

John 17:1-11
Easter 7A + May 28, 2017
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church + Boise, Idaho
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In Cahoots!

The Word of the Lord from John 17:10: Jesus prayed to His Father, "All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them." This is the Word of the Lord.

Dear hearers in Christ, He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

And here we have the proof: the risen Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father are in cahoots! Oh, this isn't some leak from an anonymous source among the twelve disciples, nor some grainy recording from a hidden microphone. We've got Jesus Himself admitting it in the very holy Scriptures that the Lord has preserved for you today.

Look at what Jesus has to say: in verse 1, He says that His work is all about mutual glorification: the Father glorifies the Son so that the Son might glorify the Father. In verse 2, the Father has given the Son authority over all flesh – all flesh! Why? It's for the Father's people, who also happen to be the Son's people because the Father has given His people to His Son. In verses 4 and 5, we find that this conspiracy of mutual glorification goes way, way back: Jesus says that He has been sharing glory with His Father since before the world existed. In verse 6, Jesus is back to saying the Father's people are His people; then in verse 7, He declares that His disciples are catching on: they know that the Father has been giving everything to the Son. In fact, in verse 8, Jesus says that everything He's been telling them is straight from the Father – the Son doesn't have an original thought of His own that His Father doesn't have. Finally, in the last verse of our reading, Jesus goes on to say that He and the Father are one.

See? Verse after verse after verse declares that the Father and the Son are in cahoots – and They have been for a long time! And with all this power and glory and authority, what are the Father and the Son "conspiring" to do? What sort of *quid pro quo* is going on here?

This is where it gets really good. The Father and the Son are in cahoots for you.

First, as noted, Father and the Son are all about *glorifying* each other. God is glorious, but that doesn't always mean brilliant, intimidating light – and it certainly isn't the same as man's idea of glory, where we tend to glorify winners who show themselves better than everybody else. Remember when Jesus speaks these words: this is near the end of the Last Supper. He's about to be betrayed, and His crucifixion is only hours away. It's then of all times that Jesus prays, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You."

See, God is love. Love wills to serve and to sacrifice. So even though He is all-powerful and far, far greater than you and me, God is – by nature – a servant. He created Adam and Eve in the first place that He might care for them. When they fell into sin, He didn't say, "It's up to you to get yourselves out of this. Instead, He promised that He would deliver them: He promised that the Seed of the woman would come and crush the serpent's head.

In John 17, the hour has come for that snake to be steamrolled. The devil's only power over you is your sin: he tempts you into sin, then he blackmails you with it. He repeatedly accuses you of the sins that you've done, and he does so to convince you that you're not forgiven. There are variations: he might accuse you by saying, "That sin brings so much pleasure that you don't really want to be forgiven, do you?" On the other hand, he might parade your big sins of the past in front of you and say, "God hates sin, and so God must hate you, too."

If you want to crush the devil's head, get rid of his weapon: sin. If sins are gone, he's got nothing left to accuse with. That's what Jesus does on the cross, right? He dies for your sins. Now, remember that God is love, and that love wills to serve and to sacrifice. When the Son of God defeats the devil, how does He do it? By service and sacrifice. He doesn't quit being a loving servant for a day to beat the devil to a bloody pulp. He remains true to His nature and saves by sacrificing Himself, by taking a beating for you. This is how the Son of God is *glorified*: He saves by love, by service, by dying in the place of sinners.

And in doing so, the Son glorifies the Father, who is equally about love and service. The Father has been in on this plan all along, right? When Jesus was baptized, He took His place with sinners and said, "I'm going to die for them." And when Jesus was baptized, how did the Father respond? He spoke from heaven and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Father declared His approval of His Son taking on the burden of your sin, even though He knew well the cost: not only would His Son sacrifice Himself for you, but the Father would condemn His Son in your place, for your salvation.

Nowhere more than at the cross are the Son and the Father both glorified. They are glorified because they are working in love to save you – save you by their work, their serving, their sacrifice. Because of their love, salvation is a free gift to you.

