

RECTOR'S MESSAGE – MAY 17, 2026

John 17:1-11 — *Jesus' High Priestly Prayer*

Let's quickly break this down a little bit.

1. This is Jesus praying right before His passion and death. It's called "***High Priestly Prayer***" because He's interceding for His disciples, like a priest interceding for the people. Here's the text in focus: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son... I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world... I am praying for them... Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." [John 17:1, 6, 9, 11] 1. "Glorify your Son" — For us as 21st century Christians Jesus redefines glory in this time and age. What Jesus means is that ***Glory*** here isn't worldly power or self-recognition, Instagram followers, influence, or platforms. ***It's the cross! His glory is in the cross for our redemption.***

"Father, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" [v.1]. His glory comes through ***suffering, obedience, laying down His life***. Jesus suffered the pains of denial, betrayal and being left alone. Here's a challenge for the 21st century believers: We often look up to Jesus for success, miracles, and influence, and with this social media and prosperity culture push a "***glory***" that looks like comfort, being nice or liked, and lack of suffering. But what this does for Christians now is that it corrects our gaze and perception about what God's glory looks like. However, looking up to Jesus means expecting that following Him may involve carry our own ***cross*** (light or heavy) ***hiddenness, sacrifice, and cost***. Whether as ***an African or Caribbean pastor in a small village, the Canadian nurse working night shifts, the mother praying for her family going through a tough time at 2am — that's glory too***. We don't need a platform to be glorifying God. ***Faithfulness in the ordinary is enough.***

2. "I have manifested your name" — Jesus reveals God's character, not just rules. And what Jesus means to "manifest God's name" is to make God known in action and in His person. Because "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me" [v.6]. However, many Christians today relate to God as a cosmic ***manager, therapist, or rule-enforcer***. That being said, undermining who God is and deconstructing Him often start here — if God feels distant or moralistic, why follow Him anyway? But what does this do for Christians, I mean those who follow Him faithfully? Looking up to Jesus means looking at how He treated people: For example, the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus who wanted to see Jesus, Thomas in doubt - this is looking up to Jesus in everyone. In an age of ***anxiety, loneliness, and identity confusion***, Jesus shows a God who knows you by name — like He did with Mary at the tomb. For 21st century believers, this means discipleship about faithfully performing and more about being known and knowing God.

3. "I am praying for them" — Jesus' intercession for us is our security and what Jesus means is that He prays specifically for His disciples (all of us inclusive), those who follow and trust Him whole-heartedly. "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me" [v.9]. But the 21st century Christian problem is that, Christians often feel alone

in a hostile culture, cancel culture, secular workplaces, family pressures — it feels like you're on your own. But what this does for Christians now is that your faith doesn't depend on you holding on tight enough. Jesus is actively praying for you right now, per Romans 8:34. In the 21st century, where burnout and faith deconstruction are common, this is anchor - **JESUS!**

Practically speaking, you can look up to Jesus as *Advocate*, not just only as example. He's not waiting for us to get it right; He's holding you when we get it wrong. The reason He says, "That they may be one" — Unity as witness in a divided age and world at the moment. And what Jesus means here is that "Holy Father, keep them in your name... that they may be one, even as we are one" [v.11]. **The goal of unity is missional:** "that the world may believe" [v.21, later in the chapter]. We have to realize that the church is fractured

— **denominationally, politically, culturally** - It's now between us vs. them, Gen Z vs. Boomer, "conservative" vs. "progressive" - in all this, no doubt, the social media amplifies division. And what this does for Christians now? Looking up to Jesus means prioritizing unity over self-importance. Jesus isn't praying we all agree on every issue, but that we're held together by the Father's name with a shared mission in His name.

In practice on many levels, Christians may disagree on politics, worship style, or social issues. But if we are held by "Father, Son, Spirit," that's the unity Jesus prays for. This matters because the world watches us in our identity with whom we embody and proclaim. If Christians can't stay together, why would anyone believe the gospel reconciles? We are "Kept in your name" — Identity over self-recognition, and what Jesus says here is that, "Name" in Hebrew thought means = **character** and **identity**. Jesus asks the Father to keep His disciples safe and secure in who God is. However, 21st century Christian problem should not be identity that is outsourced to career, gender, politics, race, social media presence, etc.

Finally for us, looking up to Jesus we have to re-center and embody His character and identity. We should not see ourselves as "Christian influencer," but we're "given by the Father to the Son" [v.6, 9]. That should be our stabilising news in 2026 beyond where algorithms and culture try to define us every 30 seconds. Now the question is, so how do 21st century Christians "look up to Jesus" from John 17:1-11? The answer is, we have to redefine success like Jesus, **Glory** may look like hidden obedience, that's what defines our success, not any viral influence.

We need to know the Father: Look at Jesus to see God as approachable Father, not a distant judge. We have to be rest assured that Jesus is interceding for us with groaning that cannot be altered (Romans 8: 26-27) **You're prayed for. We' are being prayed for.** You don't have to generate your own convenient faith daily, but stay in relationship with God who often prays for **YOU!** That's witness, because you're kept in God's name, not your own performance. **Jesus' High Priestly Prayer** in John 17 is about relationship, not religion. In a 21st century drowning in content, comparison, and division, Jesus pulls the focus back to the Father-Son relationship and invites us into it. Thanks be to God. Amen.

With every blessings,

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Rector