

GLOBAL THEOLOGY CONFERENCE CONCLUDING PLENARY: ONENESS
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John 17:1-5: After Jesus said this, he looked toward 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 that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

The Gospel of John gives a special emphasis on the identity of Christ and His mission; Jesus is identified as one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And throughout the Gospel, there is an emphasis on the oneness of Godhead which is revealed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is eternally one with the Father, sent into the world to reconcile us to God. To accomplish the redemptive mission of God, Jesus became incarnate by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit!

Through Jesus Christ, humanity is invited into a relationship with the triune Godhead.

Jesus says that He came to the world as a sent one — sent by the Father to do the work of the Father. See John 5:19 *“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*

The Father and the Son are one. Christ is fully God and human. He shares in the divine nature of God the Father — He is holy in His nature as is the Father. He also shares in the glory of the Father. He shares in the Father's work to reconcile His own creation to Himself.

God's creation is not holy by nature. Any holiness that we have is derived holiness; derived from the triune Godhead.

From the beginning when God created us He desired for us to live in intimate-holy relationship with Him.

But, because of sin, humankind, who was created to live in God's holiness — in the very nature of the triune Godhead, is now uncomfortable living in intimate-holy relationship with the triune God. *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* (Genesis 3:8).

Sin created a distance between humanity and God. Yet apart from God and His holiness, our lives are unfulfilled and empty — for we were created to find fulfillment in intimate relationship and fellowship with God.

Apart from Him, our being is distorted and corrupted.

But, thanks be to God, who does not give up on His creation. In Genesis we already see God coming to seek us and invite us back into intimate, Holy Communion with him; *But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"* Genesis 3:9. Right here in Genesis God begins to unfold the plan for our redemption through the work of His Son (Genesis 3:15). And throughout the Old Testament, God unfolds his plan to bring us back to communion with him.

So, now in Jesus, this divine plan to bring us back into oneness with the triune Godhead is fulfilled. It is important to note that we are not brought into this oneness as god(s). We are not God, and we are not holy by nature, but as long as we remain in Him, He makes us holy and we can now live as holy people of God even though we reside in a fallen world. Through Jesus, we are brought into the very nature of God — holiness, and we have the same life that flows in Him.

Jesus is the person of the trinity of God who makes it possible for humanity to share in God's holiness!

Again, any holiness in us is derived holiness — derived from God. God's presence in us makes us holy. When we depart from Him we distance ourselves from the source of our wholeness and holiness.

To continue to live as holy people and participants in the triune Godhead's communion, we are to remain in Jesus (John 15).

Jesus has authority to make all this possible.

Jesus' Authority

Jesus said that the Father granted Him authority over all people, to give people eternal life.

Sin is powerless and can not stop God's plan for us to live in communion with the triune Godhead and in fellowship with one another.

Jesus gives us a new life, in which we love God with our whole being and love one another.

So, Christ not only has the authority to invite us into life in God, but He also has the authority to make it possible or to give this new life to us and to give us all that is necessary for life in this intimate, holy relationship with God. See 2 Peter 1:3-4 *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires"*.

Jesus closed the gap that existed between us and God; and in the authority that was given to Him, He promises that He will not leave us as orphans, He will always be with us, and He will send the Holy Spirit to live in us. We never need to do any part of His mission and holy living on our

own. He is in and with us. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ continues to live in us and enables us to live as holy beings of God.

Jesus gives us Eternal life

“Eternal life is that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”.
John 17:3

This speaks of relational knowledge.

We can not know someone without being open to having a relationship. We get to know and to be known when we are willing to be vulnerable — open to being known by the other person.

This means, to know God, we must be in a relationship with Him; walk, talk and commune with Him.

Throughout the Bible, we learn of the Covenant that God makes with His people. He desires to be known by us and for us to know Him. He offers to walk with us, be with us, be our God and for us to be his people (Genesis 17:7, Exodus 6:6-7, Leviticus 26:12, II Corinthians 6:16).

To know God is to know His holiness and His mission.

To know God is to live in His holiness and live His Mission in the world.

When we live in God we experience Him and His work in our lives. We get to know Him as we interact with Him.

We can not know someone in hurry, and when our purpose to enter into a relationship is self-centered. To know and to be known by God one needs to invest time and be willing to humble oneself to listen to and to obey Him.

Jesus exposed the creation to all of this and makes it possible for the creation to enter into this new life (holy life) through knowing and being known by God.

