

## Amazing Insight into God's Loving Will

Sermon for Palm Sunday

Sermon Text: John 17:1-8



*When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You*

*before the world existed. <sup>6</sup>I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything that You have given Me is from You. <sup>8</sup>For I have given them the words that You gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.*

Five days are between the shout of joy, "Hosanna!" and the cursed cry of "Crucify Him!" There are five days between the realization that Jesus is true God and true Man and the statement that He is cursed! As contradictory as these statements may seem, I can understand them because if Jesus is God, He must be honored as God, but if He is not, then He is the worst blasphemer there ever was since He had compared Himself to the Almighty. Who then is Jesus really? This question is important. Because this question doesn't decide the fate of our Lord Jesus, but ours: "AND THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, THAT THEY KNOW YOU, THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM YOU HAVE SENT."

So, who is Jesus? If we want to know who Jesus is, then we must look at His purpose. This purpose is clearly before our eyes when He looks trustingly up to heaven and says to God: "It is finished! My work and time in this world are at an end." To understand this goal of Jesus, we must go back again to the beginning of the Bible. We see there that humans didn't randomly develop from random means. No, the existence of people lays hidden in God's holy will. He wanted us and He established people as the crown of creation and made us in His image. That means that something of God exists within us. His Holy Will and His Plan are written on our faces. Now we know that people fell away from this Plan, they lost the face and sonship of God, and the first question here is this: Can it be that God's Will and Plan is being thwarted by people? And what will God's answer to that be? In Jesus, we see God's answer to us. In Jesus, we see that God still never deviated from His Plan. He still continues to see us as His Children and He wants to receive us as His Children again. He wants His ways to be written on our faces! And that's why Jesus came as the Son of God. In the father-son relationship between God and Jesus, we are clearly shown what God always wanted from us. Through Jesus, we can guess what our purpose has always been. Whoever has seen Jesus, has seen God. Nothing brings us closer to God than the intimate relationship between God and His Son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we see for the first time, who God is and what His goal is. And the Son is like the Father's likeness; without the Son, we can't see the Father and can't understand Him and have no access to Him. All of this is accurately expressed in the Nicene Creed:

*“We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”*

The wonderful thing is that we humans are caught up in this union between the Father and the Son. The Father went out of Himself and became a Son. Why? For us! The Father and the Son have always been one, not just for themselves, but for us! Jesus' story is our story. His death is our death, His life, our life! And that's why we also confess in the Creed: *“who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man.”*

The question now is, how can we receive a part of this unity between God and His Son. In His prayer, Jesus says that God has ordained it so. He speaks about how God has chosen the believers. God Himself ordained everything. Now, people have philosophized for generations about what this being chosen by God might be. Some have said that God has a secret book where He has condemned some people and saved others. According to this view, man has absolutely no possibility of influencing or determining this plan of God. Others have said the opposite: They have said that everything depends on man himself. For example: Now that Jesus died for us all, it all depends on we respond to His death for us. According to this view, it all depends on how strong one believes or how well one can live as a Christian.

Unfortunately, this perspective is very widespread to this day. And this view unfortunately also leads to people looking at others suspiciously and thinking they can judge precisely who is a believer and who is not. In Jesus' prayer to His Father, it is exceptionally clear that no one can determine his own holiness or that of others. No! Everything comes from God. And God is not random or arbitrary. We are not at the mercy of the dark fate of an invisible God, nor are we dependent on our own fickle decisions. Rather, our fate is entirely determined by God. And God Himself has made our destiny extremely clear.

Everything we are and everything we have, our past, our present, and our future, comes solely from the cross and leads back to it. Looking at the cross opens up paradise for us. Looking at the cross reveals to us the secret of life. Looking at the cross unites us with God Himself. That is a great comfort and a source of strength for us. In these uncertain times, where war and climate disasters foreshadow the end of all time, many people ask what the point of life is if we are going to die anyway. Do you feel lost? Do you not know what to do with your life? And do you want to know what God has to do with all this? Then look to the Crucified One. If you want to be sure that you have eternal life, then look to the Crucified One. In Him, I see that God didn't make me by accident. It was His Holy Will. And in Jesus Christ, and in His death on the cross, I see myself in my lost condition. But at the same time, I see the Loving Will of My God. He wants nothing more than that I belong to Him. The Almighty God says: *“You are my beloved son!”* And if He wants that, then so be it! And so shall it be! Amen.