

Seeing Christ's Glory in His Love Story (John 17:24-26)

Jn 17 shows us Christ. It answers Jn 12:21 'we wish/desire to see Jesus.' In Jn 17:24, Jesus says He desires (same Greek word) us to see Him and His glory. Jesus reveals God's glory here and wants us to see it. In the OT, His glory was seen in the temple sanctuary. Jn 13-16 has been called the temple of the NT where His glory is. If so, Jn 17 is its holy of holies, after passing through the holy place to the most holy place, based on Christ's sacrifice.

A.W. Pink says here 'the veil is drawn aside, and we are admitted with our great High Priest into "the holiest of all." Here we approach the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, therefore it behooves us to put off our shoes from off our feet, listening with humble, reverent and prepared hearts, for the place whereon we now stand is indeed holy ground.'¹

May God reveal His glory through the preaching of His Word, v. 24 *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*²⁵ *O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.*²⁶ *I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

Lloyd-Jones: 'As we face certain difficulties in the Christian life which trouble and perplex us...difficulties which we have with ourselves and with other people, our tendency is to feel that we are quite alone and that no one understands. But to all that the answer is that here is the Son of God under the very shadow of the cross, knowing what is before him, and yet his great concern, his primary concern is for his people ... There is nothing that is more important for us to grasp than the fact that our Savior...prayed for us on earth and that at this moment he is interceding for us at the right hand'²

Whatever you're going through today, whatever your struggles or difficulty with situations or sinful people, v. 1 lifts up our thoughts to heaven as Jesus looked up to heaven in v. 1 for us. In the hour of greatest struggle, difficulty greater than any of us have ever experienced, Jesus lifted His eyes above a sinful world, selfish people around him, stabbing betrayal about to happen, and this can lift us up if like v. 1 we focus on His glory and His love, v. 26. People are going through weighty things, God's glory (*kabod*) is weightier. A hymn says God's love is 'greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell.' This is a deep well of God's limitless love, but let's at least plunge a little

Let's drop beneath the surface of this deep reservoir of God's love and see some of what's here, and remember a well is something you come back to again and again. My brain has a limited bucket, but I can at least bring up something for us. Jesus said at another well, He satisfies thirsty souls (Jn 4).

'O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, deep well of love;
The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above' [the old hymn says]³

Or 'O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean In its fullness over me, underneath me, all around...'

Or another: 'Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made;
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill, And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God, above, Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Tho' stretched from sky to sky.'⁴

The end of John's gospel says of the life and love of the Son of God, all He did on earth, if the whole was written, '*the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*' (21:25). The world is not enough. The heavens declare the glory of God, but here we have the greatest display of the glory of God's *love* as Jesus looks up to heaven and prays in light of glorious love and then goes from here to die on the cross, stretching His hands from sky to sky to show how big His love is. God's glory and love is bigger than the universe, it existed before the universe, and it brought about the universe. In v. 24-26, these massive truths can't be reduced to an outline, but we can see them in a story. See God's glory in the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

[this isn't a 'how-to' sermon, this is a how-glorious-God-is story]

This story doesn't begin a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. The story of salvation begins long before galaxies existed, when there was only God. This is no fairy tale 'once upon a time,' it's a true story starting before time. In this drama of redemption the main character isn't us, it's God. The end of v. 24 says God the Father loved God the Son before they created the world.

[it's a love story, but men...there's action in it, fighting scenes, blood]

It's a love v. 24 links to glory. In v. 5 Jesus talks about a glory they shared before earth existed. The glorious Trinity had no lack, no needs unfulfilled, no loneliness. The 3-in-1 God was NOT incomplete without us or imperfect in His ability to love. No, John who heard Jesus pray these words wrote in 1 Jn 4 '*God is love.*' He understood from what Jesus taught that God's very eternal nature is love, that isn't something that started after creation. *God is love.* Love in Scripture doesn't seek its own, biblical love requires another person, so this proves the Trinity: God has always existed in 3 persons in a relationship of love, otherwise His eternal nature couldn't be '*God is love.*'

