

If you were to ask me to describe all of life in one term it would be contained in the idea of anticipation and longing. Hardly are we able to enjoy a moment because within us is the idea that there is something greater, something higher. We live in these moments and whether we call it nostalgia (looking back) or expectation (looking ahead) we live in time with the awareness of eternity (the place where there is no time).

I think that this restlessness within all of our hearts comes from the fact of our creation and the place within time we are in God's purpose for us. We were created for God, but most are not pursuing God.

The Bible says (Ecc. 7:29) - *See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.*

It is the many schemes that resulted in what we call in Christianity, the Fall. What did we Fall from? We fell from glory, fell from God's original intention for us and now man is desperately searching to fill the void with so many things. Now, not all the scheming of man to fill this void would be what we would call immoral or bad things. Sure, many attempt to fill the void with drunkenness, drugs, sex, and the like. But far too often, people try to fill the void with other things; friends, marriage, children, church attendance. But even the best attempts to fill the void is like trying to trying to drive uphill on an icy road with bald tires.

This is what we have been talking about the entire time in our marriage series together here at Oxford. We have been discovering this idea that marriage expresses a greater reality - a reality of a love that has existed forever and will exist forever - the Love of God. The unlimited expression of the love of God is in His self-giving, sacrificial love for us made known to us as Christ and the Church. Marriage has been ordained by God to display His glory, but not to fulfill the singing of our hearts but to leave our hearts in anticipation for something greater!

So if you are here today and are trying to find satisfaction through marriage, you may get close, but as C.S. Lewis said in his sermon the *Weight of Glory*:

These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.

But, one day we will visit that country. We know because the King of that Country has come to us, and indeed is with us here today. But even in His presence here today there is not a full sense. Even though He has come, He has left us both satisfied and longing.

Let's turn to Scripture this morning to understand all of this as we get to see with anticipation a glory that will be ours:

TURN TO JOHN 17

Now, we need to understand John 17. John 17 is the longest and most beautiful prayer that we have from Jesus. It is a prayer that is part of the Farewell Discourse and is prayed in the shadow of the Cross. That does not mean that we read it with gloom but we understand that John 17 is to be read with victory. The one who prays what is prayed in John 17 is the same one who just announced His triumph over the world in John 16:33.

In John 17 Jesus prays for Himself (1-5), His current disciples (6-19) and for his future disciples (us, 20-26). Let's join what He says specifically for us in 20-26

READ TEXT

This morning, I want to give you 3 Truths concerning a glory that awaits those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who was sent from the Father:

1. The Greatest Union is Union with God (20-21)

- The whole world has been created to enjoy fellowship with God. Even now the world is existing at His loving will. He is upholding the world with the word of His power and patiently and lovingly causing rain to fall on both the just and the unjust wishing that all men come to repentance.
- Though man was created for fellowship with God, sin has caused a rupture of fellowship. Fellowship with the Eternal God can only be had in His terms, at His discretion and not at our own. He is God, we are not, He is the Creator, we are His creatures. Man lost fellowship with God when we tried to live out of bounds with this reality. We tried to usurp Him as God and place ourselves there. This has created great strain and left man longing
- And then Jesus comes on the scene as the sent Son. The reason for His coming was to reveal the Father, that is, to reveal who God is!
- One of the saddest places that I have ever visited is the Shepherd's Spinal Clinic in Atlanta. When I ministered to that city we made several visits to the Clinic and saw great inspirational stories of people who had overcome their disabilities. I will never forget visiting one young lady. She was 16 years old, just had started driving, just had started to enjoy life, was active as a cheerleader at her high school, but had an ATV accident and was left paralyzed. She would never walk again, never feel her legs again, could never feel the comfort of a new pair of shoes, would never enjoy a stroll anywhere, and she knew this. When we went to see her you could tell that she did not want us there, what she wanted was to have her legs back. She knew what it was like to run and would never run again and she thought that her life was over, now you and I know that her life is not over and we were there ministering to her to remind her of that but still her life was forever changed and now she would have to go through life handicapped and burdened by her predicament.
- We were made to have union with God, to enjoy fellowship with him but have been hindered because of the Fall, because of sin that separates us from being all that we should be for Him
- Jesus' coming not only showed us God but it also revealed how far from God we were. But he does not simply give us an example He comes to be the way for union with Himself, a union that we were destined to enjoy, a union that though all the powers of hell and scheming's of man try to interrupt could never shake us from His presence.

