

What Makes Jesus Tick?

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[0 : 00] Thanks so much, Sarah. It's lovely to be here today. I haven't met you, met some new folks this morning. Lovely to have you. My name is Graham. I've got the real joy of being the pastor here of the church. I like to think I'm young and trendy, and then I hear Sarah use a word like chillax, and I think, who am I kidding? But here's what I'd love you to do. I'd love you to come to John 17. Whether you get on your phone, or whether you have the physical Bible open in front of you, or grab one on the pews here, because this is a special, special chapter of the Bible that we step into today. This really is holy ground. This will blow your socks off today when you take in what's going on in John 17.

Let me tell you what John 17 is. This is in classic Amazon Prime documentary style. This is all or nothing Jesus. I love those documentaries. Have you ever watched one of these programs before? I love them because the cameras are given all access passes to go places where they wouldn't normally go. You're taken right behind the scenes to see what's really going on in HQ, backstage, and you think to yourself, this is what's really going on in the heart of things. And that's what John 17 is. This is a behind the scenes, all access, fly on the wall, deep dive into the very heart of Jesus. And why it's fascinating and why it's thrilled the souls of Christians down the ages is I think it's here probably more than anywhere else.

And all of scripture before the cross, where we see so clearly the things that matter most to Jesus. And so if you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a follower of this man, here's the question that I pass to you today and one that I'd love for you to catch, put under your arm and run with a rugby ball right through the next 25 minutes or so, Doohan style, had to mention it.

The question I want you to think about is this, is what makes Jesus tick? Well, get some out of bed in the morning as it were. What's he all about, this man? You know, our world where we are so used to being burnt by people presenting is one thing in public, only for it later to emerge that they are another thing in private.

I want you to see the sparkling consistency to the life of this man, Jesus. That really his inner life is just as magnetically beautiful as his outer life. I promise you that you will never meet anyone like him. And if you are a Christian, then here's what I want you to do.

[2 : 48] I want us to do. I want us to come and feast on every little morsel of John 17. How slow and how often forgetful we are when it comes to remembering and savouring just how committed a saviour Jesus is to us. And it will do our souls the world of good to overhear Jesus praying to his Father and hearing him praying amongst other things, praying for us.

Now, listen, this is where I want you to particularly think about this. If you think in the game of life right now, I'm not winning. You come in here today with all sorts of burdens on your mind, with people on your hearts, with mistakes that you've made.

And I want you to know that when it comes to his people, Jesus doesn't run a survival of the fittest kind of deal. He's not a shareholder in your life. He's not interested just in the good highlights, the match of the day highlights, where it's just, just give me the good bits.

No, Jesus sees you. He sees all of you today. And he carries your name into the very presence of the Father. He carries your sin all the way to the cross.

And this is the man who holds your life in his hands. And you could not ask for a more committed Jesus. And what makes what Jesus is doing here even more powerful is when we appreciate the two contexts which this prayer has.

[4 : 23] Now, one comes in the context of the bigger story of the Bible. And it's so moving and so powerful that I'm going to put it in a goodie bag and we're going to save it right for the end of this sermon.

And the other comes in the context of the bigger story of this book of John. Do you see verse 1 of John 17? Jesus declares, Jesus knows that his hour has come.

So this is not just another day in the life of this man. Jesus knows that he's on the cusp of the cross. And that's why I think they're right.

I've heard so many people refer to this down the years as the real Lord's Prayer. As Jesus says, Father, this is everything that's on my heart. And this is everything that I go to the cross in his own words, verse 4.

I go there to finish it. Do you see that word? It's a word that's so closely connected in the Greek to the final word that Jesus will use as he dies on the cross, as he declares in front of the watching world in the presence of his Father that it is finished.

[5 : 37] So what are the things that dominate Jesus' prayer in these, his final moments? Here's the first of them, verses 1 to 5. He prays for himself to be glorified.

You see, that word glory, it comes up time and time again in this gospel. We've met it before. It's something that is to be praiseworthy. This is what sports teams do, don't they?

When they win a cup or they win a bit of silverware, something that's never been done before. They go on the open bus tour around the city. And we look and we gaze and we think, no, those people, those people, they deserve glory.

You want something to get glory. I take it this is what it means. It means that you want everyone in the public domain to see that this is a big deal. This is a big deal. And Jesus longs that the Father would glorify, do you notice it?

He would glorify him, which is really strange when you think about it. Because if any of us were to utter those words that we want glory for ourselves, we would think to ourselves, that is narcissistic, wouldn't we?

