

# Jesus' Hour

## 1 Welcome

It is my privilege to lead you in a time of worship and reflection as we continue to manage Covid-19 lockdown. Find a comfortable place to sit where you are unlikely to be disturbed. You will need your Bible and, possibly, a notebook. It is my humble prayer that you will hear the voice of God speaking to you, to strengthen your faith and equip you to face the challenges in your life.

## 2 Call to Worship

*After Jesus finished saying this, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you." (John 17:1)*

This call to worship comes from our Gospel reading for today. It is the opening sentence of Jesus' prayer to God the Father on the occasion of his farewell address to his disciples. It gives us an insight into the intimate relationship between Father and Son and an understanding of Jesus' purpose on earth.

## 3 Prayer

Our prayer is taken from the first 5 verses of Psalm 63. If possible read it aloud.

<sup>1</sup>*O God, you are my God, and I long for you. My whole being desires you; like a dry, worn-out, and waterless land, my soul is thirsty for you.*

<sup>2</sup>*Let me see you in the sanctuary; let me see how mighty and glorious you are.*

<sup>3</sup>*Your constant love is better than life itself, and so I will praise you.*

<sup>4</sup>*I will give you thanks as long as I live; I will raise my hands to you in prayer.*

<sup>5</sup>*My soul will feast and be satisfied, and I will sing glad songs of praise to you.*

## 4 Scripture readings

John 17:1-24. Jesus prays for his disciples

Acts 1:6-14. Jesus is taken up to heaven

### 4.1 John 17

1. John 17 describes the closing scene of the Last Supper. Jesus' prayer expresses a deeply intimate relationship between God the Father and God the Son. This relationship is expanded to Jesus' immediate disciples and to those who would follow them down to the ages to the present day.
2. This chapter has provided strength and guidance to men of God in all ages, particularly in times of danger and persecution. I mention two examples from the Reformation period:
  - (a) In 1535, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was beheaded for his opposition to Henry VIII's usurpation of the headship of the Church in England. At the scene of his execution, he requested that John 17 be read aloud to him.
  - (b) In 1572, on his deathbed, the Scottish reformer, John Knox, was asked by his wife what she should read to him. Without hesitation he replied, "In the Seventeenth Chapter of John."

## 5 Jesus' hour

1. The prayer, in John 17, is not the typical prayer of a dying man. It is more like an announcement ushering-in a new dispensation in human history. Indeed the old has gone, the new has come! Jesus' opening words set the scene,

*Father the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you.*

Here Jesus alludes to the spectrum of events that would follow; arrest, conviction, crucifixion and death, resurrection and ascension. All to be witnessed by his disciples. Indeed the events that they, initially, read as a victory of evil over good, proved to be a crushing defeat of evil and totally changed the course of human history.

2. In the first 5 verses of the prayer, Jesus reviews what he has done in the events that lead up to this hour;
  - (a) The Son has given eternal life to all those given to him by the Father (17:2);
  - (b) The Father's glory has been revealed on earth (17:4)
3. In 17:6-19, Jesus prays for his disciples, the ones the Father gave him out of the world. He prays for their safety and their unity (17:11). Jesus fulfilled this responsibility while on Earth (17:12).
4. In 17:20-23, Jesus prays for believers, through the centuries, to us today who have believed the message of the first disciples. His prayer for unity amongst his disciples as a witness to the world is strongly emphasised.
5. The closing verses of the prayer (17:24-26) speak to a great concern for all believers and a concern that they should experience a divine love for one another.

## 6 Reflection

1. Let us reflect on 'Jesus Hour' and its meaning for us in the world that we live in. In John 17:26, Jesus prayed,
 

*... in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them. .*

 Do we demonstrate that the love the Father had for the Son is evident in our lives – especially in our relationships with other people.
2. Jesus prayed, fervently, that his disciples should love one another. He identified that our unity would bear witness to the world that we are his disciples. How do you think we are doing?

## 7 Prayer of intercession

You may wish to list requests that come to mind.

Remember those who are leading us in our efforts to defeat the Covid-19 pandemic

What can we do to contribute?

## 8 Benediction

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.*

Jan Reynders