk about in your Life Groups.

The chapter is organized into three parts. In verses 1-5, Jesus prays for himself, that he would be glorified by God the Father. In verses 6-19, Jesus prays for his disciples. He prayed that his disciples would carry on the mission of reaching the world for God through his life. In verses 20-26, Jesus prays for us and our continuing of the mission.

The last section, verses 20-26, we won't have time to cover this morning. Pastor Jordan focused his Small Group Worksheets for your Life Group on those verses. My plan for this morning is to dive into the first six verses and study a little theology. Theology is very sexy. I find it very attractive. Then we will study verses 9-19. From those verses, we will pick up a few practical pointers on carrying out the mission. Ready to go?

Jesus prayed for glory.

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". John 17:1–2 (ESV)

I don't recommend we pray this prayer for ourselves. Don't pray God will glorify you. It is probably wiser to pray that God will increase humility and teachableness. On the other hand, if you are the son of God, praying for your glory sounds like a fair way to go.

What does it mean for God the Son to ask God the Father to glorify him? Glory is revelation of identity. It is seeing someone for who they are.

Years ago, when I was a youth pastor, I was in an airport walking next to this boring, generic-looking older dude on my way to catch a plane. Somebody in the group with me whispered in my ear, "That is Wayne Rice." You probably

don't know him. He is one of the founders of Youth Specialties and the author of a boat load of great youth ministry books. This guy was amazing. I used his ideas all the time in my youth group. Once I knew who he was, I just couldn't believe I was walking next to him. I even skipped my concourse and kept walking with him just so I could say I spent more time with Wayne Rice. That old man was, in a small way, gloried when his true identity was revealed.

The same is true with God. Psalm 19:1 tell us the heavens declare the glory of God and the stars proclaim the work of his hands. God's creation begins to reveal God's identity to us. Look at a beautiful sunset. Look at the web of a spider or the beauty of a field. Look at the wonder of the night sky. God's creation tells us a little bit about God's complexity, amazing power and incredible beauty. Scientists tell us the creation is so vast that if we were traveling at the speed of light it would take 50 octillion years to visit all the stars in our solar system. God is big.

Amazingly, our vast beautiful creation doesn't even begin to touch communicating all of God's glory. The most complete revelation of God's glory comes in Jesus Christ.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...
Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2
Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

You want to see more of God than creation could ever reveal? Look at Jesus Christ. Only a small part of God's glory is visible through creation. What does Jesus reveal about God that can't be known from creation?

The Father, the Son and the Spirit enjoyed an unbroken perfect love relationship for all eternity. We had no way of knowing or experiencing God's love.

It wasn't always that way. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve experienced God's love. Once they sinned, they were cast away from God and our experience of God's love was broken. Ever since, people have wondered what God feels about them. Does God care about me? Does God love me? Why am I here? That is why people run around wondering if they are worth anything. This is why people struggle with depression. Everyone is desperate to be loved by God. What makes it worse is each one of us knows we sin. We know we deserve punishment for our sins. We want to be loved by God but we know that we are scheduled to face judgment by God.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews that God the Father planned our amazing creation but it was God the Son who made it. In Bethlehem, the same Son of God, who made the universe, permanently fused himself with human flesh to be a man and still remain fully the son of God who made the universe. Why did God the Son humble himself and do this? God loves us. There was no way of us knowing the extent of this love until Jesus came in Bethlehem.

While part of God's love for us was seen in Bethlehem, so much of God's love for us was still hidden, until the cross. On the cross, the Son of God became a sponge and soaked up all of sin. The sins of our past, present and even our future. When he who knew no sin became sin for us, God the Father poured all of his wrath against sin on his own son. This is the son he loves. Why

did God the Father pour out his wrath on the son he loves? Why did God the Son take on a human body then soak into himself all of our sins and then suffer the unspeakable horrors of the fury of his father's wrath? God loves us. We would never know how much God loved us until the cross.

After the cross, what was still unseen was an even greater display of God's love for us in the future. After Christ died on the cross, in our places, for our sins, he rose from the grave and conquered death. He ascended back to God the Father to be where he was before all this took place --- at the right hand of God. Now things are different. Jesus still has his human body. Humanity and divinity were permanently fused together in God the Son who now sits at the right hand of God the Father with Satan, sin and death conquered and defeated. One day Jesus will flex his muscles and raise all of our bodies from the dead, but our bodies will be transformed. They will become just like Christ's resurrection body --- perfect, powerful and indestructible. We will reign and rule with Christ over an earthly millennial kingdom and ultimately over a new heaven and new earth with and under Christ. This is an amazing future that we don't deserve! God's plans for our future was not known until the empty tomb. God is more glorious in our minds now than ever before. The more about God's love that is revealed to us, the more glorious he becomes. The cross and the empty tomb revealed God's love in ways we never knew.

