

John 17:1-19

We have a record 21 prayers of Jesus in the gospels. 20 of those times he starts them in the same way as this one – Abba, Father. It's an intimate term that, no doubt, would have drawn sharp looks from any of the religious authorities that heard it. The closest term in English to the Hebrew "Abba", is probably Dad. Not a formal title, but one indicating closeness.

And it's that closeness of relationship that starts to define this prayer. As Jesus draws towards the end of his earthly ministry, this is a prayer of celebration and a prayer of handing on.

So, let's look at the first bit – celebration.

"I have brought you glory by completing the work you gave me to do" 4

When Jesus came, he had a set plan. It was to proclaim the coming kingdom of God in word and deed. It wasn't to heal everyone, it wasn't to speak to everyone but rather for the good news of God to be known. Part of this work was to train and equip a motley crew of disciples. Jesus encapsulates what he has done with them in a few words, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me" 6 "I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them" 8 "They know with certainty that I came from you" 8 He showed the disciples a fresh glimpse of God, he taught them about God's kingdom and they came to a realisation that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. And then there is a beautiful line, "Glory has come to me through them" 10 – This rag tag, unpredictable, unreliable and definitely flawed bunch of disciples has glorified Jesus! He is pleased with them, despite their failings, Jesus can see the gold within. It's a beautiful statement.

But Jesus knows that he has done almost everything asked of him and the final task was to come. Jesus was like a light shining in the darkness and his light was bringing glory to God.

Jesus now asks the Father glorify him "Glorify your Son that your son may glorify you" 1 – considering the context, Jesus is on the way to the cross, this can seem a bit odd, especially viewed through human eyes. The cross and Jesus' death looks more like humiliation rather than glorification. But, as the Bible teaches us, God's ways aren't our ways. The cross and resurrection are the ultimate victories over death. Through the cross, God's plan of salvation is enacted. Glory comes to God because of his saving work for us. It is a measure of his love that what he considers most important is getting rid of the problem of sin and death for little old you and me.

"Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" 5 – Jesus didn't have to do this, he didn't have to come to earth, he didn't have to suffer. But he gave up that glory of heaven that he may be glorified once more through his saving acts.

The second part of this prayer then switches attention and it goes back to the motley crew of disciples. Jesus' work may be about to be completed, but the work was ongoing and the baton was to be handed to the disciples "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" 18. And they would need prayer! "I pray for them" 9, he says.

Jesus recognises that the task that lays ahead of the disciples is not going to be an easy one. If Jesus was not ultimately accepted, then they aren't going to be either! "I have given them your word and the world has hated them" 14 The main reason for this animosity is that followers of Jesus are to stand out in the world. Though we are to be part of this world, we are not to be like this world. The followers of Jesus are to live by a different standard. As Jesus says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it" 16. It's a slight head scratcher, but in essence, our home is not this world, our home is heaven. The ultimate leader we follow is not the world's leaders but our heavenly king. We are people of God's kingdom and followers of Jesus will stand out. The world doesn't like it when the people of God do not conform to the standards of this world.

He also wants his people to remain united. Just as there is a closeness between the Father and the Son, so his prayer is that the believers will have a unity and closeness "Protect them by the power of your name... so that they may be one as we are one" 11

This is a reminder. Yes, we have been given an awesome task, one that can feel daunting. Simply standing and living by God's standards and not those of the world can feel intimidating and daunting. But we are never asked to do anything within our own power. Jesus has done everything for us "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" 19 Being sanctified, in simple terms means being made holy, set apart and brought into an intimate relationship with God.

And that is the whole purpose of Jesus. That is why he came, why he died, why he rose. To bring us into an intimate relationship with God. It's through his relationship that the real meaning and significance of life can be found. It's where we'll find real purpose and satisfaction. You won't find those things within what the world offers. No matter what it claims, nothing about it will truly satisfy. It is only through knowing Jesus, knowing God that there is fulfilment.

So may you today know the intimate love of God. May you know his call upon your life to be holy because he is holy. May you lean entirely upon him knowing he has done everything for you. And may you call upon his name – Abba, Father, in full confidence that he loves you.