



## SPIRIT IN THE DESERT

### John 17:1-11

NRSVUE

#### Jesus Prays for His Disciples

**17** 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, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all people,<sup>[a]</sup> to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup> "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. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> 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.

*Grace and peace to you from the mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.*

The hour has come.

Aah Remember when Jesus said this to his disciples. That was awesome!

The late comedian Chris Farley used to repeat an entire scene from a movie while he interviewed the actor. The actor wasn't given anything to respond to, then Farley would say like a star struck child, "do you remember that?"

The actor would say “yes.” Then after an awkward pause Farley would exclaim, “That was awesome!”

Is this the same way we read the words of Jesus? Like Chris Farley, we repeat stories back to Jesus as though it were all in the past? It seems too often, our faith is now full of nostalgia and short on present relevance.

It wasn't awesome what Jesus was going through. What *was* awesome was the radical compassion, radical love, and divine intimacy present in his prayer for us and the entire cosmos.

What *is* awesome is that his prayer transcended time and speaks to us in this hour.

Jesus prayed for radical unity for all those who claim to be followers of him. That their love would be evident in a world that is hurting. Why? Because the hour has come. The followers of Jesus' way of compassion would not escape the world but still be in the world. We exist in the cosmos that Jesus gave his life for.

Reading Jesus's prayer for the people entrusted to him, those he deeply loved and intimately walked with, reminds me of my mother's words to my siblings and I. She would always say, “you kids stick together and never leave the lord.” She was very passionate about these two statements and said them often. Not only to us, her grandchildren as well.

I get it now. For her the future was now. She wanted us to reflect the love she felt for God and for us. Maybe it would be years before she left us to be one with God but the hour to tell us was now. When our dad died, she would pray, “God, I can't do this alone, these are your children you gave to me. Would you be with them when I cannot?” It was a powerful prayer of utter dependence.

Could her prayer be similar to what Jesus prayed as he saw his hour coming? The focus and urgency of their prayers were for radical love and unity.

For the disciples there were no marching orders for their times of coming conflict except to say “We are together in this. The father and me and you are all together in love on this, let it reflect or in other words be the glory.”

Howard Thurman says Jesus prayed for radical unity, radical love, and radical intimacy in these passages. This radical compassion looks weak to armed believers. But when the hour for the march in Selma took place, the world was watching as compassion walked.

I have a little sticker that reads, “Compassion is Revolution.”

How great would it be if prayer of Jesus in John reverberated the same way it did then in this hour?

Many wonder, “is compassion enough when we need weapons?”

Don’t ask me—ask a medic on the front lines. Does war make sense to them? When the siren blares, all that matters to medics is that the hour has come. Compassion responds with urgency.

Jesus is being a medic for a hurting world, a lonely world, a misinformed world limping from one generation to the other.

When I lived in Pasadena, California I rented a room which turned out to be right in the middle of a neighborhood where there was tension between Black and Latino gangs. I learned of a place called the Harambee House. Harambee is a Kiswahili term meaning “let’s get together and push.” A rallying cry for a community coming together to address a problem.

I visited and learned that one of their programs was a community study place for children to work side by side. There they were children of every color sitting side-by-side in beautiful and innocent unity.

Occasionally an older family member would enter and remove their child. They would repeat old conflicts as the reason they cannot be with the other kids. It was a constant uphill battle, but radical compassion kept the doors open. For Harambee House the effort for unity was a reflection, or as Jesus called it, the glory, of radical love he prayed for.

Jesus is calling his people he nurtures to step up. Not with more hand-to-hand combat but with a revolution of compassion.

The hour did not come and go with the death of Jesus and the Easter experience. If we do not see that the hour has come in the right here and now, we cannot experience the radical unity Jesus is praying about for all of us.

Someone said, “Only those who have compassion can claim God is on their side.”

Does this mean compassion gets us out of this hour we are in? Perhaps not any more than a medic would say they get out of the battle as a medic.

Dr King’s mentor Howard Thurman once said compassion is when justice and peace kiss. Compassion is revolution.

Jesus said, “The hour has come.” For many, it meant that his grand plan was about to unfold. They would execute him just as he intended, then he would rise from the dead, and we would all go to heaven. Perhaps, though, the purpose is not eternal life only in the future, but eternity lived in the present.

Jesus’ prayer ended with “...that they may be one as we are one.” Are we courageous enough, as followers, to say, “Now the hour has come?”

How does the hour play out? How are we to engage compassion in our world today where it seems the hour has indeed come?

It appears in glory!

Not as worldly fame or brilliant light, but as the manifestation of divine and radical love, vulnerable and intimate connection, and the relational unity reflected between Jesus and the Father in this hour.

Amen