Glory from authority.

...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. John 17:2-3 (ESV)

Next, Jesus said, “...*since you have given him authority over all flesh.*”

This winter, we studied the book of Daniel. One of the messages of the book of Daniel is that world empires will rise and fall but God the Father will always be in charge of it all. In Daniel 7, we learned there was coming a time when there would be a divine human being that God would give a worldwide empire to. What Nebuchadnezzar desired but never obtained would eventually be given by God to someone called the Son of Man.

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)

Who is this Son of Man that is given the right to rule the earth by God the Father? It is Jesus. Jesus is the one who will eventually eternally rule all of the Earth. There is even more authority given to Jesus.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. John 5:26–27 (ESV)

God the Father has delegated to the Son of Man the right to judge the world and give eternal life to whomever the father gives him. God the Father gave God the Son authority over all flesh. Jesus has the right to rule the world, the right to judge the world and the right to give eternal life to everyone God the Father gives him. Jesus is amazing. He is more glorious than I imagined.

Just as I had no idea the identity of the old man in the airport until somebody told me his name and I knew him by the work he had done, in the same way, none of us could begin to understand God’s love for us until

Bethlehem, the cross and the empty tomb. The more we understand what happened in those three events, the more glorious Jesus becomes. That is our theology for the morning. I told you it is sexy. Let's get begin to transition to some tactical/practical stuff for the mission.

Jesus prayed for his disciples.

"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." John 17:6–10 (ESV)

I want us to notice the way Jesus described his disciples. His disciples were not people who chose to follow Jesus because they liked the way he sang in a band. They were not people who chose to follow him because they grew up in the same neighborhood and bonded when they had bologna in the school cafeteria. They are described as people God the Father chose and gave to God the Son. God the Son's job was to prepare them to handle the next leg of the mission after they were given to him by his father.

While this passage is directed to the disciples, the truth of who chose whom spans time. If you have trusted in Christ as your savior, you didn't choose Christ because you were born in the right city, went to the right church or just happened to have the right parents. God the Father chose you, and he gave you as a gift to Jesus. Jesus gives you eternal life. God chose to love you in a way he has not chosen to love others in this world. You did nothing to deserve this.

...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:4–6 (ESV)

This kind of stuff makes me feel much better on my tough days. Like you, there are days when life is overwhelming. There are times of weakness when I don't make the right choices. I occasionally lose my temper with my kids. I do dumb things as a leader. I sin. Like you, I can feel overwhelmed and despondent.

It is in those times when the Bible is such an encouragement. It reminds me that God, fully knowing me, chose to love me. He gave me as a gift to Christ, who, out of his love for me, gives me eternal life through his death on the cross. None of this I deserve. The reason I know Christ is only because God the Father and God the Son love me when I do not deserve it. As Pastor Jordan pointed out a few weeks ago, our identity is not our failures and shame. Our identity is that we are loved by God the Father and God the Son forgives our sins. That completely trumps any other false identity I may feel when I get up in the morning. God, you totally rock. Thank you for loving me. I needed to hear that this week.

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. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in

the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. John 17:11–19 (ESV)

In this section, Jesus was praying for the mission. I love the way he described it. I want to focus on just one piece. He didn't pray that we are taken out of the world but that we are kept from the evil one while in the world. This is big stuff. It cuts against our culture. Jesus' prayer for his disciples then, and for us now, is that we wouldn't be a bunch of Amish riding horses doing our texting with smoke signals instead of cell phones. His prayer is that we would complete the mission of reconciling people to God by being totally immersed in the culture. While we are in the culture, we will be protected from the evil one.

You see, as Christians we tend to develop and live in an alternate sub-culture to take ourselves out of the world. When I was a youth pastor, we challenged the kids to bring their non-Christian friends to church. I remember having parents complain because their kids felt marginalized. They didn't allow their kids to have non-Christian friends. How hurtful can you be toward your kids? It is a bad idea to weed out of their lives everybody who doesn't know Jesus. First, it is a parenting strategy that is completely against Jesus' prayer. Second, if you weed all non-Christians out of your kids lives, it will kill their spiritual growth. How does a weight lifter get stronger? Resistance. When nobody disagrees with your kids' faith at school, they have no reason to open their Bible and find out what it says. Sometimes the best way to grow spiritually is to hang out with a non-Christian and try to answer their questions.

