

Lectionary Reflections

**Easter 2017**

**April 23-May 28, 2018**

*O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen (Book of Common Prayer p. 225)*

*Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.*

Allow me to offer a few comments about using the Easter Reflections:

There are 4 Scripture passages listed at the top of each reflection for the week. They are from the Lectionary and are the assigned Scriptures for each Sunday of Easter. Each reflection has the assigned Psalm, OT, NT, and Gospel passage. The Gospel passage is in bold as the reflections, and most likely the sermons, will focus on the Gospel passage. There is not a reflection for the first Sunday of Easter (Easter Sunday). If you are meeting as a small group the week of April 16th, do spend time reflecting on the events of Holy Week and Easter Day, ending your time together in prayer.

I encourage you to read all the Scripture passages during the week if you have time to do so. If you are using these reflections in a small group setting, it would be most helpful to have the group members read the Gospel passage, the reflection and review the questions before gathering together as a group if possible.

When you gather together in small groups, you should read the Gospel passage and reflection together, work through the reflection questions, ending your time together in prayer. It is likely that the Sunday sermon and the Easter Reflections will not be exactly the same, as the sermons and the reflections are written by different people, but they should enhance one another and deepen your reflection upon the Scripture passage.

My prayers are with you as you enter into the joyous season of Easter. May this time spent in study and reflection fill your heart anew with the love that our Lord has for you.

Easter Blessings,

*Jacki Tase*

## Lectionary Reflections

### Second Sunday of Easter –April 23, 2017

Psalm 16

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

1 Peter 1:3-9

**John 20:19-31**

As we begin to read this passage, we find the disciples gathered “*together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders.*” It doesn’t take much imagination to understand the basis of this fear and why they are meeting behind a locked door. They are afraid for their very lives. Jesus has just been crucified and they are his followers. Are they to be next? What is to happen to them?

Suddenly Jesus is there, speaking to them. “*Peace be with you*” he says. These are the very words you would hear today when two friends share a greeting of peace in Hebrew. Then the stunned disciples are given proof, they are able to see the wounds he suffered at crucifixion. It is truly Jesus risen from the dead! At that moment the disciples were forced to grasp what became a central confession of the Church; the risen Lord is none other than the crucified sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> As they embrace this truth, they are filled with joy.

Then, for the second time Jesus gives this greeting, “*Peace be with you!*” It is also the same greeting he shares with Thomas a bit later in verse 26. Is there significance to this greeting? Why is Jesus repeating it three times? It might appear Jesus was just using a conventional greeting of peace and maybe on one level he is, but for the disciples this takes on a very special meaning. Jesus is using this greeting of peace for a reason. It is because with this greeting promises Jesus had made to them are now fulfilled.

The repetition of this greeting of peace would prompt the disciples to remember what Jesus had told them before the cross. He promised to give them peace.<sup>2</sup> (John 14:27) He promised not to abandon them, not to leave them as orphans. He would come for them (John 14:18). They would recall his words, “*In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me. Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy...Now is your time of grief but I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy.*” (John 16: 16, 20, 22). As they remembered his words, they would also be reminded that Jesus had told them all of this would happen. He had done this so that in him they would find peace (John 16:33). Jesus had promised them peace and joy and now he gives it to them.<sup>3</sup>

As his words flooded them with memories, Jesus now moves to commission them, to send them out to carry on his work. He tells them, “*As the Father had sent me, I am sending you.*” (v. 21) Carson describes it in this way; “The Son’s mission in the world is entrusted to them and the Spirit is imparted by the breath of Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus is sending out the very ones who were fearful, the ones who were meeting behind locked doors fearing for their very lives. In a fairly short period of time, they would step out from behind closed and locked doors, empowered by the Holy Spirit and boldly share the Gospel in Jerusalem and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John*, Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991, 649.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary-John*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co. 2000, 552.

<sup>4</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistle of John* Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, 392.

## Reflection Questions

Take a moment to place yourself in the room with the disciples. Reread John 20:19-23. What might it have been like in that room before Jesus enters in?

What might it have been like when Jesus appears? What would it feel like to be one of the disciples at that moment? How would you react?

