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JOHN 17:1-10

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Father, thank you that we can be part of the church. We are the church as you send us out into the world to serve you and to represent you. Lord, we consider it a privilege to be Christ-followers and we value your word highly. We hold it up as the standard by which we measure everything. Every social problem, every decision that we make, every challenge that we face, everything that we find ourselves faced with, Lord, we want to evaluate by scripture. We hold it high as our standard. So now, Lord, as we open your word, we ask that you would teach us. Give us some more guidance. Maybe it's something new that we need to learn. Maybe it's some reminders of things that we already know, we've just forgotten. We ask that you use your Holy Spirit in our hearts today to empower us and reveal to us what you would have for us today. In Jesus' name, amen.

I find it fascinating to study how the church developed after the disciples passed off the scene. The church grew rather quickly, partly because of the persecution and Christians were all over the place. But partly because many of them had seen Jesus and they told people about the resurrection and how Jesus was different than the other religions they had experienced and the power of Jesus to do amazing things. I find it fascinating to study that in the early centuries of church history and how the church grew.

When I was in seminary in my church history course I had to do a paper. I had to choose a topic for a paper. So I chose to do a paper on the prayers of the early church fathers. They called them fathers. They were the early pastors and leaders of the church there and many of their prayers, sermons were written down. We have them even today, ancient documents that describe the theology as we were understanding it and how they were implementing Christianity. And that's what I like. Because as I read those prayers I think, "Boy, that's the same prayer I'm praying. They were praying that thousands of years ago (or however long ago that was) and here I'm praying that same kind of prayer."

Let me give you an example. This is Ambrose in Milan. Now Milan is in northern Italy. So the church is developing in northern Italy. It's developed all over the world, but in northern Italy there's this Pastor Ambrose and we have some of his writings there. One of them is this prayer: "Oh Lord, who has mercy upon all, take away from me my sins and mercifully kindle in me the fire of thy Holy Spirit. Take away from me the heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh. A heart to love and adore thee. A heart to delight in thee, to follow, and to enjoy thee for Christ's sake."

I know that's the prayer that some of you came here to pray today. Because you just value Christ so much and you see that and you go, "Wow." This guy was in the 4th century there. And he is praying the same kind for prayer that we pray.

His name was Origen. He was an apologist. An apologist is someone who defends the faith. And he was a brilliant man. So there were occasionally some kind of groups that formed that were heretical that took an aspect of the gospel and didn't represent the gospel itself. So he prays this prayer. Notice the time of his life was 185-254. This guy is a long time ago. Listen to his prayer. He prays this: "Jesus, my feet are dirty. Come even as a slave to me, pour water into your bowl, come and wash my feet. In asking such a thing I know I am overbold, but I dread what was threatened when you said to me, 'If I do not wash your feet I have no fellowship with you.' Wash my feet then, because I love for your companionship." This guy is an apologist in Alexandria, Egypt where we have a number of his writings and books that were protected well because of the climate in Egypt.

It's just fascinating to me to see how Christianity has grown and developed, but remained the same. We're still Christ-followers, we still trust Him as our Lord and Savior. We recognize that He died, was buried, and that He rose again for us. That we're living the same kind of lives that those way back then were so committed and on fire for. One of the things I enjoyed about my research paper was when you actually read the prayers of someone else, you get inside into their heart. In the same way that as you pray with other people, you hear more about what their heart is like.

That's why it's valuable for you to be praying out loud with other people. Praying out loud in your family, praying out loud with your husband or wife, praying out loud with your children. And if you have a problem praying out loud, I've just got one thing to say: Get over it. Because you don't want to have a private faith, you want to have a shared faith. And this prayer is your ability to share your faith with someone else as you pray with them.

I say all of those things, because now we're going to look at a prayer, the prayer of Jesus in John 17. I want you to feel the presence of God in the midst of the passage. I want you to see what Jesus is saying in those words. As this historical event unfolds and we get His words there, we're also recognizing His heart and understanding what He's saying (I think in some very intriguing ways).

In fact would you stand with me as we read our passage today from John 17:1-10. After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew

with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.”

You may be seated.

Notice first of all the word *glory* I underlined it in our passage these different words. I'd encourage you to bring your Bibles on Sundays or electronic Bible, or however you want to manage it, and take notes. This is a great thing. If you can underline the word *glorify* or *glory* it just stands out in the passage. Five times in the first five verses and then back down here in verse 10. *Glory*.

What is the glory of God? Just think with me for a minute. What is the glory of God? The glory of God isn't a thing. The glory of God is an expression of His greatness. It's like if we could get outside of the clouds of our universe and see God in all of His splendor, that would be God's glory. I think there are three ways that we get to see God's glory. We get pathways into this glory. One is when we see the magnificence of God and how big and huge He is. And we go, "wow." That "wow" response is the connection we have to the glory of God.

