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SERMON

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JOHN XVII, 3.—And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Brethren how much is there of the simple and the profound, of the goodly and the grand, in the art and exercise of prayer! Heaven and earth are herein united. Eternity comes into contact with time. Things unseen and eternal become visible and tangible, and the realities of the future seem as if they were just at the door. And when the wrestler with God gets into an agony—when there is the praying and the supplicating, with strong crying and tears—when there is the entering into the holiest of all, and the laying hold of the pillars of the Throne of Grace—when there are such cries as these, “O let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once. O let not my Lord be angry, peradventure there be but ten righteous men—wilt thou not destroy it for the ten righteous men’s sake:” When there is the climax of the struggle reached as the piercing word is breathed forth into the ears of the hearer of prayer—“I will not let thee go except thou bless me”—is not the supplicant sublimated—does he not seem to be something other and higher than man, almost not of the earth earthy and as near to heaven as he can get while yet in the body and on the earth below?

But if all this be true when a man prays, and of a man when the spirit of prayer is at work within him, may it not be said, with something of certainty, that it is true of Jesus—of the Lord Jesus Christ perfectly?

Now in the text, and in the whole passage to which it belongs, we see and hear Jesus praying, and I want that you give to your imagination scope and play enough that even though we be far removed in time and place from the upper room in the City of Jerusalem, where he was when so engaged, you picture, and I pray you idealize the picture as some of you can, and vivify it as well with spirit and with life—to yourselves Jesus engaged in prayer at the head of the first sacramental table, with the Eleven—the all the world Elven around whom there has gathered a lustre of fame during these eighteen hundred years, which nor time, nor men, nor the world will willingly let die—about Him, bowed down into the deepest solemnity at the sight of the so lowly condescension of their Master, but filled with wonder and love, and praise at the gracious words He had just preached to them, and at the earnest cries He was now sending up into the ears of His Father and their Father, of His God and of their God, in their behalf, and for the weal of all them who should believe on Him through their word. What must it have been to see Jesus as these men saw him; and to hear Jesus as these men heard Him adore the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their God and Father in Him, as these words fell on their ears: “Father the hour is come, glorify thy Son,