

“Our Savior’s Finest ‘Hour’?”—John 17:1-5

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Our Savior’s Finest ‘Hour’?”, is John 17:1-5 → *When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

What might you consider a person’s “finest hour?” One definition might be: A point in time or brief period of time when an especially distinguished, admirable or effective set of actions is performed. Such distinguished actions might draw the attention and admiration of many people. For instance, the performance of a player in a game which

produced an important win against all visible odds might be referred to as his “finest hour.” The effects of his playing brings victory accompanied by praise and accolades in the midst of such a glorious moment. It may be considered a time of a person’s greatest achievement or success.

What might you consider to be Jesus’ “finest hour?” During His earthly public ministry it is quite possible that many perceived His healings to be His finest hour. While *teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom* He healed every disease and . . . *affliction among the people. **His fame spread** so much that they brought Him all the sick, people afflicted with various diseases and pains . . . oppressed by demons . . . having seizures, and paralytics, and He healed them* (cf. Matthew 4:23-24). Wow! That’s pretty amazing, is it not?

Maybe Peter, James and John considered His transfiguration His finest hour. After all they did experience a glimpse of heavenly glory, saw Moses and Elijah, and heard Yahweh speak to them, validating Jesus’ teaching that He is the Son of God. (cf. Luke 9:28-36). Maybe Mary, Martha and their friends felt that Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead was His finest hour, although I’m not so sure Lazarus would have felt that way. Apparently the Jewish ruling council recognized the effect this had on the people, saying in John 11:48 → *If we let Him go on like this, **everyone will believe in Him.*** Many must have felt that Jesus’

resurrection from the dead was His finest hour since the Christian day of worship became Sunday. Wow! These are pretty amazing feats, are they not?

In this prayer of Jesus, He made the statement in verse 1 of our text that *the hour has come*. What *hour*? The context places His prayer immediately before His arrest, mock trial, flogging and crucifixion, all of which happened within about a sixteen hour period. He was using the term “hour” to refer to these upcoming distinguishing events which defined His whole purpose for leaving the glory in God’s *presence* which He shared with Him *before the world existed* (verse 5). Philippians 2:6-8 says that *though He was in the form of God He took the form of a servant . . . and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*.

Jesus had referred to His hour or His time throughout His three plus years of public ministry, all referring to His finest hour with His crucifixion. He expressed His concern about miraculously providing more wine for a wedding celebration because His *hour* had *not yet come* (cf. John 2:4). But what would performing miracles have to do with His crucifixion. Everything! His performing these miracles would not only make Him famous and sought out by thousands of people but it would reveal Him as the Messiah (cf. Matthew 11:4-6). He knew this revelation would provide an impetus for *the hour* of humiliation through torture and death on the

despised object of the cross (cf. Galatians 3:13; 1 Corinthians 1:23), by no means a Messiah which was admirable in the eyes of the people.

That didn't matter because His time was determined by His Father in heaven. Even though people wanted to stop Jesus or kill Him long before this hour, they were prohibited from doing so by divine intervention. The people of His home synagogue (i.e. His home church), furious at the sound of His teaching, took Him to a cliff to throw Him off but He walked right through their bodies and went on His way (cf. Luke 4:28-30). Why? Because His time had not yet come. Another time when they wanted to arrest Him for His teachings *in the temple . . . no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come*. As Jesus Himself said in John 10:18 → *No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father*. Now His *time had fully come* (cf. John 7:6-8;13:1).

Jesus referred to this in verse 2 of our text. Referring to Himself in relationship to Yahweh as His Son, He prayed: *You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him*. Not only was His Father's plan in clear focus throughout His earthly ministry but He also had **you** in clear focus in that plan. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to God's Law **for you**; He willingly offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross **for you**; He rose from the dead **for**

you; He ascended into heaven **for you**. You see, the distinguishing character of His finest hour was how it effected your eternal salvation in the forgiveness of sins which you need and is only given by faith in Him alone.

Thus, He says in verses 3-4 of our text: *this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do.* In other words, *eternal life* is knowing Yahweh as *the only true God* Who created you and all things, *and* knowing *Jesus* as the *Christ* Who was sent by God and *accomplished the work that* He gave Him to do.

It has been said: “The distance between heaven and hell is about twelve to fourteen inches—from your head to your heart.” To *know* Yahweh as *the only true God, and Jesus* as His Son is much more than simply processing information about His earthly ministry, life, death and resurrection which you read about in the Holy Bible. It has to do with faith, as Romans 10:9-10 says: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* When you repent of your sins, trusting in the atoning work of Jesus in the hour of His crucifixion and resurrection, then God is glorified as *you confess with*

your mouth that Jesus is Lord of all and Lord of your daily life.

The crucifixion of Jesus is our Savior's finest hour even if it was not admirable in the sight of most people. The world does praise many who have sacrificed their lives in order to save others, proclaiming such a sacrifice as their finest hour. Interestingly, many of those same people may take offense at Jesus and the salvation He brought about in His finest hour. Maybe they think that such an action of allowing oneself to suffer and die for no apparent reason is ridiculous. Actually, that's just an excuse for not being willing to face their own sin in accountability to *the only true God* before Whom they will have to give an account on the Last Day.

Still, Jesus' teachings and works are simple and effective, even with the reaction or response of sinners. The effect which Jesus' finest hour has worked is held out to you during your whole earthly life because His one atoning sacrifice stands for all your sins, for all time. So, either at the coming of Jesus on the Last Day or upon your death, you can experience your finest hour or worst nightmare. Jesus went to the cross in His finest hour so that your hour on that Last Day (cf. Matthew 24:36) would be secured by faith in Him. After His ascension into heaven He sent the Holy Spirit so that you too can confess *Jesus is Lord* (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3) and share in His finest hour. Amen.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me,

and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.

(John 6:37)

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