A second way that we see the glory of God is through the presence. We see that the glory of God filled the temple. That the glory of God came down over the tabernacle, representing the very presence of God. There are times that you know when you're in the very presence of God. Sometimes it's when we're worshiping and singing worship songs to the Lord. You just feel the glory of God. You're getting a glimpse of the glory. It's just one of those pathways.

The first one has to do with magnificence of God when we see His glory. The second one has to do with this presence of God. And the third one has to do with His plan. When you get a glimpse of the plan, when you see the different things taking place in God's plan, you get to see the glory of God. It's awesome. This glory is just so amazing that it throws us to our knees. It just creates this awesome confidence in us that we are connected to God in a powerful way.

So let me take you on a little path of the glory of God in God's word. When we see in Psalm 19:1-6 – *The heavens declare the glory of God.* Now they're using the idea of words and speaking to describe this in helping us understand what can speak, what can't speak. But the message is there. Listen to the words described here. *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.*

There's something about looking at the heavens that just reveals the magnificence of God and allows you to see the glory of God. Now you can be a farmer out in your field and look up and see at night when it's really dark because there's no city lights. You can be out there and you can see the beauty out there and you can see the glory of God. That's one way. Or you could be a

scientist and you can study the heavens and astronomy. And as you do, you can see the magnificence that exists there.

There's a message there. A message that goes out to the whole earth that there is a God and He's working. That's what it says. *The skies proclaim the word of his hands*. There's a God and He's working. You can tell that just by looking at the heavens. There's the glory of God is just so big. It must have been amazing to see the cloud come down over the tabernacle and recognize that's the presence of God, the glory of God.

Now Paul picks up this idea in Romans 3:23 and shares the bad news with us. He says – *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. Well that's an interesting idea. So we could see the glory of God, but there's something you see inside of ourselves that makes it hard to connect with God and to recognize who He is, and that's our sinfulness. We don't have to go too far to recognize our sin nature because the sin nature is a pull. It's a gravitational pull towards selfishness.

I would suggest that we all have a glory dysfunction. This glory that we end up being selfish. We try to glorify ourselves. So as we try to glorify ourselves, we end up with missing really the glory of God that He wants us to understand. We miss it because we have sin in our lives. It just confounds the whole problem because we have this glory dysfunction in our lives. We want to build ourselves up. So if there's something wrong going on, oh we can point out the something wrong and we start building ourselves up by being a critical person or being negative.

If you're negative, what does that say? The person who's negative all the time. I don't know why a person is negative all the time. It has something to do with this glory dysfunction that takes place when we try to build ourselves up by putting other people down or comparing ourselves to other people or whatever we do to try to make ourselves feel good somehow. That's part of the glory dysfunction. And God wants to lay it out right here real quick and let us know that we cannot get to the glory of God on our own because of sin. We've got to accept that.

In fact it means a transformation of our thinking. It has to be something completely different. And that's when we come to our passage. This is from our passage in John 17:5 that we just read. It says this: *And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began*. What Jesus is saying is God, I had glory with you before the world began. Now if you think back to before the world was even created, God is outside the time. But the very first thing that God had to create was time. Once He created time, He stepped into that time envelope and He sent Jesus to be in that, to come to earth that He created. And when He did come to earth, something happened. He left the glory behind.

See when Jesus was on earth, He was totally God and totally man. But He left the glory. The glory was back there. He came to earth to become a man so that He could fulfill God's plan, this glorified plan. And whenever we see the plan of God, not only the plan of creation before the world began, the creation, but also the plan of redemption. When we see creation, redemption, restoration of our lives, we see that plan, we go, "Whoa. That is so amazing." That's the glory of God.

So Jesus knows now that He's here on earth without the glory. Oh He has powers. I mean He can heal people and He can know what's going on in people's minds. But Philippians 2 tells us that He emptied Himself. What did He empty Himself of? He emptied Himself of the glory. And so He's here on earth without the glory, but He's now saying, "Okay Lord, I'm fulfilling your plan. God, I'm connecting with you as the Father here, fulfilling this plan, and I will return to that glory." So when Jesus Christ died on the cross, executing the plan of God, in the midst of that He rejoined the Father in this glorified presence.

See, we have a problem and that problem is sin that prevents us from experiencing the glory of God. But Jesus Christ died so that we can experience that glory. And we're going to experience it in practical ways. I always like when I'm teaching to ask the question, "So what? How does this apply to me?" So that's where we're getting here. This is, I think, what you're going to take away from our time today.

