



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

DOES GOD PLAY FAVORITES?

GOD'S GLORY TAKES PRIORITY (ROM. 9:22-29)

MAY 29-JUNE 4, 2016

MAIN POINT

As Jesus did the work of the Father and glorified Him, we glorify God by serving Him and telling others of the salvation He brings.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What were you put on earth to do? How do you know?

2. How might Christians and non-Christians answer this question differently?

Leader: One of the most basic questions of human existence is, "What am I here for?" Everyone longs to find purpose and meaning in their lives. As believers, we have a clear-cut answer to this question. The Westminster Catechism puts the question this way: "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The answer is to glorify God. We glorify God most fully when we serve Him and tell others of the salvation He brings.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:1-3.**

3. What is going on in Jesus' life as He prayed this prayer? What "time" has come for Jesus? (Look ahead to John 18 for insight.) How did the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus glorify the Father and the Son?

4. Jesus mentions us in His prayer. Where do we fit into God's plan of redemption (v. 2)?

Leader: Jesus prayed these words just prior to giving Himself up on the cross for our sins, an act that brought glory to the Father and the Son because it was the climax of God's redemptive plan, His effort to restore His relationship with sinful humanity. Jesus described saving faith as knowing the one true God through the sacrifice of His Son. We bring glory to God first and foremost by accepting His gift of salvation.

5. How does the gift of redemption compel us to live for the glory of God and enjoy Him for eternity?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 17:4-5.

6. Verse 4 gives us Jesus' model for how to live a life that glorifies God. What does it look like when our lives are devoted to the glory of God? What changes about who we are and how we live?

7. Think back to the sermon from Romans 9:22-29. What did we learn about the scope of God's redemptive plan? How does that scope help you better understand the work God has called us to do?

Leader: The very foundation of Jesus' prayer began with His relationship and oneness in the Father. Specifically, Jesus prayed that God would glorify Him on earth for the purpose of completing the work God had called Him to do, ultimately returning that glory back to the Father as He did. While our mission is different, the end goal is the same. We bring glory to God when we faithfully serve Him and His mission. That mission, according to Matthew 28:19-20, is to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." In Romans 9, Paul helped his readers understand that God's redemptive plan was not limited to the Jews. People from every nation are included in this plan, which means we must do our part to spread God's glory around the world.

8. If the criteria for a life that glorifies God is to serve Him and tell others about Him, then are you living a life that glorifies Him? Share about the challenges or distractions that have gotten in your way recently.

9. If Jesus prayed before He was glorified, what does it tell us about the necessity of prayer in our own lives as we seek to live for the glory of God and enjoy Him forever?

Leader: After the cross and the resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that as Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, He lives to intercede for us. Jesus is praying for us right now and empowering us on mission. If we truly seek to leverage our lives for the glory of God, it cannot be done without prayer. If Jesus prayed as He lived for the glory of God, so should we.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. God created you to bring Him glory. How does this change the way you think about yourself?

11. How might you glorify God this week by serving someone else, like Jesus did for you?

12. As we bring our group year to a close, take a few minutes to discuss and pray through specific ways you can live a life that glorifies God this summer, whether that be through tangible acts of service, spiritual conversations that need to be had, or challenges for personal growth.

PRAYER

Praise God for revealing His glory through His Son. Ask that as His church, we would realize the gift we have been given in redemption and allow our appreciation of that gift to extend through us as we tell other people about what God has done for us.

MEMORIZE

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." –John 17:1-2

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JOHN 17:1-5

17:1. Jesus' high priestly prayer begins by establishing the Sonship of our Lord. In the Old Testament, God was the Almighty One, the Sovereign, but rarely the Father. But this new covenant truth appears frequently in the Gospel of John.

There was no question that God loved his people and cared for them through the ages, but His approachability was another matter. The pattern was fixed—God appeared through the priest and the high priest, who were confined to a certain place and time. But now, earth had become the visited planet, and God moved among people in the person of his Son. No longer would there be a veil, but instead, a family relationship between God the Father and His children—a relationship exemplified by Jesus the Son.

Verse 1 shows us how specifically Jesus prayed. It begins with a petition: "Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."

17:2. In the Father-Son relationship of this passage, we also see the sovereignty of our Lord—His authority over all people. This is the same word (exousian) found in the Great Commission, when Matthew recorded Jesus' words about having received all authority from the Father. We do not often use the word "glorification," but the New Testament applies it to Jesus in order to describe a fuller manifestation of His true nature, which would become more acute at the time of the resurrection and ascension.

We should note that the Lord did not request power. Jesus did not take on sovereignty and omnipotence after the ascension. He possessed these eternal qualities then and still possesses them today as a member of the eternal Godhead. The result of this authority over all people and the major purpose of its exercise by the Son centers in eternal life for those designated to receive it. The entire prayer keys to this central idea of eternal life, since that is the result of the glorification of Christ in the lives of people. The Father gives Christ believers. This fact is emphasized no fewer than seven times in this chapter (vv. 2, 6, 9, 11–12, 24).

17:3. We also see here the salvation of our Lord in what has become a major New Testament text on the theology of redemption. What is eternal life? It is knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He sent. John recalled these words (which he probably overheard) in his first epistle: "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11–12).

For hundreds of years, people have tried to know God without coming through the only door or walking the narrow way. But the Bible offers no access to the Father except through the Son. Any theology of God that leaves out Jesus Christ borders on idolatry (1 John 5:20–21).

Christ's definition of eternal life is important because it differs from the current concept of endless existence. The word know in verse 3 is ginosko, emphasizing an experiential relationship, rather than just necessary information. The verb also appears here in the present tense, suggesting a continuing personal experience and contact with both the Father and the Son.

17:4-5. The fourth segment of this first paragraph teaches us about the status of our Lord. Jesus' earthly ministry had now finished. Indeed, he would announce that from the cross. Here again we have the second petition, identical to the first—Jesus' only request of the Father regarding himself. He wanted to return home to claim again his status as the prince of heaven. Jesus had always been "about his Father's business." Now that earthly business was drawing to a close.

This was not some work Jesus constructed for himself but the completion of obedience to God's plan. Soon he would reassume the independent exercise of his divine attributes. "The hour," which he had so frequently said had not yet come, had now arrived.

We dare not miss the practical application of this paragraph while relishing the splendor of its theology. Jesus set a model for finishing tasks God gives us to do. Think of pastors leaving churches before their work is finished. Think of missionaries returning from the field before God's actual release. Think of the many times

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

you and I have started some task for the Lord with great enthusiasm only to abandon it—unfinished—in the busyness of our lives.

The humiliation of death in humanity is, for the Lord, glorification. What we would consider the end of life, Jesus considered return to the reality of eternal life. Christian praying depends on Jesus' relationship to the Father. Through him we have access to the Almighty God of the universe—a fact established by his own words in this prayer.