



## **John 17:6–9**

6 'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you

have given me, for they are yours.

## **Reflection**

Today we take up again one of most wonderful chapters in all of Scripture. Why is it so? What makes this chapter so precious? Perhaps it helps to think of John 17 in these terms. Can you imagine listening in to a conversation between the members of the Trinity right before the most pivotal moment in all of human history? Can you imagine being invited to hear and listen in to Jesus' extended prayer in the Spirit to his Father, the night before he lays down his life for the sins of the world? That we can do so, in the words of John 17, makes this chapter one of the greatest, most wonderful, and most treasured chapters in all of Scripture. Some refer to it as the 'Holy

of Holies of Sacred Scripture.’ Philip Melancthon, Martin Luther’s right-hand man, said of John 17,

There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than the prayer offered up by the Son of God himself.

Scottish reformer John Knox had this chapter read to him every day in his final illness and in the final moments before his death. Thomas Manton, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, preached forty-five sermons on it. More recently, Marcus Rainford, an Irish preacher has written more than five hundred pages on these twenty-six short verses. On entering John 17 we enter holy ground.

In John 17, in his high priestly prayer, as it has come to be known, Jesus prays for himself (vv. 1–5), for his disciples (vv. 6–19), and for the church (vv. 20–26). In Friday’s passage Jesus began by praying for himself. The essence of this section of Jesus’ prayer is found in John 17:1,

‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

The glory of God is seen in the revelation of who and what he is. The more the revelation the greater glory. And so, when the psalmist considers the expanse of the universe in the dark night sky, his soul cries out,

The heavens declare the glory of  
God;

the skies proclaim the work of his  
hands. Ps 19:1

But nothing declares the glory of God so profoundly as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who laid down his life for the sins of the world. By far and away the most complete revelation of God's glory came in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the pinnacle of this glory, its summit and highest height is the cross of Jesus Christ. And the hour of Jesus' crucifixion is at hand. As Jesus' prayer begins,

'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

In today's passage, Jesus' prayer moves from himself to his disciples; from his glory about to be consummated on the cross to the beneficiaries of his glorification, those he loves more than life itself, his followers. Reading from John 17:6–9,

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May Jesus be right now praying these words for everyone of us! These words are so precious and so extraordinary. In them we glimpse the deepest depths of assurance, as we come to truly understand whose hands and care our souls are in. Listen to them again, Jesus is praying for his disciples, and by extension all those who truly believe and follow him,

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What is so extraordinary about these words is the grace that Jesus is showing towards his disciples. Consider their characters as revealed in the gospels. How weak was their faith, how slender their knowledge, how shallow their spiritual attainments, how faint their hearts in the hour of danger. In a matter of hours the disciples will, to a man, flee like cowards, shortly followed by their leader, Peter, denying Jesus' three times. J. C. Ryle says,

‘No one, in short, can read the four Gospels with attention, and fail to see that never had a great master such weak



servants as Jesus had in the eleven apostles. Yet these very weak servants were the men of whom the gracious Head of the church speaks here in high and honourable terms.'

Which makes this passage one of deep comfort and instruction. Clearly Jesus sees far more in believers than we often see in ourselves, or than others see in us. Even the tiniest degree of faith is very precious in his sight. Though our faith be as small as a mustard seed, there can be no more precious possession on earth, and even the tiniest of faiths makes for a boundless difference between those who have it and those who do not.

**Think**

As we consider this passage we are struck then by both the deepest assurance of our salvation – we are now and always have been the precious possession of both Jesus and his Father – but also by this gracious aspect of Jesus’ character. As we grow in our faith so often we see in ourselves a vast amount of defects and shortcomings, and perhaps feel ashamed at our slow progress in holiness and Christlikeness. And yet, in Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in John 17, there is such warmth and grace despite their obvious failings. They believe in him and they are his. He will defend them to his death and intercede for them into all eternity. By his wounds they are healed, by his blood they are made holy – not by their attainments or anything else they will go on to do. He loves them unconditionally and no-one will ever take

them from his hands.

So too, with you and I, if we sincerely trust in Jesus' name. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you cling to him and cast all your burdens on him? Can you say to Jesus, as Peter will later say to Jesus,

‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’

If so, then in John 17:6–9 Jesus is praying for you as well as his disciples, listen to his prayer for you one final time,

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## **Pray**

Pray this morning for the hundreds of millions of followers of Jesus Christ right throughout our world. Pray that we would all experience the deepest assurance of our faith and realize that no matter our failings we are loved unconditionally and eternally by God. Pray that we would each day be reminded that we are saved not by anything that we have done or could

ever have done, but only through what Jesus has done. And pray that our heartfelt response to this amazing grace and never-ending kindness towards us might be to live every moment for Jesus' glory and not our own. In his name we pray. Amen.