1 Corinthians 10:31 uses the word *glory* of God when it says this: *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* That your motivation is not to bring self-aggrandizement, to make yourself look good. The goal is the glory of God. So now we ask different questions about life.

If we read the whole passage, the statement there is all foods, drink, everything is permissible within God's plan, but sometimes you may restrict your freedom based on God's glory. You may choose not to eat or drink something because it's going to cause someone else to stumble. It's going to cause offense to someone. So you may choose to limit your behavior so that you can glorify God. So now we ask different questions about life. Now when we're trying to accomplish something, we're asking the question... Of all these choices I make, which one of these is going to glorify God? Every day we're asking the question, how can I glorify God today? That's a different question than we often ask and it will help us move out of this glory dysfunction into what God has for us. And it's not just for us.

Notice in Matthew 5 Jesus says this: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* It's through us that when people see what we're doing and we see the choices that we're making that we're glorifying the Lord and they're drawn to God's glory and they're not drawn to us. They may be drawn to us in the process, but they're drawn to the glory of God.

In our same passage, but in a verse further down (which we'll come to in future weeks) Jesus says this: *I have given them the glory.* He's talking about the people who have not only His disciples, but all those who believe the message. He says – *I have given them the glory.* Well that's cool. *I have given them the glory that you gave me...* Well here's our opportunity to participate in this vast and amazing glory of God that we can enjoy something tremendous. But it's focused on the Lord. It's not focused on us. It's this glory that He gives us.

I just think this is so practical. I was talking to a man last week who told me that he had an anger problem and he wanted to address it. In particular I mainly do family kind of issues and he had a sixteen year old boy that is very annoying, irritating, rebellious, defiant. He's enough to be angry with, I'm telling you. But as we were talking, we ended up talking about driving. He's one of

these guys: He's not an aggressive driver unless someone else is being aggressive. If someone else is pulling up by his car, wants to slide in, he'd speed up real quick so they can't get in. Or if someone pulls up, he'll go up really fast behind them. I said, "Why do you do that? That's probably not glorifying to God." This is his response: "Who will teach them this lesson?"

And then I realized that what he's doing is he's taking on the personal justice. His personal justice is he has to balance the scales of justice every time he's offended. People who believe that they have to balance the scales of justice every time they're offended end up becoming ugly people inside. There's something about glory dysfunction that has this desire for us to rise up and teach someone a lesson or put them in their place or make sure they get the point.

Of course this was having a real problem in his family and his son is terribly irritating. But he got into a fistfight with his son. Really difficult. I said, "Look, if you want to lead with your anger, you know where you start? You start with your driving because you drive so much. If you would just practice glorifying God in your driving and giving up the right to get revenge, God will do something in your heart. But it's going to take some real work of sanctification to build that inside of you in order to make that happen. And it will work itself out into these other areas of family life."

What I think happens in glory dysfunction is that we become miserable inside. We have a greater propensity to anger or lust or whatever it is because we feed this thing inside that God never designed us to feed. It's about glorifying God. If we ask the question, "God, how can I glorify you today?" that's a really important question. A picture of the glory of God.

If we go back to the passage, I want to draw your attention to another group of statements that are in here starting in verse 6. These are the ones where Jesus is describing His disciples. And I'm just really surprised that it describes them so honorably. Because these guys, I know the disciples. I read the stories about these disciples. They are the guys that are making trouble a lot of the time. They just didn't get it. It took them a long time to get the ideas.

Notice how Jesus describes them. He says – *They have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. Everything. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.* Look, I know the disciples. They had a hard time with some of this. *They knew with certainty.* That's a really strong statement. *They believed that you sent me.*

You know as I look at that, I'm reminded of the fact that before the Father, we are perfect. When God looks at you, if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior, God doesn't look at your weaknesses, He doesn't look at your imperfections, He looks at Christ. He accepts Christ as the sacrifice for all of the sin and injustices and He looks at you and me as perfect. We can hold our head up high. We can say, "I am a Christ-follower. I am a child of God. I am a Christian. I am someone who's given my life to Christ and I don't have to defend myself, I don't have to apologize for being who I am as a God-follower. I don't have to compare myself to other people. Before God I am perfect and the only opinion that matters is my Father. My Father's opinion."

Jesus is using that language to describe them just reminds me of this identity that we have before God. That it is perfect, that God has given us something really special in the midst of this. So

there's no reason for a Christian to be going around, "Oh I'm such an idiot. I'm never going to get this right." Our responsibility is to trust Jesus Christ, to glorify Him, and allow Christ's righteousness to be our standard for our own self-concept.

