

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 25, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 39, 160:1, 32, 616, 355.

Lessons: Psalm 16, 1 John 1:1-10, John 8:42-59.

Sermon Text: John 17:1-5

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

At this time Jesus is still in the upper room with his disciples. This chapter is called his ‘great high priestly prayer’ because here Jesus is functioning as high priest and intercedes to the Father first for himself, then for the disciples, and then for all believers.

Jesus had been talking to his disciples, and in the verses immediately before our text we read that they said *“Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”* *‘You believe at last!’ Jesus answered. ‘But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.’* (John 16:30-33)

Then he tells them *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* With that joyful encouragement, let us consider Jesus’ great prayer. Philip Melancthon, a contemporary of Luther and the primary author of the Augsburg Confession wrote “No worthier, no holier, no more blessed or exalted voice has ever been heard in heaven or on earth than this petition of the Son of God Himself.”

Today we are reminded as

**JESUS TALKS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE**

1. (that) God the Father will be glorified in Jesus Christ,
2. (that) God the Father has given authority to His Son to give eternal life,
3. (that) Jesus will give eternal life to all those the Father has given him,
4. (and) Eternal life is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sent.

In this great prayer Jesus begins by praying for himself and for his mission. He appears in His work as Mediator, praying to His heavenly Father first for Himself, then for His little band of disciples, and finally for all those who would be gathered by the proclamation of the Gospel.

He asks *“Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”*

A number of times in the past Jesus had been criticized and mocked by leaders among the Jews for claiming he was the Son of God. And at his trial that accusation would again be made against him, as if it were blasphemy and grounds for executing him. But there is no true God without Jesus Christ. Our God is triune, that is, three persons but only one God. The catechism speaks of open idolatry as not only giving glory to idols as god, but also when people “try to give glory to the Father without also giving equal glory to Jesus.” Yet many people try to make public, unionistic prayers to ‘god’ – some god, thinking it is the true god – without using the name of Jesus. When such public, sinful prayers do mention the name of Jesus, the person making such prayers is often criticized by many for that very reason. Scripture tells us *“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”* (John 5:23) And *“No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”* (1 John 2:23)

Jesus is about to enter on the last part, the most important part, of his work. The hour is come which was to be the climax and culmination of His life's work, the hour in which He was to go to the Father through His death.

Jesus will have the purpose of His life carried out through His suffering, death, resurrection, and sitting at the right hand of God. Even his human nature is to be glorified.

And just as he, the Son, would be glorified, so also he, the Son should glorify the Father. The fulfillment of the will of the Father, the reconciliation of the world, giving redemption to all believers; all these facts would reflect and be added to the glory of the Father. The entire work of Christ in His state of exaltation is a continuous glorifying of the Father. Its goal is the praise of God for His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. And we must remember that Jesus' state of exaltation is identified by the words in the Apostolic Creed that Jesus "descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

He prays that in the hour of his suffering and death the Father will take him through the resurrection and ascension into the perfect and majestic glory which was his from eternity as the eternal Son of God. This was the glory which Jesus had freely relinquished and not used during his state of humiliation. **"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him"** (Hebrews 5:8-9) Now will be made plain what Paul writes about Jesus' exaltation: **"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"** (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus can accomplish this glorifying of his heavenly Father because the Father **"granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him."**

In praying for God the Father to glorify him, Jesus was praying for the successful outcome of his work of salvation. The glory would come with Jesus' victory on the cross over sin and Satan. It would be revealed in his resurrection and ascension, and would be made complete in heaven.

When the disciples saw Jesus alive after he had been placed dead in the grave, they saw that glory, **"the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14)

All that the Son did was for the glory of the Father. And the Father gave the Son, in his human nature, authority over all people. **"God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,"** (Ephesians 1:22) so that Jesus might give them eternal life.

Make no mistake. After his resurrection and before he ascended into heaven, Jesus said: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** (Matthew 28:18) **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."** (Matthew 28:18 King James Version).