[6 : 49] It's the kind of line that you'd expect to come from a candidate auditioning for The Apprentice on your CV. I want glory. I want glory. That's why I'm in this gig. But you think to yourself, Jesus wants glory.

glory. Which only makes sense if you step inside how he defines glory. glory. And just take in these opening few verses.

Glory to Jesus is wrapped up with glorifying his Father. Accomplishing the work that his Father sent him to earth to do. Glory to Jesus is wrapped up with giving eternal life to his people.

A people who the Father has chosen since before the foundation of the world and given as a gift to the Son. And that tells you all you need to know about this God.

This God is a giver. He's a giver. Everything he does is out of an overflow of who he is. The Father gives the Son. The Son gives eternal life.

[7 : 51] And from the Father and the Son, they give the Spirit. This God is a giver. Do you need to recalibrate your understanding of who he is and how he works? He is a giving God.

What is eternal life according to Jesus? Jesus. It's not so much everlasting life. Although that is true. Do you see how he defines it? It is a personal and saving knowledge of and a passionate and transforming love for the eternal one.

Know that according to Jesus, that is the very reason that you and I were made in the first place.

Jesus not only saves us for, but he also shows us, doesn't he?

With his example, with his life. As my American pals would say, he shows us true north. No wonder when you have a father and you know a father as good as this.

No wonder glory to Jesus is to return to the glory that he both shared and had with his father in heaven before the foundation of the world. Glory is on the mind of Jesus.

[8 : 55] And secondly, verses 6 to 19. Do you see how Jesus prays for his disciples to be sanctified? So the other thing that's in Jesus' heart is his band of disciples.

This group of men who've been with him, who've been up close and personal, who've seen and heard, who've asked, who've listened. Who Jesus has poured himself into their lives over the last three years of his.

Now, why are these 11 of these men on his mind? Because they are the ones that Jesus has entrusted, verse 8, do you see? With his words.

The words that Jesus has received from the Father that he's made known to his disciples. These are words that Jesus doesn't just want them to keep to themselves, to hoard.

These are the words that they will take to the nations and they will share with the nations. As the Spirit comes and he propels the gospel out to the world.

[10:04] Why does Jesus pray for them? Because he knows that after he's gone, not only will they be vulnerable, but they will be in for the same treatment that he got when he was on earth. And that explains why Jesus says, I'm praying for them.

Father, I pray for them. I pray that they would be, do you see the word? I pray that they would be kept. Father, would you have your hand upon their lives? Don't take them out of the world. Love that.

Don't take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one, verse 15. It's a wonderful little picture there, isn't it? Of our role as Christians.

It's not just to be, come out of the world and be separate. It's not to go into the world and just be the same as everyone else. It's to be distinct. Remember, we always say this. Our job as disciples is not to be sweet.

It's not to be sour. It's to be salty in the world. And that's what he's praying. That word sanctify. That's a big biblical word. Here's what it means.

[11:02] It just means something that's set apart. In this context. Jesus is saying, set them apart from the world. Lord, I pray that they would be devoted to you, Heavenly Father.

Not just to you, but for you. And his truth. Praise Jesus. Would this truth have its forming and cleansing effect on their life?

So what Jesus is about to do is he sets himself apart. As he sanctifies himself will be for their sake and for our good.

And real quick, thirdly, verses 20 to 26. Jesus prays for the church to be unified. Now, are you ready to have your mind blown here?

Jesus moves from thinking about his immediate disciples to begin to think about the billions of people who the Father has given him in eternity past, who will come to faith in him at some point in the future.

[12:07] That's a lot of people. Now, you go on Google. Quick Google search will tell you that it's still one of the most popular greeting cards that they sell in the card factory.

Or in Clintons are the ones that say, thinking of you. You see one of them before? You got one of them before? You sent one of them before.

Thinking of you. Because it means the world to us, doesn't it? When we know that somebody was thinking of us. Those words still mean the world to us.

Well, take this in. That here is God the Son. Speaking to God the Father about you.

Here is a conversation within the Trinity about you. See your name in his prayer as Jesus prays to the Father for all those who will believe in me through their word.

[13:13] See your name. And I take her littlest to nursery every day. What she does when she goes in, they've just got a little notice board and all the names and all the faces of the children on there.

And they say to her, just find yourself, find yourself. And so she goes and she looks and she finds it and she sticks it in the little letterbox, which is their way of taking the register. And that's what Jesus invites us to do here.

Find your name. See your name. In his prayer. Do you see how Jesus desires there at verse 24? Do you see that? Jesus. His desire. Know that you do not have a reluctant Savior. His desire. His heart is that you would see his glory.

That you would see it. That you would know it. As you see him in his glory with his Father. So it's driving this whole thing. That you would know that.