Thomas was not there when the others had encountered the risen Jesus. When he sees the other disciples they tell him that they have seen the Lord (v. 24). But Thomas refused to believe them, insisting that he will only believe if he sees the risen Jesus and his wounds for himself. One week later Thomas, while with the others in the locked room, encounters Jesus exactly as the other disciples had only a week before. Jesus greets him with peace and then tells Thomas to reach out and touch the wounds himself. It is with Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus that we receive one of the greatest declarations of faith in Scripture. Thomas responds with great conviction based on what he has seen; "My Lord and my God!" (v 28).

What strikes you the most regarding Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus?

Many Christians have experienced doubt during their journey of faith. If you are willing, share with your group how you have handled that moment of doubt and what helped you during that time.

Jesus responds to Thomas' declaration with a blessing. This blessing is for each one of us, "*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" (v.29) As you end your time together, take a moment to receive this blessing from Jesus as we are ones who have "*not seen and yet have believed.*" The word translated as "blessed" in Hebrew most closely means "May it go well for you." So another way to read and understand this blessing is, "May it go well for you those that have not seen yet have believed. End your time together praying for one another

**Lectionary Reflections**  
**Third Sunday of Easter-April 30, 2017**

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

1 Peter 1:17-23

**Luke 24: 13-35**

As we join Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus we find them in deep conversation about all that has just happened in Jerusalem concerning Jesus. Scripture tells us their faces are “downcast” (v. 17). They are grieving and discouraged.

Jesus approaches them but they do not recognize him. To them he is just another stranger on the road. When Jesus engages them, asking what they are discussing, their answer seems to have a bit of an edge. “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened here in these days?” (v. 18) Jesus is not put off or detoured by the tone of their response. He simply continues, asking them to share more of what is troubling them.

After they have shared the whole account of what has just occurred in Jerusalem, Jesus gently challenges them. “How foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (v. 26) You can almost picture Cleopas and his companion a bit startled, suddenly a bit more alert and attentive, maybe even a bit curious wondering who this stranger is that has joined them. As they continue to walk together, Jesus takes the time to “explain to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

As their journey nears its end, Cleopas and his companion invite this stranger to stay with them. Something has been occurring on this journey. They want to hear more from this stranger and are not ready to have this conversation end. They ask this stranger to stay with them and Jesus agrees to stay on.

As Jesus breaks bread and gives it to them, they suddenly recognize him. Craig Evans in his commentary on Luke makes this observation. “This act is surely meant to recall the Lord’s supper (22:14-23) and possibly the feeding of the five thousand (9:10-17) and so would make Jesus’ identification more apparent. But their recognition is not simply natural; it is divinely given. The expression their eyes were opened, should be understood as God opened their eyes.<sup>5</sup> Then he disappears from their sight. What an incredible moment this must have been!

Cleopas and his companion share the feeling they had as Jesus had “opened the Scriptures” (v.32) to them. They describe the feeling they had in their time with Jesus as one that their “hearts were burning within them.” (v. 32) Howard Marshall offers this observation. “The explanation of the OT scripture has already filled their hearts with emotion. Now it is shown to be justified.”<sup>6</sup> They were so captivated by what this stranger had to say and now they understood why. Suddenly their grief and discouragement is replaced by amazement and excitement. Marshall also suggests that in the light of the disciples’ experience later believers may be able to recognize their inward warmth of heart as springing from the presence of the risen Lord.<sup>7</sup> Their response is immediate. They turn back to Jerusalem to share with the other disciples what they have seen and experienced. As they greet the disciples and others, they find out that Simon (Peter) has seen the risen Lord as well.

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<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Evans. “Luke” Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990, 351.

<sup>6</sup> I. Howard Marshall. “The Gospel of Luke” Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, 889.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 899.

## Reflection Questions

### Read Luke 24:13-24

As you read this passage again, place yourself on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and his companion.

They are grieving and discouraged, having placed all their hope in Jesus, that he would be the one who was going to redeem Israel. But now Jesus has been crucified and buried. Not only were they discouraged, they are confused as well as some of the women had claimed the tomb was empty and they had a vision of angels.<sup>8</sup> This was not the outcome they had expected and they could not see that ultimately this outcome would be far greater than they could have imagined!

Has there ever been a time when the outcome of a particular situation you had been praying for was unexpected? How did this unexpected outcome compare to what you originally anticipated?

