

## The closeness of the Father and the Son: Means we hear about God - John 17: 6-8

A couple of weeks ago I went to Sam's wedding! Not my wife, but my friend Sam. He married a lovely American girl, and you know how Americans can be, so positive when we Brits can be so negative. Well this family really were! They were so loving to one another, so kind, particularly in how they spoke, so full of praise for one another, and encouragement – that I just loved being there. I was really blessed!

Have you ever been to an evening like that? Or more particularly do you have friends like that? They treat each other so well, the atmosphere is just really great to share in! Do you know what I mean? Perhaps you don't, but I guess you can imagine what I mean.

This wedding just had a really was a great atmosphere, this family set the tone. And I came away thinking, I wish I was more like that to my wife, I wish I was as kind and caring with how I speak as they are! Just being around them, was brilliant for me!

Well that's how it is with God! Just being near him, spending time with him, being friends with him is brilliant for us!

Because of, just how much the Father and the Son and the Spirit love one another – we are blessed by being near the divine family, the trinity.

And John chapter 17 is really like that. We see the love of God the Father and of Jesus his Son, for each other. We see the quality of their relationship. And we are blessed by it. You see, *true* love, real love, between two people, overflows to others. And the love of God overflows to us.

This chapter is all about the love of the Father and Jesus, it's actually a prayer, a very personal and intimate prayer.

And yet, although it *really* tells us about *them* it's full of blessings for us! Every little section as we work through it in the next few weeks, will teach us about blessings for us

I want to try to explain two of these blessings as today's passage explains them, and then say a little more about how they fit into the big picture.

The first thing for us to see is: **#1 Jesus reveals the Father.**

I'm going to need to say exactly what I mean by that, and why it's such *good* news, but just look down to v6 and see where it comes from.

v6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world"

Revealing means to peel back the covers, take out of hiding.

You might think of a new painting being unveiled... tada!

Or a child hiding playing hide-and-seek under the sheets... woosh – they are revealed.

Actually, to go even further, the imagery that Jesus uses is of the-blind being able to see.

Jesus reveals his father, that is, he makes him known.  
So that *some* people, who *were* blind, now can see and know God.  
And that is a real blessing. This is great news!  
I want to show you why: you see, what Jesus means is far more than just factual information about God.

Lots of religions claim to teach the truth about God – and there are some things they're similar on, and you'll know some of them. And some things they differ on.  
But Jesus is talking about far more than simply having *the truth* about God. That's part of it, but what Jesus is really talking about is becoming friends with God. It's relational.  
In a sense that's why this is so precious! It's personal, it's not just information.  
Jesus reveals his father, so that we can know him, *be friends* with him, *be in relationship* with him.

I want us to see that, and it's in last week's passage.  
Look, in your bibles, at the start of chapter 17  
v3 is what we need to think about, but we're going to build up to it.  
The chapter begins: "Jesus looked towards heaven and prayed "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him *authority over all people*"  
Now see this bit – The father gave the Son all authority, why...?  
*that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.*  
So you need to picture this, the father comes with a present, gives it to the son... what is it?  
It's people, people he wants to save.  
And Jesus, with all authority, gives those people eternal life, and then gives them back to the Father, as a present.  
And they both love it – it's love, it's kindness, it's partnership, it's giving.

It's there in v2:  
*that [he, Jesus] might give eternal life to all those you [God the Father] have given him.*

And then this is our important verse,  
v3 "Now **this** is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."  
Eternal life **is** to know the Father, and to know the Son.  
It's not to know information about them, it's to know them.  
I *know* Dave Brown, he is my friend and my colleague. I don't *know* David Cameron or David Attenborough – I only know about them.

Eternal life is a deep, satisfying, personal friendship with God and his Son Jesus Christ, (to know them) which starts now, and goes on forever in heaven.  
Knowing God in this way transforms your life! It's amazing!  
That's the first blessing!

The big picture is: the Father gives people to the Son, and the son gives them eternal life, which means they now *know* the Father and the Son.

**That** is what Jesus is talking about when he says v6

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world”

And it begs the question, which I hope you were asking yourself as I was talking.

Do I have eternal life? Do I know the Father and Jesus Christ whom he sent?

Has God been *revealed* to me?

Because, I hope it's clear, this is really important.