But as Jesus says in v. 25, the world had not known the Father in this way that Jesus knew His Father, a God of love in His essence. James Boice: ‘No Greek, no Roman, no Egyptian, no Babylonian in Christ’s day, or in any of the centuries before, had ever thought of God’s nature as being essentially characterized by love. It is just not there...not the benevolent, unmerited love of God disclosed in the Bible. It simply does not exist in antiquity...’⁵

But in Scripture, God is love eternally essentially as Father, Son, and Spirit. God didn’t ‘need somebody to love.’ He already had a perfect Son in whom He’s well-pleased, eternally sharing in the perfect ‘joy of the Holy Spirit.’ It’s only been the last few thousand years there’s been anyone else, that’s only a blip on the radar of eternity. God did just fine without us in eternity past loving Jesus. We don’t improve on Him. God didn’t need us! The *I Am* as pre-existent was self-sufficient and self-satisfied in the loving fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit, but God decided to let His glorious love overflow

In eternity past, the Father, in His perfect and complete love, promised His Son a people as a love gift to share God’s love with for all eternity. Titus 1 calls them ‘*God’s elect...which God...promised before time began*’ (v. 1-2 NKJV). Who was there to make a promise to before creation, before time? God the Father made a promise to God the Son of an elect people, and the Son in turn pledged to love and redeem them (a covenant of redemption, or plan of redemption). Ephesians says the Father ‘*chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...In love He predestined us...*’ and in turn ‘*Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her* (1:4-5, as His bride, 5:25, 27 NASB). The Father gives the bride to the Son as a love gift and He loves her to the praise of the glory of His grace He prays our eyes will see (1:6, 19).

This is where the prayer started in v. 1, praying for His glory, and then in v. 2 He prays in the end of the verse for ‘*all whom you have given him.*’ In v. 5 He prays that God would glorify His Son with the glory they shared ‘*before the world existed.*’ That’s His resurrection and glorification, He wants them to see that glory in v. 24. Who are those the Father gives to Jesus? In v. 2 it’s those He gives eternal life to. ⁹ *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.*

So these are God’s people, not the world, these are the Father’s people and He gives them to the Son He’s loved before the creation of the world. ²⁵ *O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.* ²⁶ *I made known to them your name*

God's name is who He is, His attributes. The world doesn't know God as righteous Father, but for those the Father chose and gave, Jesus reveals or makes known who the Father is so they'll come to Jesus in faith. 6:37 '*All that the Father gives me will come to me...*' He said earlier '*no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*' (Mt 11:27). Just as the Father chooses to love a people who He gives to the Son who in turn chooses to love them, Jesus chooses to reveal God to them. In Jn 15:15 He told them it's because He loved them as friends that it says He made known the Father. ¹⁶ *You did not choose me, but I chose you*

...
 In the Greek middle form, literally it's '*you didn't choose me for yourself or by yourself, but [strongest Greek contrast] I chose you by myself for myself.*' His choosing us enables us to choose to '*love Him because He first loved us*' (1 Jn 4:19). John knew I'm 'the disciple Jesus loved,' not I who loved Jesus. It's like a song says 'if You had not loved me first, I would refuse You still.'⁶ The end of 15:5 says apart from Christ you can do nothing, but Christ chose in v. 16, not just choosing for service, 13:18 makes clear this choosing also cleanses us, which didn't include Judas who was selected to serve in the 12. In 15:16 this choosing is appointing to life. v. 19 adds He '*chose them out of the world.*' Vine's Dictionary lists these verses as meaning choosing in love. He chose the bride, He pursued her, wooed her and won her heart to love.

'From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride,
 With His own blood He bought her and for her life He died.'⁷

We also sing: 'O how I love Jesus (3x) because He first loved me'⁸

In 17:26 not only did He make His name (attributes, love) known to them, He says '*I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them...*' This is all driven by love, God's love to dwell *in them, in us*. John Piper paraphrases that this way, Jesus: 'made God known so that God's pleasure in his son might be in us and become our pleasure.'⁹

Carson: '*love...in them ... may mean amongst them* (and displayed in their love for one another) or *within them* (so...as individuals they become loving people). It is impossible to think of one without the other ... this text [v. 26] does not simply make these followers the object of God's love (as in v. 23), but promises that they will be so transformed, as God is continually made known to them, that God's own love for his Son will become their love.'¹⁰

Thomas Manton wrote on v. 23b: ‘the expression is stupendous; therefore interpreters have sought to mitigate it ... can there be a more endearing expression?...[love] eternal...unchangeable; as to Christ, so to us...it began before the world was, and will continue when the world shall be no more’¹¹

A modern theologian-poet says eternal ‘inter-Trinitarian love should make us astonished...