Keep that in mind the next time we sing, "*Glory* be to God on high," yes? While Father and Son reign in glory, they reign to save you and all who will believe.

The Father has given to His Son authority over all flesh for the sake of His people – and any of those who belong to the Father also belong to the Son. There's a ton of comfort in this for you too. First of all, if the Son has authority over all flesh, then He is given authority to redeem all flesh, that *whoever* believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life. You need never wonder if you're one of the ones for whom Jesus died. Are you made of flesh? Are you in the world? Then Christ has died for you. That is His glory.

Second, on a related note, both the Father and the Son are in on your salvation, because both claim you as His own. We make this clear every Sunday with the absolution, because the pastor doesn't say, "I forgive you in the name of the Son, but the Father ... not so much." It might be easy to take this for granted, but you really shouldn't: other religions are full of multiple gods who compete with each other and even war against each other, usually making humanity miserable in the process. It is not so for you: the one true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is one in essence, one in will and one in love for you.

You might also take this for granted because you have far too high an opinion of yourself, and don't appreciate your sin or how much you don't deserve this gift of salvation. The more we comprehend our sinfulness, the more gloriously shines God's grace.

Third, the Son has authority over all flesh, which means He rules over all things for your good. It's an ugly world, and there are plenty of people who are doing their best to work things for evil, not for good. When you see evil and violence in the world, it doesn't mean that the Son is losing control or dropping the ball. He still has authority over all flesh, because the Father has given it. It may not look like it from what you see on the evening news, but remember that the Son saves by laboring in the midst of suffering. He works patiently now so that more might repent and believe; but He exercises authority for the sake of His people. He will eventually judge the unrepentant sinner, though not because He wants to: that's called His *alien* work for a reason. He would prefer they repent and be saved. But He will judge the wicked to save His people.

Fourth: as the Father and Son are one in essence, will and love, so They are one in Word. The Son speaks what the Father says. The Son's ministry, says Jesus, has been to manifest the name of His Father – to make His Father known to all who will hear by proclaiming His Word. The message made manifest isn't "You're on your own." It isn't "Enjoy your sin before I end you", or "Don't make Me come down there." Of all the things that Father and Son could make known, it's that the Son *has* come down here. He's come down in the flesh, according to His Father's will, to save you by His life, His death and His resurrection.

We could go on, but we note one more thing about Father and Son. When Jesus speaks these words, He isn't teaching the disciples. He's praying. The Son is praying to the Father, and the Father is listening to the prayers of His Son. Jesus is praying for His disciples, and He hasn't stopped yet: Jesus still prays for you. Romans 8:34 declares, "Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Hear that? How does the risen and ascended Jesus spend His time in eternity? He is praying for you. What is the Father doing? He's listening to His Son's prayers about you. I have no idea how those prayers sound: in my feeble mind, I imagine the Son saying, "Father, have mercy on those people at Good Shepherd, because I've died to make them Your people;" and the Father responding, "I delight to have mercy on them, because You died to make them My people!"

Do you see all the Good News? The Father and Son are in cahoots! And clearly, their grand "conspiracy" is your salvation.

Could it get better? It could. It does. There's a sobering bit in this prayer of Jesus, where He says He prays for His people because they will remain in the world long after He is ascended into heaven. Where He will no longer face the scorn and wrath of the world, they will. You do. But what has Jesus just told His disciples in the previous chapter? He will not leave them as orphans. Once He has departed by way of the cross, He will send to them the Helper, the Holy Spirit.

We'll hear more about that on Pentecost next week, but for now do you know what this means? It means that the "conspiracy" grows. Now the Father, the Son *and* the Spirit are revealed as being one – one in essence, one in will, one in Word, one in love and grace for you. You're not just baptized or absolved in the name of the Father and of the Son, but also the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Holy Trinity are in on your salvation.

Now to me, this is a difficult text to preach. There's a reason: it's largely about who God *is*, not what God does or what we're to do, right? It's mostly about how the Father and the Son are one, busy serving each other by serving you. But still, Jesus prays that He would be glorified in you. So as we rejoice in the "conspiracy" of the Father and the Son, I think there are some things here that are good for self-examination.