[14:15] You know, my best friend is, this morning, he sent me a text and he just said, my sister died.

And she'd been suffering with cancer for a long, long time. And she died. And you just think, how do you get your heads around that? She was early thirties, two kids.

Left her husband. Thinking about a mum and a dad having to bury their daughter. How do you get your heads around that? I take it they need to know, don't they, with our prayers, that there is no more committed a Savior than this one.

Whose plan for her life is that she would see Jesus' glory. Do you see Jesus' heart for you today? In the mundaneness of your life.

If you think that every day of yours is the same. When you think it's not making a difference. When you think, why am I in this job? What's life all about? Do you see his heart that you would see his glory?

[15 : 32] His desire for that. He prays that we would know that. And he also prays for our relational oneness. Do you see that word unity in the text? Jesus goes to the cross to achieve it and create it in his church.

He has bound us together. We need to see that unity here means the world to Jesus. Do you see that? It means the world to him.

Isn't it really interesting that Jesus, when he says that he will build his church, he is at that point, he is guaranteeing growth. But isn't it interesting when he comes to pray, he doesn't pray for growth. He prays for unity. Because he knows the spiritual battle that we will be in. He knows that the devil is a wily fox who will get in and he will sow the seeds of discord in our relationships.

But the unity of his people draws out the heart and the prayers of Jesus. And just think about that. Feel the impression of his heart as we think about how much his people matter to him.

[16 : 44] Every single one of them. And I think often we need to repent when we get this wrong, right? Every time I belittle somebody or speak ill of someone in his family, what I am doing is I'm putting on my lumberjack shirt.

I am picking up a hacksaw and I'm going to town on the tree that is the unity of the church. My sinful heart, it passes it off as a green light.

You were justified to do it. You were fully right to think about that person. Sometimes I might pause and I think to myself, it's an amber. But through the spirit speaking through the text, see that according to Jesus, it's a red.

When gossip comes our way in life, let us not be conduits for it. We're called to be cul-de-sacs.

In other words, the gossip as it comes up our street, that belittling of somebody, all it will find when it comes to our lives is a dead end. Unity of his church means the world to Jesus.

[17 : 53] And here's why unity in his church means the world to Jesus. It is because our God's, his very essence is diversity in unity.

Our God is gloriously Father, he is Son, and he is Spirit. One God, three persons. And we resemble him so wonderfully and powerfully when the local church reflects the loving community of diversity and unity.

You know, I've just finished a book by a man called Jason Roach. He is one of the directors of London City Mission. And he's a man who describes himself as Black British.

And he's born in London to parents from Barbados, having grown up in London, and having grown up seeing the good, the bad, and the ugly of the church here in the UK.

And that made him really wrestle with the question, how can we be better in the UK at being a true multinational church?

[19 : 02] And he's written this book called Healing the Divide subtext, Advancing God's Vision for Racial Unity and Justice. And he asks some really soul-searching questions.

And he graciously and yet powerfully points out the blind spots that we sometimes often have. But here's what he says in the book, and I love this. He said, Perhaps one reason that God created many nations bearing his image was to show something of his majestic nature as the triune God. His unity and diversity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And then get this line. Our unity and diversity was meant to be an advert for God's.

And the question comes at us as we see Jesus' heart for unity is how serious are we about this? Are we being intentional about pursuing this kind of multinational, cross-generational unity in our church?

Do we celebrate and embrace the wonder of what God has done through the cross of Jesus when it comes to the quality of the love that we have for each other?

[20 : 20] Because see that Jesus knows that when the church does that, verse 23, it will cause the world to sit up and take notice of the love of the Father.

Why do these people love each other? The only answer is that they reflect the God who is love. And they declare as they see that truly the living God lives amongst these people.

Friends, here is all or nothing Jesus. And here he is praying and saying, Father, this is everything that's on my heart and everything that I go to the cross to finish.

And that takes us so nicely to the second context to this prayer. And this one takes in the whole context of the bigger Bible story.

You know, so back in the Old Testament when Israel came out of Egypt. And they're there, they're wandering in the wilderness. All of Israel is living in a massive campsite.

[21 : 26] And more than that, it is a massively organized campsite. So God has told the 12 tribes to set themselves up with three of them camping at each point of the compass.

I should have had this as a PowerPoint, but I forgot. Three in the north, three in the south, three in the east, three in the west. And right in the middle of them was this huge tent called the tabernacle. God dwelt there. God dwelt in the middle of his people. That was what he was trying to get them to understand. And in the middle of that tabernacle where God dwelt was this area called the Holy of Holies.