Sometimes in either the busyness of life or in unexpected events, it is easy to become preoccupied and overwhelmed. During times like this, it can be more challenging to recognize and see the movement of God in our lives because we are so preoccupied.

In what ways did Jesus reveal himself to Cleopas and his companion? What can we learn from their experience and apply to our own lives?

### Read Luke 24:25-35

“When he (Jesus) was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.” It was then they recognized Jesus. But then he was gone. Take a moment to place yourself at the table with Jesus, Cleopas and his companion. What might it have been like to have your “eyes opened” to who this stranger truly was, Jesus the Messiah?

The response of Cleopas and his companion was immediate. They were compelled to go and share this experience and encounter with the risen Christ with the other disciples. Take a moment to discuss how this return trip to Jerusalem would be different from their earlier trip.

They were so excited about their discovery they could now wait to tell their friends what had happened. It is such a natural response. Sharing our faith in Jesus should be that natural and easy but at times, it is not that easy at all. Often times we can feel awkward and uncomfortable.

Take a moment to discuss some of the reasons why it is not as easy to share our faith as we would like it to be.

Recall a time in which you had the same excitement and urgency to share Jesus with a friend, family member or coworker. What was the outcome?

End your time together praying in groups of 2 or 3.

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<sup>8</sup> Craig A. Evans “Luke” 350.

## Lectionary Reflections

### Fourth Sunday of Easter -May 7, 2017

Psalm 23

Acts 2:42-47

1 Peter 2:19-25

**John 10:1-10**

This parable is often referred to as “The Parable of the Good Shepherd.” It follows directly after the recorded incident of the man who was born blind and was healed by Jesus. The Pharisees questioned his healing. He was roughly treated by these religious authorities and thrown out of the synagogue. What John next writes is that many thieves and robbers destroy the sheep, while the good shepherd leads his own out from the sheep pen and into his own flock.<sup>9</sup> These religious leaders would no doubt call themselves the “shepherds” of God’s people. Jesus tells this parable in light of this incident.

This parable should be read against the background of Ezekiel 34. There, the God of Israel speaks as the chief shepherd of his people, who appoints under-shepherds to look after them. But those shepherds are denounced for being more concerned with feeding themselves than to feed the sheep entrusted to their care. Instead of looking after the sheep, they neglected them. Those unworthy shepherds will therefore be removed; God himself will seek his scattered sheep. He will tend to all of their needs and he will commit them to one who is worthy of the trust reposed to him. This is clearly the Messiah of David’s line and the one who makes this claim is making the claim to be the Davidic Messiah.<sup>10</sup>

The details of this parable would have been very clear to those that were hearing Jesus. They would understand this metaphor of the shepherd. The fold or stone enclosure with one entrance and a watchman or doorkeeper would have been quite familiar. The protection of the gate and the ability for the sheep to recognize the voice of the shepherd would have been clear as well for this was something that was well understood. The bond between the shepherd and his sheep, his constant guidance and knowledge of each sheep would be known. The references to ‘thieves and robbers’ would have been common knowledge.

In this parable Jesus appears to be equating these thieves and robbers to the members of the establishment who have shown themselves such unworthy shepherds. Jesus refers to these thieves and robbers as malicious and not caring for the needs of the sheep as a true shepherd would. In times of trouble they are only concerned with their own safety. These religious leaders were more interested in fleecing the sheep than in guiding, nurturing and guarding them. They are the leaders of John chapter 9, who should have had ears to hear Jesus’ claims and recognize him as the revelation from God but who instead belittle and expel the sheep.<sup>11</sup> They will not risk their lives for the sheep as a true shepherd would. The mark of a true shepherd would be that he would know his sheep, care and protect them even if it resulted in his own death. It is interesting to note the safety of the sheep is dependent upon their proximity to, and knowledge of, who is their true shepherd.

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<sup>9</sup> D.A. Carson *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991, 378.

<sup>10</sup> F.F. Bruce *The Gospel and the Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, 223.

<sup>11</sup> D.A. Carson, 382.