Jesus' authority extended over everyone, and he won eternal life for everyone. In that way, we can understand that Jesus wants to give eternal life to all those God had given him. However, what Jesus won for everyone would have value only for those who would believe it. Those who believe have come to know God and Jesus Christ, who was sent from God. They believe and live eternally.

Through His suffering and death Jesus has power over all flesh, since He 'earned' all men, he gained them for Himself, by His redemption. There is no one excepted: every one who belongs to the category "flesh" is included in the number of those for whom Jesus paid with His blood. And out of this whole number God has given certain ones to Jesus. They are the ones who actually receive the salvation of Jesus by faith. They are the only ones who actually become partakers of the grace of God in Christ the Savior. Eternal salvation, which was intended for all men, is realized only in the case of the believers. The credit goes to God. The fault or blame in the case of unbelievers is plainly theirs.

All who believe in Jesus as God's Son have eternal life.

The Father is glorified when believers receive and accept this eternal life.

It is an illustration of the **"all power"** which was given to Christ that God, on account of the work of Jesus, might have the Savior give eternal life to everyone that belonged to Him. The Son has the authority and power to give eternal life to them whom God gave Him as His own.

Believers in Christ know from this prayer that they have eternal life.

Jesus says **"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."**

But this life eternal, which the believers receive at the hands of Jesus, consists of two things. First there is the true knowledge, the right understanding of God as the only true God, as the one and only Lord, and of Jesus Christ, the Savior, as the one sent by God to accomplish the salvation of the world. Second, there is faith in that fact, belief, trusting and having confidence in that fact of salvation. The knowledge and belief in both the Father and the Son are necessary for the obtaining of eternal life. The Father has revealed Himself in the Son, and the Son has revealed the Father. One writer had this to say: Eternal life is the intimate union and communion with the Father and the Son. This happiness and bliss begins even here in time; here on earth. [Here on earth we experience it] only in part, but in the future life [we will experience it] in all its fullness and glory. In this way the Son glorifies the Father, by bringing the believers to the right knowledge of the Father. This work He began in this world. That was one of the purposes of the incarnation. The fact that Jesus carried out the work entrusted to Him, that He fulfilled the will of the Father in every detail, will serve the glory and praise of the Father. Every person who was gained by the teaching of Jesus will add his voice in praising the God of mercy and in praying to Him in spirit and in truth. [Because all this has been] accomplished, the Father should now, in turn, receive the Son up into glory. [He will] crown His human nature with the full and unrestricted exercise of all the divine attributes and powers which were His in the bosom of the Father before the world began. Jesus, even in the midst of humiliation on earth, was the possessor of the divine glory. Even as man He was almighty, omniscient, omnipresent. But He did not make use of these divine attributes except in His miracles and at a few other occasions [such as the transfiguration] when the flashes of His divine majesty became visible to men. But through His [suffering], death, and resurrection Jesus wanted to enter into the state of glory, into the full exercise and enjoyment of the heavenly, divine essence, and of all the joy and bliss in the presence of His Father, also according to His human nature. This section of Christ's prayer [is] a petition for Himself, namely, for His own glorification as man; but He indicates even here that this glorious culmination will be of benefit also to men.

***“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”***

Jesus was prepared to show God’s glory by completing God’s work of salvation. He prayed for God to bring him through his suffering and restore him in the glory of heaven. As the second person of the Godhead, Jesus – “the Word” – had shared it with the Father before the world began. ***“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** (Philippians 2:9-11)

Eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ and the Father who sent him. Not just knowing by name, but knowing in faith. Peter proclaimed: ***“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*** (Acts 4:12)

We must boldly – yet with love – proclaim that truth. Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. Jesus himself said ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** (John 14:6)

You have learned that fact, that Good News. By your confession I accept that you believe that fact. By my confession you accept that I believe that fact. Jesus has saved you and you have come to know it. This is the time, now is the time to give that message to others. Jesus is the only way to eternal life.

It is our joy to learn and to share that message. May we boldly speak up and tell others about eternal life which is this simple fact: ***“that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*** God, give us the strength and courage to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Savior! Amen.