Overflow of joy and love, the Father made...a promise
To give His Son a people to liberate from their bondage
So they’re no longer slaves and hostages but blameless and spotless
Consequence of eternal love--our salvation’s accomplished!
Love so perfect, love eternally, Transcends our understanding ...
... when we lived as God’s opponents, He gave His only Son for atonement
So we’ve got to see He can’t possibly love us more than He does this moment
In love, He justified us, in love, He sanctifies us
So we don’t have to jump through hoops to try to make Him like us
One thing we truly cannot fathom--we’re stunned
The Father loves us with the very love He has for His Son!¹²

v. 26 says the eternal unchangeable love within the Trinity is now within us. The love of Father to Son from eternity past is on believers, Ps 103:17 says ‘*the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting...*’ God says to His New Covenant people: ‘*I have loved you with an everlasting love*’ (Jer 31:3). But that’s not all, the end of Jn 17:26 ‘*...I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*’ Not just love in us, the Lord in us! There’s no greater intimacy, the lover of my soul internally in my soul, eternally making known His love inside me. It takes us back to the intimacy v. 24 began with: *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory*

...
Manton: ‘Every verse is sweet but this one should not be read without some ravishment and leaping of heart. One [Puritan said] he would not for all that world that this scripture should have been left out of the Bible. Certainly we [would then lack] a great evidence and demonstration of Christ’s affection ...Love brought Christ out of heaven, that he might be with us...He came to taste the vinegar and the gall [the cross]; we are called to the feast of love’¹³

He desires to be with His bride. One writer says “‘*With me*’ is the language of love. The beloved longs for the lover’s presence. So Jesus, in these final moments, as the last grains of sand trickle through the hour glass before his rendezvous with darkness, gazes across the rolling aeons of the future and anticipates the embrace of his beloved bride in the glory that is to be.”¹⁴

Minutes earlier Christ said to His bride-to-be in Jn 14:2: ‘...*I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you*³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*’ That’s language of Jewish engagement, after a bride was betrothed the groom would go prepare a place for them and would return to bring her. A bride-price had to be paid to the Father, Jesus paid that price on the cross.

In Jewish custom sometimes the bride was given a love gift till His return, to remind her of what He promised. Here Jesus promises as a love gift His Spirit to remind what He said in v. 26, pouring love in our hearts, Rom 5:5. Eph 1:13 uses the word for engagement ring, guarantee of what’s to come. In Jewish tradition, the groom would return to the sound of trumpet and the voice of a messenger to gather the bride to join him at the wedding supper.

Jesus now says ‘*I desire that they...be with me where I am...*’ Just minutes earlier He said of the last supper ‘*I have earnestly desired to eat this...with you...For...I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God,*’ Lk 22. Mt 22 said that kingdom is as father ‘*who gave a wedding feast for his son.*’ Jesus earnestly desires to be with us at that wedding supper Father puts on.

And this isn’t just a wish, it’s His will at death, it’s why He’ll return for you as Paul says at the last trumpet we’ll be changed to meet Him (1 Cor 15:52), at an angelic messenger’s voice calling the bride ‘*to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words*’ (1 Thess 4:18). Be encouraged Jesus wants to be with you

He doesn’t just love you, He *likes* you! He longs to be with His bride! We aren’t desirable in sin, but it’s like Song of Solomon where the bride says of the king ‘*he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend ...[and in his love] I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me*’ (5:16, 7:10). It’s like the King desiring his bride in Ps 45:11 (a picture of Christ and His church). It’s like Boaz eagerly desirous for Ruth to be with him in marriage, not resting till it’s done (3:21, a picture of our greater Kinsman-Redeemer).

Hendriksen says nothing equals the ‘tenderness of this final request [in Jn 17:24]...*I desire...it is my pleasure, my delight...that they be with me.*’¹⁵ Ps 37:4 was my favorite verse: ‘*Delight yourself in the LORD, he will give you the desire of your heart.*’ Jn 17:24 is my new favorite verse because it says the desire of the Lord’s heart is to be with us. He delights in His bride.

