



*'After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.'* Acts 1

### **John 17:1-11**

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal

life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'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. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 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. 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 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.' *NRSV*

### **Commentary**

In our Gospel reading Jesus looks towards heaven and speaks to the Father, summing up what's about to happen and praying for His disciples and for all believers. In verses 1 - 5 Jesus reports that he has completed the task of making the Father known and asks to return to the Father's glory. In verses 6 - 8 He amplifies

His report. He has passed on to the believers that which he received from the Father. But the focus is not about communicating information but about the establishment and confirmation of a special relationship with God. In this relationship is life itself, here on earth and for eternity, in the world and beyond the world. And for all those who have entered into this relationship, they too are special. Special because they belong to the Father through this new relationship, and because of this they are invited to share in the task which the Father gave the Son. As we are called to carry on this task today, we, like them will face many challenges, the same challenges that Jesus highlights in His report back to the Father. The challenge of a hostile world, the challenge of temptation to give up when the going gets tough, and the challenge of disunity among believers. How could they, or we, ever succeed?

This passage from John is Jesus' prayer for what the Father will do for the world, through his risen Son, through the church. It is not a declaration of what is, but a heartfelt prayer for what shall be. It is not a blueprint for how unity will take form or mission take place, but a plea for the Father's strong name to protect those who are in the world who are called and open to the task of doing mission with joy and hope. A passionate appeal from Jesus to His Father that the believers may withstand the challenges which will lie ahead.

For the disciples and for us the meaning is clear, Jesus has gone before us. He has left this world and is exalted to the place from which his reign will be acknowledged as he is Lord of all. This separation of Christ from his followers was the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to be given to the disciples to enable them to have God's presence with them intimately, wherever they might be. The disciples lost the physical presence of Jesus, but they gained the spiritual presence of Jesus in a very real way. This we celebrate next week at Pentecost.

### *Prayers for Sunday and the Week ahead*

Heavenly Father, You gave your Son, Jesus Christ to show us the Way of justice, truth and peace. Help us hold his example before our eyes, in the way that leads to a better world on earth and eternal life in the Heaven. Amen

The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen

We pray for forgiveness for our unwillingness to take to heart your prayer that we should be one people, united in love and witness to your world. Thank for the unity among the churches in Maidstone and pray that we grow that to your glory.