There's one more idea here I just wanted to speak to you before we leave this passage and that's the one at the very end here where He says – *I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.*

Now I find that interesting because first of all *the world* has three different meanings in the Bible. The word *world* one time it means it's creation. God created the whole world. (That's not what's being used here.) The other idea is the world system. That's the system of this world. The world is going somewhere and it's not good. That the system of our world is what we battle against because we get chopped up in it sometimes or we become the enemy of the world. That's not what we're talking about here either in this passage. He's talking about the people. All the people of the world. That's the third way that the word *world* is being used.

But Jesus is saying, "I'm not praying for all the people in all the world. I'm praying for my disciples." Why is He doing that? The reason He does that is not because He doesn't love the whole world. Because we know that *for God so loved the world*. Those are the people, all the people in the world. God loves all the people in the world. But it's through God's people who love Him. It's through those who believed in His name. It's those who've trusted Him that the message of this gospel of change takes place in the world. So Jesus is saying, "I'm not praying for all the people of the world. I'm praying for the Christians who are at work within the world."

We're going to learn more about this as we go through the prayer in coming weeks, but I just want to encourage you in your own prayer life to think this way. We can pray for world peace, but I'm not sure God promises world peace until He comes again. I think what we pray for is that Jesus' people in the midst of our world can bring peace inside of people's hearts in the midst of their trauma and their challenges.

So I would encourage you on a practical level to do this. Pray through the news. If you see a news headline, you see a story in the news, you've got to know there are Christians right behind that story, people who are working. When there's an earthquake in El Salvador or there are immigrants who are trying to get out of their country and into our country, those are political issues. You are going to read about the politics and you can have opinions about the politics of those issues, but you know there are some real people behind those. In fact there are Christians at work in those countries, Honduras, El Salvador, Venezuela. Those are countries that are close to us, but there are bigger places where immigration is just such a problem.

There are more refugees from Syria. 12 million refugees from Syria that are trying to find places because the war has just torn people up. There are Christians working in Syria. That's what we pray for. We pray that God would use the Christians to bring a message of hope to those people who are suffering. We're going to pray for Compassion International who has a ministry in the Sudan and they are trying to help those people in that war-torn country. They are working through churches there to help them. World Vision is trying to work in El Salvador to try to

bring solutions. And they've got great solutions going through the churches that are there. You don't get to hear that in the news.

I think sometimes we probably ought to find other sources for our news because we only get the bad news. The stuff that makes the headlines is often the hype stuff and it's usually bad. There are great things underneath and behind that are so significant. In Nigeria there are attacks happening in northern Nigeria against Christians. We want to pray for those Christians who are being persecuted just because they are Christians. We want to pray for them. I just want to encourage you in your prayer life to pray past the news. Because you see the news regularly. Maybe too much. Maybe you shouldn't watch so much news. I don't know, that's up to you. But the point is that when you see the news, pray past it. There are Christians working there.

If you want to see who they are, then go to Compassion International's site and see what they're doing in various countries. Go to World Vision's site called the "Field Reports" and you can see what's happening in those countries through churches through Christians. See God has called His church, so He's praying for them. They are the vehicle through which God is bringing hope and peace and love to a world that needs it.

And when I say the church, I'm not talking about a building. I'm not even really talking about an organization of the church, although that is often helpful. I'm talking about you and me, the people of the church. We're the people that go out and we go past the news. We know there are real people hurting in the office. We know there are real people in the schools that we spend time in. We know that God has called us to be that light, to express the glory of God, to recognize what God has done for us, and we are there to make a difference. I trust that God will use you wherever you go, whether it's a college campus, or whether it's a workplace, or whether you're going to the gym, or something. Wherever you're going, you represent the glory of God. Everything we do represent God's glory, so we want to move past what we see on the outside because God, Jesus is praying for us.

I'm just going to show you one more verse. We'll look at this verse again. This is in the same passage in John 17. *My prayer is not for them alone.* (He's not just praying for the disciples, but who is He praying for?) *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.* That's me and you. Jesus is praying in this prayer in John 17 for me. I can hardly wait to get to the rest of this passage and see what His prayer really is for me as we look at the rest of the verses in here. But I just want you to know Jesus prayed for you and me that we would be able to glorify God, that we would be able to be the people of God even as we live in the world.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Father, I ask that you would inspire us from your Holy Spirit to live different lives that we would live a life that is sold out for you, that you'd give us wisdom to know how to present you directly or indirectly to those people around us. We ask, Lord, that you would lead people to yourself through us, that you'd allow us to reveal your glory and to glorify you as we spend time with other people. So we ask for your inspiration to do that and for your power to accomplish it. In Jesus' name, amen.