We're talking about heaven, instead of hell, our eternal destinies!

And it's not just about heaven *after* we die is it?

Knowing God, being his friend, living a life in friendship with him, begins *now* and goes on forever – and that is eternal life.

Have you received that? Have you been given it?

You can be!

If you want to know more about that, why not come to our identity course, starting up in May, it's a chance for anyone – (a)if you've been coming to church for a long time, or (b)if today is even your first or second time to church! To come along and hear more about Jesus Christ, look at an account of his life, and decide what you make of him, and if you want to “know him” in your day-to-day life like this.

The second blessing for us to see is this: **#2 (He does this) by giving us his words.**

Since I've said how important knowing God is, we need to understand *how* God and Jesus do this, and *how* God is revealed is our second blessing:

The way Jesus reveals the Father, is through God's words – The words of God the Father, spoken by Jesus the Son.

Let's see why I say this is how: well look down at your bible, and listen to what Jesus says – one little word here is pivotal:

v6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.”

~v7 “Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.”

Then v8 **For** I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.”

Do you see – all that happens, all that revealing, transformation, knowing – happens because Jesus gave mankind the words of his Father, and they were accepted.

That's how. That makes those words pretty important doesn't it!

The words of God are not like the words of people – they have much greater power.

When a police officer shouts “stop thief” the thief only runs faster!! But when Jesus says to a storm “quiet, be still” the storm calms down.

When God says “let there be light” there is light.

God's words are powerful, and here we see that the *way/(the how)* God is revealed to Jesus' followers is by them accepting God's words from him; hearing, receiving and believing them.

Jesus really wants us to do this, because it pleases and glorifies his Father.

This way of God revealing himself is nothing new.

800 years or so before Jesus, we heard in our OT reading, the prophet Isaiah said this to God's people

**“Seek the Lord** while he may be found;

**call on him** while he is near...

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it without watering the earth  
and make it bud and flourish,

so is... **my word** that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire...

You will go out in joy

and be led forth in peace...

This will be **for the Lord's renown**” – Isaiah 55

Isaiah talks of people being transformed, saved because they respond to God's words.

And it's just the same when Jesus speaks God's words, they do what they were meant to do – they reveal him, so people know him – and this is for his renown!

When this happens, it gives such honour to *God* – and Jesus loves that.

And it brings honour to *Jesus* – and God loves that.

Their teamwork, these words coming to us through Father and Son working together – shows, as we said, how crucial their *relationship* is to us receiving good things.

*Summary: “Jesus reveals the Father, by giving us his words”*

So, *what difference* should that blessing make to us?

Well (clearly) those words are important, so we should want to hear them, read them ourselves, study them!

How can we do that?

Of course, Jesus here is talking about his disciples, not us(!). *They* were with him, *they* heard his words, and *they* wrote them down for us, in the bible.

The first and main test of whether a book made it into the new testament was this: Did an apostle write it?

The NT in the bible is made up of lots of shorter books, written by the apostles/the ones who heard Jesus.

Jesus' words are available to us, because the Son spoke the Father's words and the Spirit helped his followers to write them down for us.

So: Do you want to hear them?

Do you want to know them better? These words are God's way of opening our eyes, of drawing us closer to him – God's great plan: is to use his words, and for us to receive and accept them.

Did you ever wonder why a church service always has readings from the bible and a sermon seeking to explain them?

This is why! In fact, all the liturgy in a Church of England service is designed to teach us these words, to embed them in our mind by hearing them over and over, and by saying them ourselves.

That's why at the end of every reading, the person reading says "this is the word of the lord" and we all say "thanks be to God".

We have a word-centred faith – because – God's plan is that he uses his word to change us, and to bring us to know him.

So I can only stand here and say.. please, please, for your own sakes, make time to read it, make it a priority to come to church on Sunday, and if you aren't in one, join a group – where you can sit down with others and read and study these words for yourself.

Why would you *not* do that? Because something's more important? The gym? The TV? Because childcare is hard to arrange?

No no no, please, make it a real priority, for your own sake!

Ok, let me summarise the blessings:

**#1 Jesus reveals the Father.**

Not just so we can know facts about God, but *know* the Father and also the Son (both) personally, as friends – and that *is* eternal life.