The most powerful message of this parable should not be overlooked. It is the great love of the “shepherd” for his flock. His desire to care for, protect, nurture, and to be present with them even in the face of danger is to be of great comfort for those who are followers of Christ Jesus. His willingness to die for the benefit of his flock is the ultimate testimony of his great love for them. For the greatest message of this parable is the unstoppable, undeniable love of God for his people.

### Reflection Questions

#### Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4

To know truth and recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, you must spend time hearing his voice, reading God’s word. In the busyness of our lives, we need to be intentional and creative in the ways in which we hear and surround ourselves in God’s Word.

Share with your group some of the ways you have found it to be helpful for you to hear and learn more of God’s Word. What are some of the challenges you have faced and how have you overcome them?

#### Read Ezekiel 34

God’s words are very strong regarding the failure of the leaders of Israel (the shepherds) to guide their “flock”. As you read and hear these words, what are the warnings you hear to those who lead God’s people?

God speaks in this passage of removing the corrupt shepherds and being the shepherd himself. What are the characteristics of good leadership (shepherding) described by God in this passage?

We all serve as leaders in some way whether it is leading our children and families, leading small groups, or serving in the various leadership roles in the workplace and in the church. Identify and share ways in which we can develop more fully into the type of leaders God desires us to be.

How will this knowledge help you to be a better leader?

Gather in groups of 2 or 3 to pray and give thanks for the great love of God, asking God for the opportunity to experience more of the great love he has for you.

**John 6:39** *“I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”*

## Lectionary Reflections

### Fifth Sunday of Easter –May 14, 2017

Psalms 31:1-5; 15-16

Acts 7:55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

**John 14:1-14**

I remember the day when the beginning verses of this passage came alive for me. I was spending the day in quiet retreat at the Jesuit Center in Wernersville. As I was quietly walking through the hallways, I passed the many rooms that were being prepared for an incoming retreat group. In this grand hallway with beautiful tall wooden doors, each one had an individual's name on the door. Each room had been carefully and lovingly prepared for the incoming guest's comfort. As I took all of this in, I remembered this scripture in John 14 of Jesus promising "*My Father's house has many rooms, I am going there to prepare a place for you.*" (v.2) This brought me great comfort for it was a time of many transitions for me. It was that sense of preparation, love and caring that captured my mind and my heart that day, overwhelming me with the great love the Lord has for each one of us.

It is this overall comfort and assurance that Jesus is giving his disciples in the beginning of this passage. D.A Carson makes this observation. "The disciples are confused and uncertain of what Jesus means and threatened by references of his imminent departure."<sup>12</sup> F. F. Bruce adds, "It is not surprising that their hearts should be troubled, a short time before as they reclined at the table, Jesus himself had been troubled in Spirit as he spoke of the presence of a traitor in their midst (John 13:21). There was also the distress that came from his words about going away where they could not follow him (John 13:33, 36)."<sup>13</sup> It is very easy to understand their confusion. But Jesus makes it clear to them, there is a prepared place for them and they will be with him, but it is to their advantage that he goes away.

Thomas then poses a question. It is clear he really doesn't understand what Jesus is trying to convey to them. This question by Thomas opens the door and provides an opportunity for Jesus to go into more detail. Not only is Jesus going ahead of them and they will eventually be with him, but there is no other way to get there other than through him. Jesus is the way.

F.F. Bruce makes this observation regarding Jesus' statement that he is "the way, and the truth and the life."(v. 6) To come to God by this way is to know him. The disciples have already begun to know the Father because they have come to know the Son. In fact in the Son they have seen the Father. To see the Son is to see in him the otherwise invisible God.<sup>14</sup>

This is the answer to Philip's question. Philip asks for Jesus to show them the Father. In Philip's question, you can almost hear the pleading and desire in his voice to understand. Then Jesus makes it clear to Philip and the other disciples. Jesus says to them, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*"(v.9)

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<sup>12</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (1991), 487.

<sup>13</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (1983), 297.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 299-300.

## Reflection Questions

### Read John 14:1-14

As you read and hear these words, what words stood out the most for you? Was it *“Do not let your heart be troubled?”* Or maybe *“I am going there to prepare a place for you.”* Take a moment to jot down the words that stood out to you.

Now imagine that Jesus is saying these words to you. Allow them to sink into your heart.