Isaiah 62 says of the last day *'you shall be called My Delight Is in Her...for the LORD delights in you...and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you'* (v. 4-5). In the new heavens and new earth the Lord says *'I will...take delight in my people'* (Isa 65:19 NIV). Zeph 3:17 says *'He will take great delight in you...in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing'* (NIV). NASB: *The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you...He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy*

I promised there'd be some action and fighting in this love story: Isa 59:17 says the Lord puts on His armor like a warrior or knight at His 2nd coming, to fight His enemies (v. 18), so His glory will shine from the west like the rising sun (v. 19). Rev 19 says His shining glory is coming on a white horse as a warrior--the greatest ever 'knight in shining armor on a white horse' for the greatest wedding supper ever! In Rev 12 a dragon attacked the woman, and tried to kill the Prince, the male child promised to rule, but Prince Jesus rescues His bride from the dragon's lair. In Rev 19, now as King He defeats that evil armies, then in Rev 20 locks the dragon in a dungeon 1,000 years. In Rev 21 after the final defeat of all the enemies of His kingdom, Christ and His bride live happily ever after in a heavenly castle of a city forever!

Hollywood has nothing on this love story! Disney can't come close to the drama of the true Prince all movies and books fall short of, the love story and marriage all human ones are a faint picture of but pale in comparison to.

What's the application at the end of God's story? To those outside His love, Rev 22 ends with the bride saying *'Come.'* *And let the one who hears say, "Come."* *And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price...The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.* If you aren't yet in love with the Lord, come to the grace of Jesus as the Lord. Come if you're thirsty for this love, come turning from your sin to taste and see the Lord is good in His water of life, come knowing you can't pay for it, trust He paid for your sin on the cross. If you desire Him you can know He has delivered you from hell and in v. 24 desires you be with him in heaven.

That's the invitation to unbelievers, the implication for believers or question for your meditation is do you desire to be with Him in glory? Jesus desires this for you, can you say with Paul *my desire is to depart and be with Christ* (Phil 1:23)? What if you're groaning under difficulties of life? Say with Paul *'in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven'* (2 Cor 5:2 NKJV). Set your mind on things above, not earth.

Seek first His kingdom of heaven, His righteousness. 1 Jn 3:2 'we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.' Until then as we're beholding 'the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another' (2 Cor 3:18).

Rev 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

²¹ *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne ...*

'How, then, should we rejoice; how happy should we be--who are loved by the Lord Jesus! Especially when we consider: on the one hand . . .

how despicable, how poor, how worthless, and how unlovely WE are! And, on the other hand how glorious, wealthy, worthy, lovely JESUS is!

To be loved by Jesus--is to be preferred before the possession of a world!

Think of ... the glory of His person, the vastness of His possessions,

the number of His angelic attendants, the unlimited sovereignty ...

He knew what loving us would cost Him--how He would be treated by us and by others--for our sakes! Yet He fixed His love upon US! He loved US--just because He would! He passed by others more dignified...more exalted ...but He chose US! He did not, could not, NEED us--for He was infinitely happy and glorious without us! Yet He loved us! He still loves us!'¹⁶

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, chapter 57.

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Assurance of our Salvation*, p. 653.

³ Anne Ross Cousin, "The Sands of Time Are Sinking."

⁴ F.M. Lehman, "The Love of God."

⁵ James Boice, *John 13-17*, p. 1349.

⁶ Jordan Kauflin, "All I Have is Christ," Sovereign Grace Music.

⁷ Samuel J. Stone, "The Church's One Foundation."

⁸ Frederick Whitfield, "O How I Love Jesus."

⁹ John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*, p. 26.

¹⁰ D.A. Carson, *John*, p. 570.

¹¹ *Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 11, p. 76-80.

¹² Shai Linne, "Perfect Love," Attributes of God album, LampMode records.

¹³ *Works of Thomas Manton*, Solid Ground Books, vol. 11, p. 89, 97.

¹⁴ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!: With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 251.

¹⁵ William Hendriksen, *John*, p. 366.

¹⁶ James Smith (1802-1862), www.gracegems.org