

# Seventh Sunday of Easter

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS OWN

John 17:1-11

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## Analysis by Paige G. Evers

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Jesus Prays, I Walk Away**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *Recoiling from Authority*

If Jesus were praying this prayer aloud today, it's easy to imagine when an audience would stop listening and walk away. It's right at the beginning: "Father...glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people" (vv. 1-2). It's a fine concept that God has given Jesus authority over "all people," but that certainly doesn't include me. I pick and choose from the things Jesus says, taking what suits me and leaving behind the rest. If other great teachers have some wisdom to share, I'll mix that into my spiritual life as well. It doesn't matter where it comes from, as long as it fulfills my needs and makes me feel better about myself.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** : *Getting Ahead on My Own*

My ears closed at the beginning of Jesus' prayer because if Jesus has authority over me, then he has a claim on me. But no one has authority over me or a claim on me except myself. Sure, I may profess faith in him, I may worship him, I may do some things here and there to serve him, but he's not in control of my life. I am. Deep down in my heart, I don't believe in anything or anyone as much as I believe in my own abilities and self-sufficiency. Why should I trust in anyone beside myself? What could anyone else give me that would be better than what I can get for myself?

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** : *Being Lost*

That's what Judas thought when he cashed in on his relationship with Jesus. Looking out for himself, exercising his own authority, he betrayed Jesus for thirty silver coins (Matthew 26:14-16). It seemed like a good deal. But within this same

prayer, in the verse after the assigned text ends, Jesus is clear about what happens to Judas after he turns away from his Lord and tries to gain something for himself. He is “lost” (John 17:12). Those thirty coins didn’t do much for him after all (see Acts 1:13 in today’s First Reading, and then Acts 1:18-19 for what happened to Judas’s cash.) But Judas isn’t the only one who betrays his Lord and denies the claim God has over all people. He isn’t the only one who is “lost.” Anyone who turns away from God, puts his faith in his own authority, and goes his own way will discover that being lost is far worse than being under God’s authority. Being lost means facing God’s wrath and finding that those other so-called great teachers and spiritualities are of no help at all.

## **PROGNOSIS: Jesus Prays, I Receive Eternal Life**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** : *Glorifying the Son*

As Jesus’ prayer continues, he lets the disciples overhear the good news about why God has given him authority over all people. Those whose ears have stayed open hear that it is “to give eternal life to all whom you have given him” (v. 2). And Jesus gives away that eternal life by giving up “the glory I had in [God’s] presence before the world existed” (v. 5). In fact, his opening request in this prayer, that the Father would “glorify your Son” (v. 1), is Johannine language for the crucifixion (see 13:21-32). Jesus is asking for God to go ahead with his plan to crucify his Son for the sake of all people, to forgive their sins and to give them eternal life. Jesus affirms in his prayer that he is set on “finishing the work that you gave me to do” (v. 4). He finishes that work by dying on the cross and bursting out of the tomb. Jesus delights in his authority over and his claim on all people because he doesn’t want any to be lost. He wants them to be saved. He gives up his own life to make it happen.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Being Given Eternal Life***

Listening to Jesus pray, and realizing the depth of his love shown in his death and resurrection, I can wear his claim on me with joy (17:13). Instead of chafing under his authority, my heart can cling to Jesus' words (v. 8), his promise that I belong to God (v. 9), and his prayer that I would remain in God's gracious protection (v. 11). Trusting in Jesus brings me a fullness of life that I could never produce on my own.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Passing on the Gift***

There are still people out there whose ears closed at Jesus' mention of having authority over them. Or they don't know that Jesus prays for them at all. Either way, they haven't yet heard about the joy and fullness that comes from throwing off one's own authority and basking in God's claim on all people as his beloved children. But Jesus prays for us about that, too. He acknowledges that those listening to his prayer—we—are "in the world" (v. 11). We will face opposition to our message about him (v. 14). But a few verses after the assigned text, he prays for "those who will believe in me through [his followers'] word" (vv. 20-23). Jesus is confident that by the power of the words passed from God to him to his disciples to us, those ears will be unstopped. God's gift of eternal life will continue to be given. More and more people will come to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (v. 3).