

He Lives!

*To Give You Eager Expectation of
Glory*

A Sermon on John 17:1-11a

Year A - Easter 7
28 - May - 2017

JJ¹

How does it make you feel when someone says that they'll pray for you? Now, I'm not talking about the empty verbal vomit of a talking head on TV when they say things like, "Our thoughts and prayers..." I'm talking about when someone you know and love tells you in the middle of misery or silent struggle, "I'll be praying for you." It's a relief, isn't it? It's a relief in knowing you aren't alone. You aren't alone in your struggle. You aren't alone in your petitioning prayers. It's a relief and comfort to know that fellow believers are holding you up before our heavenly Father in prayer, asking that He would bless you and keep you.

How much more, friends, to hear that Jesus prays for you too! Today we conclude the season of Easter by once again going to the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. I know! Three weeks in a row of the Upper Room during Easter! It can seem so strange, that is, until we listen. As we have listened to Jesus' words on Maundy Thursday, we notice that just as much as Jesus talked about his imminent suffering and death, he talked about Easter. And you know, that's a good thing, because Scripture doesn't record much of what Jesus had to say between his resurrection and ascension into heaven 40 days later.

Chapter 17 of John's Gospel is often called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. Today we look at just the first part. In his prayer, he prays for himself; the disciples who were with him then; and he prays for all believers—you and me included! And while today we focus on this prayer and how awesome to know that on the verge of suffering beyond belief, Jesus prays for us, we also remember that Jesus is always praying for us! Yes, even now! He prays for us because **HE LIVES! HE LIVES TO GIVE YOU EAGER EXPECTATION OF GLORY.**

Jesus "looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you.'" Did you catch it? While Jesus lived on this earth, he too lived in eager expectation of glory! It's shocking and confusing to think that. Jesus says, "Glorify your Son..." That was all part of God's plan to set us free. Jesus had to set aside his glory. He had to set aside the glory he had from eternity in order to be the Savior we needed—the Seed/Offspring of the woman.

He was born into this sinful world, like us. In fact, probably with far less pomp and circumstance than we had. You probably had a doctor and nurses examining

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

you all over and caring for your every need. You had parents who took you up in their arms in the comfort of a hospital or their home. Family members were there that same day to rejoice. What did Jesus have? A first-time teenage mom. A first-time dad. An un-sterile stable. And barnyard animals and shepherds for visitors. That humble beginning continued with a life of humility and a ministry of service that resulted in mockery, abandonment, torture and finally execution as an enemy of the state.

But in all that, friends, Jesus set aside his glory, living his life in eager expectation of glory—both for himself and for you! Jesus' glory is complete. He now sits at the right hand of our heavenly Father, ruling over all creation on our behalf. But you could say that he still lives in eager expectation of sharing that eternal glory with us in heaven. Until that day comes, Jesus lives to give eager expectation of glory to you and to me, and he does this by giving us eternal life.

When we think of eternal life, we so often think of something that is still far away from us. Something that is up in heaven. Something we don't yet have. But today Jesus reminds us that this isn't the case at all. Listen again to Jesus' own description of eternal life: "For you [O Father] gave [the Son] authority over all flesh, so that

he may give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent."

The reality of belonging to God through faith in Christ our Savior is this: Eternal life isn't just what will be, but also what is! Eternal life is to know God. To know God isn't having a bunch of trivia tidbits stored away in your gray-matter. To know God is to have a personal relationship with him through faith in Jesus. This is the life you have right now as a child of God. It is the new life in Christ and that life is eternal, starting the very moment God made you his own at your baptism.



Knowing that Jesus lives and this life, this eternal life, is your possession right now is what gives you eager expectation of the glory that is to come. Ah, but there's the sticking point you and I have as the fallen flesh that we are—eager expectation of glory that *is to come*. We don't like that part about the glory that is to come. We want it now. And how easily we convince ourselves that glory isn't just what we want now, but even what we need now.

It doesn't help that it isn't just our sinful heart that tells us this. There are so many in this world touting that banner of Christ who say that this is exactly what it

will be for those who “truly” believe—that glory is found now. They are those who belong to the prosperity gospel movement. They say God wants only to make your life here on earth prosperous—full of health, wealth, happiness and freedom from all evil. They say all this is given to those who will truly believe, reaching another level of faith and mindset. They teach a theology of glory.

But this isn’t what Christians throughout history have found. Is it because the world before us was almost entirely devoid of real Christians? No. On the pages of Scripture, you will never find promises of perfect health, guaranteed riches, full happiness and freedom from the power of Satan—this side of heaven.

Those who preach a theology of glory put words in Jesus’ mouth when, in fact, Jesus promises the opposite. He promises the cross. The proof Jesus gives of this truth is his own life. Peter summarizes this in our second lesson today: “Dear friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

While God never promised a rose garden, glory, this side of heaven, he has promised to use the crosses we bear to

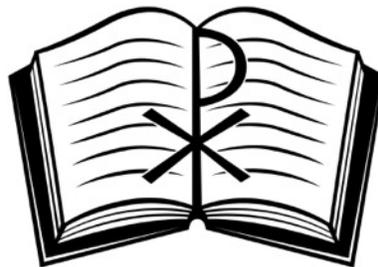
bless us. Hardships, trials, sorrows, griefs and pain—God uses all these things in so many ways and for so many purposes in our lives and in the lives of others. Sometimes it’s a call to repentance. Sometimes to teach us. Sometimes to strengthen us. But especially today, we consider how God uses those things to grow our eager expectation of the glory which waits for us.

As awful as it is at the time, consider how focused you have been on your own eager expectation of glory when you lose a fellow believer, a loved one, in death. A

year ago my family was sitting in the hospital receiving more and more bad news. Heart attack—multiple cardiac arrests—heart pumps—dialysis—low oxygen—massive stroke—seizures. Each one in the moment just seemed like a sucker-

punch to the gut. But then came the focus. Then came the sharper vision as we turned to the only One who can calm our troubled hearts. Oh, in those moments of deepest grief how strong the eager expectation of glory becomes, because we know **JESUS LIVES** and we too shall live!!!

And with that sharper vision and eager expectation of glory, life on earth is put in its proper perspective. You analyze your life and see that it isn’t about jobs, homes, cars, or toys. It’s about the eager expectation of glory and the eternal life that is yours right now. And it’s also about the



eager expectation of telling others about your living Savior so that you can share that eternal glory with them too. And one of the amazing things is that in those deepest darkest times, when our own eager expectation of glory burns the strongest in us, is when we have the most opportunities to tell others about the peace that surpasses all understanding and is found in Jesus Christ alone.

In that Upper Room so long ago, Jesus prayed. As suffering beyond belief stared him in the face, he prayed for you. He prayed that you would hold eternal life as your own possession through faith in him. He prayed that you would believe that **HE LIVES so that you would also have an eager expectation of glory.** The glory he eagerly awaits to share with you in heaven. Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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