

The High Priestly Prayer

Part 2
John 17:3-5

With Study Questions

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And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (John 17:3-5).

Preface

Perhaps you have noticed the popular COEXIST sign on bumper stickers and billboards. COEXIST has become an acronym for various religions or philosophies.

Crescent moon=Islam

O=Peace sign

E=Male and female harmony

X=Star of David or Judaism

I=Paganism or Wiccan

S=Yin and yang the complimentary forces of dark and light, feminine and masculine.

T=is a cross or Christianity.

A brief study of the COEXIST foundation unveils their purpose which, at the surface level, utilizes very positive and redemptive language. For example, their foundation affirms that:

God has given us many faiths but only one world in which to co-exist. May your work help all of us to cherish our commonalities and feel enlarged by our differences.

[This] work is a vital test of our determination to find new ways of managing conflict in the new world order.

Setting aside for now the irony of the COEXIST bumper sticker logo being embroiled in a major legal battle over design and copyrights; I think coexistence is a wonderful goal. Unity in the world is a godly objective. But I do have a few questions:

1. There seems to be religions or philosophies conspicuously absent. A study of their literature includes only Jews, Christians and Muslims. What of Buddhists, Hindus, naturalists, atheists, nihilists, skeptics or Satanists for that matter?
2. By coexist do they mean we should try to be nice to each other or that we should actually agree that contradictory notions can both be true? If that were the case they would be promoting a belief in nonsense.
3. When they elevate mission statements like “cherish(ing) and feel(ing) enlarged by our differences” or their “determination to find new ways of managing conflict in the new world order” aren’t they making an effort at simply creating one more religion – a super religion if you will – that develops the over-arching statement of faith for all religions? If I, as an individual disagree with their “new way” would I be a dissident or rebel or apostate?

True unity can never take place in this world by simply ignoring our differences or pretending they don’t exist. The short-sighted or irrational approach by this modern, popular COEXIST foundation reveals that someone or something will always seek, either unwittingly or by design, to fill the void. It is a necessary truth of reality that someone or something will call the shots. The question – the vital question – that must be asked is who or what?

Review

Between the proclamation Jesus makes of His own crucifixion and overcoming of the world and the Garden of Gethsemane we are allowed to listen in on this prayer – this prayer commonly called The High Priestly Prayer – on which the great reformer John Knox was said to have cast his first anchor while on his death bed – it being a source of supreme peace and communion with God.

In verse one Jesus speaks of **“the hour”** which had come, referencing to the cross and its attending passions or sufferings. In the first portion of this prayer, we see Jesus praying for Himself. Jesus prays that the Father would glorify Him¹ culminating in His resurrection and ascension to His Father. Jesus prays as one who has been given authority over **“all flesh,”** the purpose of this authority **“that He should give eternal life to as many as You (His Father has) have given Him.”** Jesus will now define “eternal life.”

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

Only True God

Jesus associates eternal life with knowing God the Father and knowing Him – as if knowing God and having eternal life were synonymous. Woven into this statement are the very exclusive adjectives **“only true”** thus excluding the notion that eternal life can be found but for the saving knowledge of the Triune God through Christ.

One thing I find quite appealing about the Christian faith – about Jesus Christ Himself – is His willingness not to be politically correct. Jesus is unlike so many modern day politicians, poets and philosophers who are unwilling to be clear, for fear of alienating the fence sitters. There are no ambiguous cracks in the armor of Christ’s teaching that allow hirelings entry into His kingdom by **“some other way” (John 10:1)**. Jesus taught,

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, *he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep (John 10:11-13).*

True peace, true unity, true and eternal life is to know the true God and Jesus Christ who the Father, in love, sent to rescue sinners from the wolf –

¹ Glory *doxazo* – which means honor, praise, to invest with dignity, esteem, attribute high status is used eight times in this prayer and appears to be a central theme of it.

which I take to mean anyone or anything offered to man by which he can have eternal life apart from Christ.

Some Muslims visited our church last year. After our question and answer time we had a very friendly and peaceful dialogue. But one was shocked to hear that I believed that faith in Christ is man's only hope for peace with God. Such narrow and closed-minded propositions are shocking to people (at least in today's culture). But it requires only a few minutes of honest introspection to realize that narrow and closed-minded propositions are held by anyone who has any opinion about anything and everyone does.