First: if the Lord is to be glorified in you – if you are to reflect His glory in some way, then you should always keep in mind that the glory of God is found in love, in service and sacrifice. First and foremost, this has to do with maintaining your faith. You are not made or kept holy by *your* strength or works: the Lord keeps you holy by keeping you in *His* grace and faith. In some church bodies, it's said that the purpose of worship is to give glory to God. I suppose that can be true, given a correct understanding: in our Lutheran Confessions, we state that the highest worship of God is the desire to receive the forgiveness of sins. First and foremost, Jesus is glorified in you when you repent of your sin and when you trust in His forgiveness. Remember what Jesus teaches in Luke 15:7-10: what makes the angels of heaven rejoice? Not when Christians do great things, but when one sinner repents. Repentance: that's when the angels rejoice, because that's what Jesus died for.

First and foremost, then, Jesus is glorified in you by your daily life of repentance, of trusting in Him and the grace He has won for you.

Second: this then seeps into your vocation, your callings in life. If you are somehow to reflect a bit of the Lord's glory in your life, you will live a life of love, of service and sacrifice within the callings He has given you. The Lord is not impressed with the size of your home, your paycheck or the number of exotic pets or vacations: He's the One who has given you all these things anyway. What the Lord cares about is that you have a repentant heart, and that you then act in faithful service to those around you. Live as those forgiven for much. Love and serve those around you. Don't worry so much about accumulating the things of this world: a small home and a godly family is a far better deal than a mansion and strangers. If the childhood memories of your kids are your labors of love and sacrifice, blessed are you. Don't worry about doing great things for God above and beyond the call of duty: instead, remember that the callings you have are the ones God has given you, and seek to act in selfless love to those within those callings.

Third: rejoice in the gift of prayer. As Jesus prayed to His Father and as Jesus prays for you, He gives you the joy of praying too. God the Father does not restrict prayer only as a privilege for His Son: instead, He makes you all His children for Jesus' sake and wants to hear you so much that He commands you to pray. In fact, when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He starts out by saying, "Our Father, who art in heaven." "*Our Father*," which means that Jesus is praying this prayer with you. Treasure the gift of prayer: faith hears God's Word and delights to speak it back to Him: Word and prayer make for holy conversation with God, which is why the devil works so hard to thwart both. If you're not praying, you're putting a gag on your faith, and that's not a good thing for you. Pray: give to the Lord thanks and praise, tell Him what you have heard Him say in His Word; and cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.

Fourth: labor lovingly at unity. When Jesus announces that He and the Father are one, He prays that we might be one as they are. He bids us to unity. Now, we sinners will always be attracted to unity by compromise: we want to achieve oneness quickly by making teachings as general as possible so that all sorts of people with all sorts of beliefs will fit inside the tent. The more specific you become in your teaching, the more people you will exclude; therefore, sinners are prone to argue, you should keep it general for the sake of unity. This is not the unity of Christ – Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. He does not bid us to water down and compromise His Word to accommodate sins and sinners for the sake of bigness; rather, He bids us to achieve oneness by uniting in His Word. Where He is specific, we joyfully embrace His directness. Where He is more general, we rejoice in the freedom. Make no mistake: Christian unity is the work of the Holy Spirit: without Him, it's an impossible. With Him, it's a labor of love, though one that will not be completed until the Last Day; but it is still the labor that God has given us to do.

Some things to think about, then: repent and be forgiven, for that is when angels rejoice; live a life of sacrifice, for so you reflect Jesus' glory; pray without ceasing; and work tirelessly towards godly unity. With just these few things, I've given you – and me – a lifetime of glorious labor, as well as many sins and failings to confess.

Which is why we will end with this final word: remember the joy of this conspiracy for your salvation. The triune God is in cahoots that you might be forgiven for these and all of your transgressions. By the work of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus who died for you, confess your sins to your Father in heaven, trusting in His mercy for you; and know that you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen