

Worship Material
Gone but not forgotten
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 21st May

Begin with an opening prayer

Almighty God, we watch and wait, we come to share, to know to learn.

Almighty God, we look and see and fail to see.

Almighty God, we shield our eyes – dare we see?

Almighty God, you were, you are, you will be, forever and eternity.

Amen.

Read Acts 1:6-14

Bible notes

John 17 bridges the extended meditations (chapters 13-16) on the meaning of Jesus' 'hour' as he leaves the world for his heavenly Father (v.1; cf. 13:1), and the account in chapters 18-20 of the way in which this happens. Chapter 17 is sometimes called Jesus' 'high priestly prayer', as if to suggest that his life is laid down as a sacrificial offering, not taken from him to satisfy a momentary political expediency (10:18; 11:47-53). There are echoes of the Lord's Prayer here, also the 'descent/ascent' motif of this Gospel (e.g. 1:1, 14; 12:23-32). For John, Jesus' passion is not a shameful end but a glorious turning point in the story of the world's salvation.

Jesus prays for himself in verse 1, but his eyes are fixed on his Father's glory. As in life, so in death he honours his heavenly Father. Leaving his disciples does not mean forgetting them. He asks that his exaltation to God's heavenly house (14:2) will bless and strengthen them with the knowledge and faith they have received from him (vv.7-8). And he prays for their protection and unity in the face of their enemies' hostility (16:1ff; cf. 1:10-11).

Looking backwards and forwards in the narrative, we see Jesus' prayer being answered in the coming of the Holy Spirit to the community that lives by his commandment (14:3,16-31; 15:26; 20:22). The Spirit will show that God does not abandon him to the shame of his passion, but vindicates all that he has lived and died for (16:7-15). The disciples will be reassured that though he has gone from them, neither he nor they are forgotten. They will not be abandoned like orphans (14:18ff). And his teaching will find fresh meaning (16:12-15), as they abide in the love that flows between Father and Son (14:23; 15:1ff).

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you, O God,
that your wisdom is way beyond our imagining,
for we humans make such a mess of things,
we yearn so often for the here and the now, for the easy ways;
but thank you, God, that you see beyond the here and now
and are not tempted by our easy options.

Thank you that when we set our eyes on the wrong things,
you gently divert our vision to see what you would have us see.

Thank you that when we hear something that sounds more pleasing to us,
your Word remains strong, steadfast and secure
no matter what we do and seek to do.

Thank you for Scriptures that tell your story though the ages,
for the prophets and teachers who bring you to life for us,
who reveal your being to us.

Thank goodness, O God,
that today and every day
you are there, are here, for us.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Send us out, O Lord,
waiting expectantly for your Spirit,
looking for signs of your presence with us,
looking for signs of your work in action.
Support us, strengthen us, establish us,
now and in all the weeks to come,
that we may show your glory,
and know your blessing and peace.

Amen.