If you are comfortable, share the words that have touched your heart today in your group. What do they mean in this season of your life? You may want to refer back to these words throughout this week.

Read John 13 (This will set the context of John 14)

Place yourself in the shoes of the disciples for a moment. Can you understand their confusion and concern?

What might it have been like for them as Jesus speaks these words?

Can you understand why Thomas might have asked the question he does?

D. A Carson states that the way the disciples are to calm their hearts is to trust in God and trust Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

What does it look like to trust in God?

If you are comfortable, share a time that you had to trust in God when it wasn't so easy to do so. What helped you to do this?

In previous weeks, we've looked at the fact that Jesus never seems to be annoyed or put off by the disciple's questions, especially when they do not seem to understand what he is trying to tell them. Here again, Jesus answers both Thomas and Philip's questions with patience and love.

Prayer is a time when we cannot only praise and thank God for his work in our lives, but also to ask for what we feel we need in our lives. Break up into groups of 2 or 3 to pray and ask for whatever is on your heart today.

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<sup>15</sup> D.A. Carson., 487.

## Lectionary Reflections

### The Sixth Sunday of Easter –May 21, 2017

Psalm 66:7-18

Acts 17:22-31

1Peter 3:13-22

**John 14: 15-21**

This week's scripture continues Jesus' conversation with his disciples. He is assuring them by offering words of comfort. As Jesus speaks with them, he makes what F. F. Bruce calls the "vital link" between their love for him and their obedience to him.<sup>16</sup> Jesus tells them "*If you love me, keep my commands.*" (v.15) He is pointing out this very important connection or vital link between loving Christ and being obedient to Christ. Their obedience to him will be directly related to their love for him. This obedience is a willing response, not a sense of obligation and duty, but one that is based in love. In response to this love and obedience, Jesus tells them he will ask the Father to give them another advocate.

In the Greek the word is *parakletos* and is best understood as one who is called alongside as a helper or defender, a friend in court.<sup>17</sup> This advocate will help them and be with them forever (v.16) this is important because Jesus is telling them he will no longer physically be with them. This new advocate is called the "*Spirit of Truth*" (v.17) It was a bit earlier in this conversation that Jesus told the disciples he was "*the way, the truth and the life*" (v.6) Jesus is making the connection for the disciples that this new advocate, the one that the Father will send to walk alongside of them forever, is the "*truth*" just as Jesus is "*the truth*". And to reassure them a bit more, Jesus tells them, "*I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you. Only a little while now and then the world sees me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (vs 18-19).*" The disciples would naturally feel like orphans do, alone and without support when Jesus leaves them. But Jesus is saying, they don't need to feel that way because the advocate will be with them and he will come back for them. This concept of Jesus coming back for them circles back to the beginning of the conversation when Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for them and would come back for them and they would again be with him. (v.1-3)

There is a sequence of thought that Jesus is communicating through these verses. Jesus has promised to ask the Father to send another counselor to be with the disciples forever. They should be encouraged by this. Jesus assures them that he will not leave them orphans, he will come for them. (v.18) But what will it be like when they can't see Jesus anymore? Jesus tells them because he lives referring to the resurrection, they too will live and on that day they will realize Jesus is in the Father; they are in him and his is in them.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> F.F. Bruce *The Gospel and Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., (1983) 301.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>18</sup> D.A. Carson *The Gospel of John*. Wm B. Eerdmans Co., (1991) 502.

## Reflection Questions

### Read John 14:1-21

As you read these verses, place yourself with the disciples, sitting around the table. They are trying to comprehend all that is happening. It's a lot to digest all at once! Jesus has washed their feet, Judas has left after Jesus speaks of betrayal, Peter hears Jesus tell him he would deny him, and now Jesus is telling them he is going to leave them! It is as if their world is being turned upside down.

How do you think you would be feeling at this point?

Can you remember a time in your life when it felt like your world was turned upside down? If you feel comfortable, share with your group not only how it felt but what brought you comfort during that time.

In verse 18 Jesus tells the disciples he will not leave them as orphans; he will come for them. As you hear these words of Jesus, do they offer you comfort and reassurance? In what way?

The word obedience often brings the sense of obligation or duty, something we really don't want to do but feel we have to do. When you think about the word obedience, what thoughts and feelings come to mind?