While we cannot make ourselves holy, or enable ourselves with our own ability to enter into communion with God, it is essential to recognize that God created us with the capacity to respond to His self-giving holy love. We can respond to God's grace and enter into communion with the triune Godhead, through Jesus Christ.

So, the emphasis here in John is that we are to continue to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom God sent. This is an invitation for a continuous walk with God and openness to His voice, direction, and will for our lives.

We are invited to continue to know the very relationship, fellowship, and communion that the three persons of the triune Godhead know between themselves.

Through Jesus Christ, we can know God and can continue to know Him eternally – forever, through the power of His Spirit.

In Jesus, God's work for our salvation is finished

Jesus said, *"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."* (John 17:4) This is Christ's life, ministry, death and resurrection, and in His forever presence with us through the Holy Spirit. God's plan for the redemption of His creation is fulfilled, and this brings glory to the Father; it brings glory to the triune Godhead.

Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continued presence with us — as He said in John 14:18-19 *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."*

All of this is God's power to make holy living now and forever possible, as we respond to His saving and sanctifying grace.

When Jesus lived amongst His disciples He modeled to them what it looks like to live in oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He also modeled humility and self-giving love for the sake of others (He laid down His life for our sake). He modeled prayer and the importance of being in communion with God. He modeled the fact that His Mission is the Father's mission... He showed His disciples that God is able to do exceedingly more than what we can imagine or ask. He modeled what it looks like to live in a fallen world and yet without yielding to temptations and the evil one.

Holy living is possible through Jesus Christ. There is no part of the work that has not been done to bring us into an intimate relationship with God.

Therefore, there is no amount of work nor any programs that we do that can make us holy. It is only God who can make us holy. The work we do, the studies we do, the programs we have can be means of grace to quicken our hearts and minds, but in themselves, there is no salvific power. God alone can bring us into intimate — holy relationship with him. And in Jesus Christ, the work has already been done to provide all that is needed for this to be a reality.

All of this brings glory to God.

Father, glorifying the Son

Jesus prays that God's glorious greatness would be revealed — manifested in him.

When God's glorious greatness — God's sovereignty, power, and authority is revealed in the world through Jesus Christ, God the Father is Himself glorified – exalted – magnified.

So, in the salvific work of Christ, God is magnified; this resulting in many coming to know the glory of God — His presence and saving power.

God is exalted and worshipped for He is sovereign (He has the authority and power to redeem His creation from sin, and its power). In His glory (presence) we are continually enabled to live in and for Him and be His holy representatives in the world; bringing many into the knowledge of God's love and grace.

Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world, in human likeness to reconcile us to God. In Christ, humanity is given the grace to be restored into a holy relationship with God. *"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."* Colossians 1:19-20

In Jesus, all the fullness of Godhead dwells (Colossians 1:15) and He is *"the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."*

So, indeed the hour has come for God to glorify the Son — for all has been done to bring humanity into communion with Godhead.

There is a sense in which I am persuaded that the hour that was referred to in John was not only in relation to the death of Christ but to the overall work of God that is fulfilled in Christ. If this is true, then even now the hour has come for the Father to glorify his Son. In Christ's continued presence with us through the Holy Spirit, God continues to be known by us and to know us. Our theological conversations should be centered in a desire to know and be known by Christ; they should be centered in the desire to live in a relationship with the true One God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, my hope and prayer for us as we begin our theological reflections on Christology is that:

– our conversations will lead to the hour when Christ is revealed afresh in our lives, so we can know Him more and more, and experience His nearness, love, sovereignty, and redemptive work in us and His creation. And in knowing Him, may we discern with clarity how He would want the Church of the Nazarene to represent Him in the world today. May we know how He wants us to participate in His redemptive works even in areas of life that are unprecedented in anything we have known and done through our ministry in the past. Of course, this will require our willingness for Him to know us more and more. God wants to hear and know our struggles, where we are uncomfortable and uneasy as we attempt to discern and follow Him in those unprecedented areas of ministry. Our discomfort and uneasiness are a result of the ideas and images of who God is, and how He works to bring redemption — ideas and images we have already formed because of that which is preceded.

As He knows us, He can free us from those ideas or images we have formed in our lives which might be a hindrance for us to be participants in ways He is calling us to today. He can give us a new revelation so we can follow Him with integrity. But we must be willing to listen to Him as we converse, pray, and worship together.

May this be God's hour for the Church of the Nazarene!