This was God's private throne room, if you like. This is where God was seated on the Ark of the Covenant. And nobody could just take a stroll in there.

Except one man, the high priest. And on one day of the year, the day that was known as the Day of Atonement.

[22 : 29] The most special of days in the Israelite calendar. This was kind of what Independence Day is to Americans, what St. Andrew's Day is to us. You can take your pick. Whatever else means something to you.

We read about this day in Leviticus 16. If you're doing the Bible in a year thing, you may well have reached this chapter. And it's wonderful. This one man on this one day goes into God's one presence.

And he would offer the sacrifice that would atone for sin. That word atone just means people will be made right with their God. And before that day and before that work, God told the high priest to prepare himself.

He makes a sin offering for himself. Because he knows that his sins make him guilty before a holy God. He makes a sin offering for his immediate family, his immediate household.

Because he knows they need cleansing and protecting and forgiving. And then he was able to bring all of God's people into the presence of God to make atonement for their sin. So before that day, the great high priest has three groups of people on his mind.

[23 : 43] He has himself. He has those closest to him. And he has all of God's people on his mind. And what he is about to do is for all of them.

And you see how in a truer way, here is Jesus. On the cusp of the cross. And what is he doing? What is he doing to prepare himself? He's praying.

And who's he praying for? For himself. For his closest 12. And he's praying for all of God's people. What is John trying to do? What's John trying to do for his readers? He's trying to help give us the interpretive lens through which to read the next few chapters as Jesus is killed on the cross.

What John is doing is he's saying to the world, here is the great high priest. A better one. One who doesn't need to offer a sacrifice for his sin because his life was sinless.

[24 : 50] One who didn't go to offer just a sacrifice. But one who went there to be the sacrifice. What John is saying before we enter the events of Passion Week, the next few days, is here is your great high priest.

And he's about to go to work. You know, just as we close, can I just tell you about two really unimpressive Zoom calls that I was on last year.

Both of them were membership classes that we run here. And from my end, I was the host of both of these membership classes on Zoom. And from my end, they were an utter disaster.

My internet was dipping in and out. I had problems logging in. I couldn't work out to share my screen. I started speaking and I did the classic, I was on mute.

My PowerPoint was budget at best, thinking to myself, why did I use Verdana font in white against that backdrop? And the whole thing was unimpressive. And all of a sudden I had this eureka moment, which really is just the spirit of God convicting me of being a numpty and reminding me of what's really important.

[26 : 08] Because I went from thinking about how the call went to thinking about who was on the call and what it represented. On those calls, if I remember rightly last year, and you guys will remember if you were there, we'd Chris and Grace are there from India.

And we'd Jason, who was there from the States. And we'd Pamela, who was there from England. We'd Tophel, who was there from Cameroon. We'd Pete, who was there from Northern Ireland. We'd Jonathan, who was there from Scotland.

People who were so incredibly different. People from all over the world. People who had different mother tongues. People who are working in completely different fields of work.

People from completely different backgrounds and stories. And yet here we are on this unimpressive Zoom call. And yet this is how we have been bound together.

We've been bound together in this crucified man from Nazareth. This is everything. This is it. This is everything that Jesus prayed for and that he died to accomplish in John 17.

[27 : 16] Had this moment where I just thought, this is it. This is it. You know, just as we close, I love the sweet words of that hymn, Beneath the Cross of Jesus.

And we've closed with this. Beneath the Cross of Jesus, his family is my own. Once strangers chasing selfish dreams, now one through grace alone.

How could I now dishonor the ones that you have loved? Beneath the Cross of Jesus, see the children called by God.

Why don't we pray? And let's just be silent for just a few moments. And friends, bring your own prayers to God.

As we've overheard Jesus pray today, and pray in particular for us, would you bring your own prayers, the own people that are on your hearts, the own situations to him, knowing his commitment to you?

[28 : 20] Amen. And so Father, I just pray that in the silence now, that your spirit would be at work in our midst. Would he be bringing that sense of conviction, of sin and our need of a savior?

Would he be bringing that sense of comfort as we look at this Jesus who bore all our burdens on himself, and who's dealt with all our sin and our shame and our guilt?

And Father, would your spirit lift our eyes to the fact that there's no condemnation for us that are in him? Father, maybe even today's the day where someone puts their trust in you, Lord Jesus, for the first time.

So Father, we just thank you for this morning. Lord, may this just not be a fleeting meeting with you, the living God, but may you go with us from here, Lord, as we head out into our different weeks.

Father, as we spend some time just together after this service, would you be accomplishing your purposes as we dwell in your presence, we pray, in his worthy and in his beautifully committed name we ask.

[29 : 35] Amen. Amen.