Jesus make this vital connection between loving him and being obedient to him. What would obedience look and feel like if it was done in this way, out of love?

Can you think of other areas in your life where it would be helpful to have obedience come from a place of love instead of obligation? What difference would that make?

As you end your time together, gather in groups of 3 or 4 to pray for whatever touched your heart during this group time. You may want to thank the Lord for his words of comfort and assurance.

## Lectionary Reflections

### The Seventh Sunday of Easter –May 28, 2017

Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36

Acts 1:6-14

1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11

**John 17:1-11**

As I read through this passage, what initially strikes me is how many times the word “glorify” or “glory” is used particularly in the first 5 verses. It almost seems a bit repetitive, causing me to stumble a bit as I read, not taking in the full meaning. ‘To glorify’ means to praise or to honor, to magnify and ascribe honor to, splendor and wonder, great honor and praise. D.A. Carson shares this observation on verses 1-5:

The verb ‘to glorify’ can mean ‘to praise, to honor’, and something of that meaning is suggested by the fact that God’s purpose is that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father (5:23). The very event by which the Son was being ‘lifted up’ in horrible ignominy and shame was that for which he would be praised around the world by men and women whose sins he had borne. But in this context the primary meaning of ‘to glorify’ is ‘to clothe in splendor’; as verse 5 makes clear. The petition asks the Father to reverse the self-emptying entailed in his incarnation and to restore him to the splendor that he shared with the Father before the world began. That Jesus should pray that the Father might glorify the Son is therefore a moving expression of his own willingness to obey the Father even unto death. From Jesus’ perspective, even the glorification of the Son is not an end in itself. Jesus says in order *that your Son may glorify you.* (v.1)<sup>19</sup>

This prayer is often referred to as the Lord’s high priestly prayer. It is closely linked to John 14-16 when he is giving, what we might call, his farewell instructions to the disciples in the upper room. Throughout the Gospel of John the phrase ‘the hour had not yet come’ is used. But now Jesus is saying the time ‘has come’ the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23); now he (Jesus) prays that he may indeed be glorified. And the cross is the vehicle of that glory.<sup>20</sup>

But this group of disciples throughout all of Jesus’ farewell instructions do not always seem to get the full meaning of what is happening. They interrupted Jesus frequently with questions and statements that reflect their lack of understanding. But Jesus doesn’t seem to get frustrated or angry with them. These were the people who were to bring the witness of Jesus’ teaching, his death and resurrection to the world! He warns them and continues to teach them, and now he prays for them. Jesus looks at them with insight, faith, hope and love, realizing their present devotion and their potential for the future. He knows they are weak but in the power and guidance of the Spirit, they would fulfill the mission.<sup>21</sup> Praise be to God!

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<sup>19</sup> D.A. Carson *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., (1991) 554.

<sup>20</sup> F.F. Bruce *The Gospel & Epistles of John*. W.B. Eerdmans Co., (1983) 329.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

## Reflection Questions

### Read John 17:1-11

Go back to the first 5 verses of John 17. Take turns reading these verses and replacing the word “glory” and “to glorify” with some of the definitions in the reflection.

Example: *“I have brought you great honor on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, clothe me in splendor in your presence.....”*

Does this deepen the meaning for you or help you to grasp the meaning in a greater way?

Read through verses 6-11 doing the same substitution in verse 10.

D.A Carson observes that the arrival of the appointed hour does not strike Jesus as an excuse for resigned fatalism but for prayer. Jesus’ response to all that was before him was to pray. Why was Jesus able to do this? What can we learn from Jesus’ example and how can we apply it in our own lives?

Take a moment to think of how you often deal with very difficult, serious or challenging situations. Where and when did prayer fit into your response to that situation?

Share with your group a challenging time in which you were able to turn to the Lord in prayer. What difference did it make?

Place yourself in the role of Jesus’ disciples. As you think about the loving kindness and patience Jesus had toward them; how he warned them, continued to teach and pray for them in spite of their lack of fully understanding, how does this make you feel? What does this reveal to us about the character of God?

Read verses 9-11 again with the last question in mind. Take hold of any word or phrase that stands out to you. As you now gather in groups of 2 or 3 to pray, thank the Lord for the patience, guidance and protection he has given you.