

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Seventh Sunday of Easter

Year A
RCL

John 17:1-11

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

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,² since you have given him authority over all people,^[a] 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.

Inductive Bible Study

1. Observe

a. Who _____

b. When _____

c. Where _____

d. What _____

e. Why _____

f. How _____

Notes

Background

The Setting of John 17

John 17 is commonly called the “Farewell Prayer” or the “High Priestly Prayer.” It occurs near the end of the Farewell Discourse (John 13–17), after the Last Supper and before Jesus goes to the garden where he is arrested. In the structure of John’s Gospel, this chapter functions as a transition between Jesus’ final teachings to his disciples and the Passion narrative.

The prayer is directed to the Father and is divided into three major sections:

- John 17:1–5: Jesus prays concerning himself
- John 17:6–19: Jesus prays for his disciples
- John 17:20–26: Jesus prays for future believers

John 17:1–11 belongs to the first two sections and introduces major themes that appear throughout the Gospel of John.

“Father, the Hour Has Come”

The phrase “the hour has come” is part of a recurring theme in John. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus repeatedly says his “hour” had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). By John 17, the hour has arrived.

In John’s Gospel, “the hour” refers to the climactic period involving:

- Jesus’ arrest

- Crucifixion
- Resurrection
- Return to the Father

Rather than treating crucifixion only as suffering, John presents it as the moment of revelation and glorification.

“Glory”

The Greek word for glory is *doxa*. In the ancient Mediterranean world, glory involved honor, reputation, splendor, and visible greatness.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the related Hebrew concept often refers to the manifest presence of God. John connects this idea to Jesus throughout the Gospel.

John frequently links glory with:

- Revelation of God’s nature
- Jesus’ signs and works
- The crucifixion and resurrection
- The relationship between Father and Son

The language of mutual glorification in John 17 reflects themes already introduced in John 1:14 and John 12:23–28.

“Eternal Life”

In John 17:3, eternal life is described relationally: “that they may know you.”

The Greek word translated “know” (*ginōskō*) can imply relational knowledge, recognition, and experiential familiarity, not merely intellectual awareness.

In Jewish thought, eternal life was often associated with:

- Resurrection
- Participation in the age to come
- Covenant relationship with God

John’s Gospel frequently presents eternal life as both a future hope and a present reality.

“The Only True God”

Monotheistic language was central to Second Temple Judaism. Jewish identity in the first century was deeply shaped by belief in one God, especially in contrast to the polytheistic Greco-Roman world.

The phrase “only true God” reflects Jewish covenantal and theological language found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

Pre-Existence Language

In John 17:5, Jesus speaks of glory shared with the Father “before the world existed.”

John’s Gospel strongly emphasizes pre-existence. This theme appears earlier in:

- John 1:1–3
- John 8:58
- John 16:28

The language reflects ideas about heavenly origin and divine agency found in Jewish wisdom traditions, especially concepts associated with:

- Wisdom literature
- The Logos (“Word”)
- Heavenly intermediaries

“Manifested Your Name”

In biblical tradition, a “name” represented more than identification. A name expressed:

- Character
- Authority
- Reputation
- Presence

In the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s name carried sacred significance. To reveal God’s name meant revealing God’s nature and character.

The Disciples

The disciples are presented as people given by the Father to Jesus. This language of “giving” appears repeatedly in John 6, John 10, and John 17.

The disciples in John are often portrayed differently than in the Synoptic Gospels:

- Less emphasis on parables
- More emphasis on understanding revelation
- Strong focus on witness and testimony

John frequently contrasts the disciples with “the world.”

Meaning of “the World”

The Greek word kosmos (“world”) appears often in John and can carry several meanings depending on context:

- The created order
- Humanity collectively
- Human society organized apart from God
- The sphere of opposition to Jesus

The meaning shifts depending on the passage.

“The Son of Man” and Authority

In John 17:2, Jesus speaks of authority given over “all flesh.”

The phrase “all flesh” has roots in Hebrew biblical language and refers broadly to humanity. The concept of divine authority given to a heavenly figure echoes themes found in:

- Daniel 7
- Apocalyptic literature
- Jewish messianic expectations

Prayer in Jewish Tradition

Public and private prayer were deeply embedded in Jewish life during the Second Temple period. Common settings included:

- Synagogues
- Temple worship
- Household prayer
- Festival observances

John 17 reflects features of Jewish prayer traditions, including:

- Address to God
- Recollection of divine action
- Concern for covenant community
- Themes of glorification and protection

Protection and Unity

In verse 11, Jesus asks the Father to protect the disciples.

Protection language reflects common biblical covenant themes where God guards, preserves, or watches over the people of God. The imagery recalls shepherding and covenantal care language found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

The emphasis on unity also reflects communal values in ancient Mediterranean society, where collective identity was often prioritized over individual identity.

2. Apply

a. How does this scripture apply to my life _____