**#2 (He does this) by giving us [the Father's] words.**

Powerful words, which change us and work in us. So we should want to hear them!!

Now, I want us to keep those blessings in the context of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

If you were here last week, you'll have heard Dave use the illustration of a father and son who trained and played football together....

For years they were together, working together as the son was learning his skills.

And when the son burst onto the scene after his first game, when the media were crowding around – he said "it's all because of my Dad" – and "I did it for him. We're a team, don't just give me the credit – it's Father and Son."

The Father and the Son are like that, they want to give glory to each other, they are interested in each other.

Just look, and listen again to what Jesus prays! (Feel where his heart is)

**6 "I have revealed you**

**to those whom you gave me out of the world.**

They were **yours**; **you** gave them to **me**  
and they have obeyed your word. <sup>7</sup>  
Now they know  
that everything you have given me  
comes from **you**. <sup>8</sup>

For **I** gave them  
the words **you** gave **me**  
and they accepted them.

They knew with certainty  
that **I** came from **you**,  
and they believed that **you** sent me.

The focus is all on them.

Just like at this wedding I went to, I was blessed because of them – we are blessed because of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

You see all our benefits, are a consequence of their relationship.

The reason *why* the Son reveals the Father, is for the Father.

The reason *why* he gives us those powerful words, is to please his Father.

It's all out of love for his Father!

God does it, for God.

**It's not all about us!**

If I get you to imagine your life as a party, most people imagine themselves (!)and God(!) as the hosts.

You are the ones who direct who gets an invitation, you sort out the food and drinks, you're responsible for the smooth running of the party.

Some people find that exciting, they love the idea of being the centre of attention.

Some are terrified, they hate the idea that they might do something wrong – the food isn't ready on time, the drinks aren't good enough...

The problem is, if we think that way, we need a radical change of view. We're not the hosts!

God and Jesus are the hosts!

We're invited, but we're just guests.

And when you get there, and you look at the drinks behind the bar and the amazing food – you've never seen anything like it!!

Then the Father stands up and says – the drinks are on us, the food is on us – my Son has paid for everything, in my honour, have a great time, and give your thanks to him! (and he says:- no no, give your thanks to my Father).

And the party is the most amazing party ever.

It's very easy to slip into thinking it's all about us.

Forgetting about God, and in the day-to-day of life, thinking we're at the centre of the script, not thinking about God:

But we shouldn't. Just think of the size of the sun, and the number of stars, and you realise how small we are – and feel our place... we're small.

Just think of the different cultures in our world. We only need to travel a bit, to meet people who live in a totally different way, completely unlike us, who are getting on just fine – and we realise how unimportant we are.

People go off travelling to 'find themselves' – when really what they need is to find God!

It's not all about us, it's all about God, and his Son Jesus Christ.

Even our lives are all about God.

**And that is fantastic news for us.**

It means we're completely safe, we have security, all the blessings we'll learn about in chapter 17, depend on God and not us.

Let me show you: When we think about these two blessings – Jesus revealing God to us, and giving us his words...

The direction Jesus is facing is **not** toward us.

His primary concern is not us, but his Father!

It's not like he's focussed on us, saying "oh I've got to save them, got to get them to listen, got to get them to accept these words" – NO. We're not his focus!

It's much more that the direction he is facing is towards his Father.

Father, I'm doing what you want, Father I've given them the words, Father the ones you wanted have accepted them, they received them, they believe. Oh Father, I've done it for you, isn't it marvellous, I know you'll be pleased.

So, if you become even more unlovable; if you screw up again:

Jesus doesn't go, oh man, this is hard work, I'm not sure I want to keep on with this one.

If you lose your hunger to know more about God. If you stop reading the bible with enthusiasm like you used to...

Jesus doesn't say – phew, I'm not sure it's worth trying to reveal God to this one!

I'm getting weary, tired, frustrated.

No, he's captivated by the goodness of his Father, he constantly wants to please and honour him. So he is *always* interested in revealing the Father to you, for the Father's sake. Even if you get less interested.

Isn't that great news?

Doesn't that make you feel in safe hands? In a safe place?

It should.

A few weeks ago at this wedding I was blessed by this family, their love overflowed.

Well I hope you've seen how God's love and blessings overflow to us, and you want to draw nearer to him, to see him, and to share in those blessings.