This is what the next verse teaches us. Read verses 22-24

2. Union With God is Given to Us Through the Sent Son (22-24)

- Look at the language of verse 22. The language is glory and this glory is given.
- For Christ the glory has eternally existed.
- John 1:1 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*
- But we have know it because of His coming
- John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
- It had to be given through Him to us. We could not share any other way. The one who created all things has become the way that all things would be made new, and the making new is nothing short of bringing us in union, perfect union as much as we can experience as His creation, with Himself in an everlasting and forever way.
- By coming to us and taking our broken humanity and making it His very own, He brings us to Himself to share in His nature, not to become His nature but to share in His nature.
- Without ceasing to be what he was he became what he was not. We on the other hand while ceasing to be what we were (by means of death) we (through faith) become what we were always intended to be - one with Him.

Isn't this wonderful? But more than wonderful, it is: The Greatest anticipation of our lives

3. Union with God is the Greatest Anticipation of our Lives (20-26)

- Ephesians 4:13 teaches that the Holy Spirit has been sent, after the finished work of the Son, *to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, **until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ....***
- There is nothing greater for every soul than to enjoy eternal union with God because, again, every soul was created for forever and will exist forever either in union with God or out of union with God. But out of union with God is in a place of eternal torment called Hell!
- When we read Jesus' prayer and see His desire we see how serious He understands what is good for us.
- Verse 25 - *O Righteous Father...* Can't you hear him pleading? How could the world reject Him? How could the world walk away from all that is loving, all that is good? If you know Jesus then you understand how serious the epidemic of unbelief is, how costly it is.
- Our lives, as those who know God, are filled with this longing, filled with the expectant hope with readiness for Jesus prayer to be fully realized.
- 2 Cor 3:18 says it plainly letting us know that the anticipation of our hearts, our deepest longings are being fulfilled in and through Christ
- *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*
- In other words, Jesus prayer in verse 24 for us gives us this awesome hope not just out yonder but here
- With the way that I think, the way that I talk, who I talk with, what I say, how I live, what I see, what I desire, every part of our lives is now an expression of life with Him, beholding Him, experiencing Him, being changed by Him

Listen. This is a prayer, the greatest prayer, is prayed in the shadow of the Cross, the shadow of the empty tomb, the shadow on the sending of the Spirit, the shadow of His soon return, the shadow of our own resurrection, in the shadow of the glory of the LORD filling the earth as the waters cover the sea

4. Our Lives are Testimonies of His Glory

- And that glory is available to all
- Jesus desire is not just that we may know Him, but that all may know Him
- verses 21, 23
- The great prayer ends with love to remind us of the great opportunity that we who know love get to express this love. To show that our lives, as those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are lives that are lived keeping festival to the presence of God. May it never be said of us that we who profess to know God deny Him in the way that we live.
- Union with God is the greatest union, and is the greatest anticipation of our lives and will be the greatest reality that we enjoy
- Marriage expresses this union. Marriage is not this union but is used as a vehicle to express this union to the world. The question then becomes for us who are married, how are we expressing this?
- But not just marriage, this church is also an expression of this union, where ones are married are also brothers and sisters in Christ because His union is a union stronger than any union on earth! Jesus prays for His church to experience the unity that has eternally existed - the loving fellowship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The question is, how are we doing? Are we displaying the love of God to the world? If the world comes could they tell that we are formed by the Cross, that the object of our worship is Jesus, God Almighty? Or are we living without longing?

C.S. Lewis, in his sermon *The Weight of Glory* said it this way:

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

Don't be easily pleased this morning. Glory is available but you must believe.