Let's talk about adults. It is bad news when Christian adults only watch Christian satellite television, only listen to KJIA, only get Christian newspapers and their only friends come from church. If we rip ourselves out of culture, how can we influence culture? Jesus' prayer was that we wouldn't be taken out of the world.

In Jesus' day, the people who ripped themselves out of culture were the Pharisees. While I have great respect for guys who memorized the entire Old Testament in Hebrew, in all practicality, they had very little influence on the average person. They never hung out with ordinary people.

What was the bang the Pharisees had on Jesus? He hung out with the tax collectors and sinners. The reason the Pharisees were mad at Jesus for doing that is because they never hung out with people who needed God. They accused Jesus of being a glutton. Jesus went back to the salad bar three times. Jesus healed on Sundays because people were suffering. They accused him of violating the Sabbath. They accused Jesus of being a drunkard. After all, his first miracle was to make 180 gallons of wine after they drank the wine cellar dry at a wedding party. Jesus was completely involved with real people who needed God. He refused to live a little subculture and escape from the world. If he escaped from the world, he would no longer change the world.

Was Jesus sinning? Absolutely not. He was just passionate about being engaged with real people who needed God. As a church, this is our strategy. We want to be in the world but kept from the evil one.

You know why we have a coffee bar? Our culture loves Starbucks. People love hanging out and drinking coffee. Coffee bars are the new social connection in our culture. That is why we have one. We are trying to connect with our culture when someone walks in the door.

This is why I am so pumped about Chris Brown and our outreach team. Last year, when we skipped a Sunday to clean up the community, not only did we serve the community but we connected with our culture and its needs, just like Jesus. The city was so pumped that we didn't stay hidden behind brick walls but actually cared enough to help that it asked us to help build a playground this summer. The same is true with our next serving Sunday coming up in September, the same with the backpack program helping kids in the school without food on the weekend. We are just doing what Jesus prayed for. We don't want to separate from the culture, we want to connect with our culture like Jesus did. Let me tell you my favorite way that we will connect with our community this year. As a church, we are sponsoring softball teams. Why are we doing that? We are part of the community. Why is it that businesses always sponsor softball teams but churches don't get involved with that community need? Jesus said, "Don't take them out of the world." People won't know Christ until we serve them like Christ. Hang out with real people, even tax collectors and sinners. Jesus did.

Now understand what I mean. Some people, in a supposed effort to be missionaries, go too far. They just swallow the entire culture. They are part of the Jerry Springer fan club and call it culture relevance. They get drunk and

abusive around their family. They claim they drink so they can witness to their friends. That is too far. That is embracing the evil one, not being protected from the evil one.

There are some of you who are here this morning, who just embrace the evil one. You claim it as cultural relevance but in reality the issue you need to embrace is holiness and purity. If that is you this morning, God is calling you to repent of loving the evil in the culture and pull back. Focus on Jesus.

There are others of us who live in Christian plastic bubbles. If I was to ask have many friends you have that don't know Jesus, and you have to remember a time when Clinton was president, that is not living like Jesus prayed we would live. That is a modern day Amish. You aren't dressed in black, don't drive a horse and buggy, don't have a beard or milk cows by hand but you might as well be Amish. You are not in the world.

Conclusion

That is not Jesus' vision for how his disciples would carry out the mission of reaching the world. That is not the vision of Faith Church. Martin Luther said it well when he said the church should be profane.¹ We want to be a profane church. That doesn't mean I get to swear in the pulpit. Profane in the Latin means outside of the temple. It means we are a church that cares about loving our community and connecting with those outside our doors. We don't water down Jesus or what he did, we just refuse to hide Jesus behind the mask of a weird culture that people walking in the door can't relate to. It means that rather

¹ <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/151360-a-call-to-be-profane-christians.html>

than just serving in the church, we serve in the community because that is where people need Jesus. Maybe the best reason for us to be a profane church is because we have a profane God. Jesus didn't stay hidden behind the walls of heaven but he humbled himself and came to us because he loves us. He became profane. In the same way, out of love for the lost around us, may we be a profane church.



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