

The Hour Has Come

John 17:1-5

We have reached the last chapter in our Upper Room series – John chapter 17, and this chapter is a prayer that Jesus prayed at the end of his time with his disciples in the Upper Room. It is a beloved prayer that Christians often turn to, and it has three parts: 1) Jesus' prayer for himself, 2) his prayer for his disciples, and 3) his prayer for all who would come to believe in him. Today we are going to look at his prayer for himself.

In his prayer, we'll see he talks about a very important hour, and I want you to think about – what is the most important hour of your life? Do you think it's happened yet? Is it still coming up? There are a number of ways you could answer this question. If you're looking at eternal significance, all of us would probably say the hour we first believed, or the hour we are going to depart this world to be with Jesus. Obviously both are critically important. For me, the hour I first believed was on a Sunday morning in January of 1991 when the Holy Spirit opened my eyes and changed my heart during a pastor's sermon. I started that hour as a spiritually dead sinner headed for hell and ended it as a blood-bought child of God headed for heaven. Hard to say there could be a more important hour in my life.

But then there is the hour of death, and that is extremely important too, because that is the hour that all of us who are in Christ actually pass from this life into eternity – into the presence of God, and we begin to lay hold of the glories of heaven that we've been waiting for all this time. So that hour is extremely important as well.

You might also think about the hour of your birth, or the hour you get married. Maybe it's the hour (or hours) when your children were born. Maybe the hour your life changed forever because of something really, really good, or because of something really, really bad. In a lifetime of about 675,000 hours, you can see that there are just a handful we might consider "most important."

But this morning we are going to hear about an hour that I think is the most important hour *in all of history*. It's an hour that that was ordained by God before creation. It's an hour that was greatly anticipated in all the years

leading up to it. It's now an hour we now look back on as the hour that changed everything forever in both heaven and earth. It's an hour that will never be forgotten and will always be sung about and marveled at by humans and angels in heaven.

It feels kind of futile for us to try to grasp the monumental significance of such an hour, but it's something God wants us to think about often and live according to. And Jesus prayed about that hour at the beginning of John 17, so I want us to look at what he said and try to connect with how truly awesome it is.

Jesus finished his teachings with the disciples in the Upper Room that we've been looking at throughout this spring and summer, and then he turned to a time of prayer. This is the beginning of that prayer...

Read John 17:1-5.

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, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

There are two parts to this prayer. The first is in the first 3 verses and that's what I want to unpack this morning. It begins with the phrase: "Father, the hour has come." It's easy to read past that and not think about the significance of what Jesus is saying about it in these verses – what hour is he talking about? You probably know the answer, but rather than just jumping to it and moving on, we're going to think about what Jesus says.

You can see that the first thing he says is that it's an hour in which he will be glorified by the Father, and the Father will be glorified by him. What is "glorify"? One way to understand it is to think about the word "magnify." Think about a telescope... When you look through a telescope, you're looking at something that's far away and hard to see, but the telescope magnifies it so

you can see its characteristics much more clearly. That's kind of what it means to glorify something. Jesus is praying that what happens in that hour would magnify him and the Father... that it would reveal much more clearly their character and worth. The Father would glorify the Son, and the Son would glorify the Father.

He goes on in verse 2 to begin to explain why they would be able to glorify each other in that hour. Jesus says it would be because the Father had given him authority over all flesh (all of mankind), to give eternal life to all whom the Father had given him. They would be able to glorify each other because in that hour the Son had been given the right to give eternal life to all whom the Father had given him.

Let's pause a moment to think about how important that is... This hour would be the hour in which the gift of eternal life would be given... How important is that? If we really think about it, we would be hard-pressed to come up with anything that's more important. In fact, I would say that giving the gift of eternal life sits at the center of God's purposes and plans for all of human history, and that gift was to be given in that hour.

Without the gift of eternal life, our lives here on earth would be all there is and there would be nothing more, and there would be no meaning beyond whatever pleasures and experiences you can squeeze out of the few years you're here. Once it's over, it's over. Without eternal life, your life doesn't really matter, and nothing you do really matters because the only thing your actions would accomplish are whatever fleeting rewards or consequences you receive for doing them. Our lives would be no more significant than that of a racoon that lives a few years, then gets hit by a car and rots away in the ditch.

But you know why that's not true? And why there is incredible importance and significance to our lives and everything that happens here on earth? Because of the gift of eternal life. Eternal life changes everything and puts meaning and purpose behind everything we do. There is life beyond this life for those whom the Father has given to the Son, and that makes all the difference in the world. The gift of eternal life is the gift that God has been preparing and planning for

and carrying out throughout all of history, and that gift would be given in that hour.

Now, what is this gift of eternal life? Here again we shouldn't rush to assume an answer but think about what Jesus says. He describes it in verse 3. Eternal life is knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. The word for "knowing" in this verse is "*ginōskō*," which means "*to know, especially through personal experience (first-hand acquaintance).*" It's the knowing that happens in personal relationship. The ability to know God like that is a gift because our ability to know God was demolished by sin in the Garden of Eden. Sin brought utter separation, alienation, and enmity between us and God, and that curse has been passed down to every generation, along with all its consequences – spiritual blindness, brokenness, separation from God, and condemnation.

But Jesus declares in this prayer, that to those whom the Father has given him, he will give the gift of knowing the only true God and his Son, Jesus Christ – the gift of eternal life. That means their sins will be erased, their blindness removed, their brokenness restored, and their condemnation eliminated. They will be reconciled to God, forgiven, declared to be righteous, and adopted as his beloved sons and daughters. They will be in right relationship, able to know God forever and ever.

What Jesus said at the beginning of his prayer in the Upper Room is that the hour had come for that gift to be given... The Father had given him authority over all mankind to give that gift to all he'd been given, and in giving that gift he would be glorified by the Father and the Father in him.

Think about that... That's what makes this hour the most important hour that's ever been.

And we know what would happen in that hour. Jesus alluded to it earlier that week. In John 12:23-24 it says, "*And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'*" This would be the hour when Jesus would go to the cross to

lay down his life and pay the penalty for sin, so that all of us whom the Father has given him can receive the gift of eternal life.

The hour has come... The most important hour in all of history. We're going to move into a time of Communion here this morning, which I think is a perfect way to close this sermon. And as we do, I want to close with a few passages about this glorious hour to prepare our hearts.

Revelation 5:6-12: *“And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

Romans 3:21-26: *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”*

Romans 5:6-8: *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

1 John 4:8-10: *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*