For example, when the COEXIST foundations asserts that we are to "**cherish our commonalities and feel enlarged by our differences**" they are making a statement they believe to be a moral imperative that ought to be embraced by the whole world. By logical implication, they are stating that anyone who disagrees with them must be wrong! They may find other, friendlier, language to state this. But it is their position nonetheless. People who tell you they agree with you while disagreeing with you aren't to be trusted.

Again, it is a necessary truth of reality that someone or something will call the shots. The question – the vital question – that must be asked is who or what? Certainly God has the complete and uncontestable prerogatives over all creation by virtue of being its Creator. But notice how Jesus appeals, not merely, to His rights over man as Creator, but His love, sacrifice and genuine "**care**" for the sheep.

Like parents who demands obedience from their children, not merely because they birthed them and have God-given authority over them (as if that is not sufficient) but because they know their love for them is superior to others and none will make the sacrifices they're willing to make as parents – to do the work that being a loving parent requires.

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do (John 17:4).

Finished Work

Jesus goes on in His prayer to state that He glorified the Father while on earth. He finished the work – His active and passive obedience: Active in fulfilling all righteousness – succeeding where Adam failed; Passive in taking

upon Himself the suffering of hell that we deserved. This, my friends, distinguishes the Christian faith from all religions.

A portion of my ministerial work this week included the writing of this sermon. I am now giving them sermon and my work (as far as the sermon goes) is done. Religious figures and spiritual leaders, for the most part, are merely instructors. Certainly there may be a price to pay for certain ideas. Religious zeal (for many different religions) can be fatal. But even when one pays that ultimate price, it does not, it cannot expiate sins; it cannot deliver from death, it cannot satisfy God's divine and holy justice.

The Triune God would have a perfect right to demand unwavering allegiance of all creation by simple virtue of His being the Creator and owner of it (Psalm 24:1). But when Jesus speaks of the "only true God" He speaks of a God who "sent" Him to work. And the work included the drubbing of death itself. What other religious leader or set of philosophical maxims can yield for man the unspeakable joy of an immortal soul in the presence of his holy Creator?

Who has the power and authority (seldom will any even pretend to have it) to grant the solace found in the statement of the Psalmist:

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness (Psalm 17:15).

When Jesus "finished" the work, the word *teleiosas*, signifies His completion of the work in its most complete and fulfilled manner. He has finished the work; therefore in relation to eternal life there is no more work to do. Whatever work the Christian man does shows Him to be the recipient of the work of Christ.

Jesus came to work. His work included poverty, disgrace, abandonment and sorrow. And He, unlike the Israelites in the wilderness, and so many of us did not grumble, but...

...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (John 17:5).

Glorified with the Father

There is much to be said and learned from this verse and others like it. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, had no beginning. He existed in glory with His Father before creation. He here prays here for the reintroduction of that glory.

Soon the work of redemption will be accomplished. But redemption still needs to be applied. Jesus had glorified the Father on earth, here Jesus prays that the Father would glorify Him. It is not enough to prepare a Bible study – you must tell people. It is not enough to organize a church service, you must invite people. The accomplished work of redemption (the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and pouring out of God’s Spirit upon the church) could have easily been forgotten.

How many of us (unless we’re history buffs) can recall great men and women and their deeds of service to humanity even a century ago? In the previous chapter Jesus was teaching how it would be better for His followers for Him to go away. For He would send His Spirit and the accomplishment of Jesus would continue to be applied throughout history. Notice how the work of the Spirit revolves around the glory of Christ.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:7-11).

Unity, peace, and life are not to be approached as ambiguous terms. Truth loves a definition. The important things in life must be defined and we must thoughtfully examine who or what we will trust, not only for those definitions, but for how those things are obtained. The prayer of Jesus is that His children know the only true God.

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

Questions for Study

1. What are some problems with the ideology of COEXIST (pages 2, 3)?
2. What is the vital question which must be asked in the pursuit of unity (page 3)?
3. What is the context of the High Priestly Prayer (pages 3, 4)?
4. Discuss the implications of Jesus praying to the “only true God” (page 4).
5. What work did Jesus finish? How does the affect us (pages 5, 6)?
6. Why was it better for Jesus to go away (page 7)?
7. Discuss the accomplished work of redemption in relation to the applied work of redemption (page 7).