

There are a lot of people who say they're "spiritual but not religious." The "nones" are a rising demographic group—people who believe in "something more" but aren't super-interested in traditional, organized religion. This is the case for Rhett of Good Mythical Morning (view online sermon to see photo), a YouTuber with a YouTube show with more than 18 million subscribers. In a recent YouTube video, Rhett talks about having once been a Christian and no longer adhering to Christianity.

I think where I have ultimately landed is...[I have] a hope, a desire, a sense that there is something *beyond* and that I am driven by a desire to connect with whatever that is. But the idea that I have to contain it and explain it, the idea that that thing, whatever it is, is constrained to an idea, to a book, to a religious philosophy, to an ideology...seems pretty preposterous.

Maybe many of you have that sentiment. Maybe many of you know someone who holds to that sentiment. To some extent, I get it. I think a lot of us have a hope, a desire, a sense that there's a "something more" out there. Christianity, similarly to Rhett, says, "Yes, there's something more." But Christianity, contrary to Rhett, says, "That 'Something More' is actually a 'Someone More' and that 'Someone More' has revealed himself to us."

Why do I share this? I share this because I don't think the simple belief in a "something more" cuts it, because I think that a belief in a "Someone More" is eminently better and because, in John 17, we get to peek behind the curtain and witness the heart of that "Someone More."

John 17 is a prayer. It's Jesus praying. It's Jesus' *longest* prayer. And I think that you'd probably agree with me that when you listen to someone's prayers, you get a lot of insight into who they are, right? Here we get a front row seat to Jesus' innermost thoughts and conversation with the Father. So, what does he pray for? He prays for three things.

1. Jesus prays for himself

I imagine that that strikes you as odd. His heart begins with himself? Well, look with me:

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. (John 17:1-5)

Now, it would be a very weird thing for either you or I to pray for our own glory. But Jesus' praying this prayer has a purpose. Jesus, in his perfect obedience, is about to be obedient even unto death on the cross. Did you notice Jesus' words in verse 1? Jesus says, "Father, the hour has come." All throughout John, Jesus' hour "had not yet come" (see John 2:4). It's not until here at the end that his "hour has come." What he's referencing is *his suffering*, the cross.

It is utterly shocking what Jesus is saying here. He's praying to the Father, "My hour is here. The cross is here. Glorify me so I may glorify you, Father!" By praying that Jesus is saying that both HIS OWN glorification AND the glorification of the Father happens through the shame and humiliation of Jesus' crucifixion.

That's not how we typically think of glory is it? What do you think of when you think of glory? Shame? Embarrassment? Degradation? Crucifixion? Humiliation? When you think of acquiring glory, where does your mind go? For some people glory looks like a workout warrior, for other glory is a big house, for others glory is status, for others glory is money. For me, glory is NT Wright (view online sermon for photos of each of these).

While I think that we can laugh about those photos I showed, many times we really do try to fill our cups with those (money, status, material possessions, etc.). I'm prone to it as much as the next guy. Let's get real and let me confess some places I've wrongly sought glory. If I'm being honest, I sometimes seek to fill my cup from (1) being competent and knowing stuff; (2) looking like I'm competent and that I know stuff; (3) showing favoritism/partiality to those with a higher status than me because in getting them to like me it makes me like me more (isn't that gross?); (4) preaching good sermons; (5) making you guys laugh (which is a lot);

The Bible says, though, all that stuff is just vainglory. It doesn't actually fill our cups. Contrary to what we think brings glorification, Jesus says the pathway to glory looks a lot more like the cross.

Now here's why that matters and why it matters that Jesus prays for his glory *first*: You and I were made for glory (Genesis 1+2, Psalm 8), but you and I have lost our glory through sin. We have fallen short of God's glory. This is why Jesus forfeited his (Philippians 2), and why later in John 17, Jesus makes it clear that he is restoring this for us. "I have given them the glory that you gave me" (John 17:22), which will happen *definitively* in his crucifixion.

Listen to how the writer of Hebrews puts this in Hebrews 2:9-10 (ESV),

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. [*Jesus is first glorified through his suffering.*] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

This is the heart of God, of that Someone More: to bring you to glory through *his* counter-cultural, upside-down glorification! Rhett's "something more" cannot bring you to glory. The Christian "Someone More" can and will.

So, this is the beginning of Jesus' prayer. But as Jesus continues praying, we get more insight into his heart, because now...

2. Jesus prays for his disciples

Here's what he says:

"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. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 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. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was

with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” (John 17:6-19)

So, that’s a lot, but here’s the point. This is Jesus interceding for his disciples. And listen: the disciples need Jesus’ intercession. They need his prayer. Think about it. Jesus has started talking about his “departure.” “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33). Jesus is saying, “I’m leaving!” And now here in John 17, he’s saying, “I’m leaving. And you’re being sent.” “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). They need Jesus’ intercession.

Last Spring, I had the opportunity to go to Japan and our group wound up visiting Sensoji Temple, a Buddhist place of worship. In some ways, it felt very dark, demonic almost. Here people pay their respects, waft incense (did I take a whiff? Yes!) over themselves to promote healing, then put money in an offertory box, and pray to the Buddhas for inspiration and strength to work on themselves, and finally pay some more money, pray a wish, and then get your answer from a fortune that could either be good or bad! (View online sermon for several photos.)

I walked through that place astounded at the *distance* between these people and the Buddhas or gods they were praying to. But I was equally astounded by the fact that the way those people were relating to their gods is the same way many Christians relate to the one true God.

But, my friends, our relationship is totally different. Because as we see here, Jesus in John 17 is interceding for his disciples! Of course, he’s going to send the Holy Spirit, but look at how he now shows his care for his disciples in verses 6-19. He prays that they’ll...

- Be protected (11-12)
- Have the full measure of his joy (13-14)
- Not be taken out of the world (15)
- Be kept from the evil one (15)
- Be sanctified in the truth (17)
- Be consecrated (19)

There’s a lot to potentially take away from this section, but what I want to point out is simply this: Jesus is an intercessor. He intercedes for his disciples—and he intercedes for us.

Question: How many of you have ever been falsely accused of something? Stinks, doesn’t it? You know what also stinks? Being rightly accused of something. Because then it’s like, “Yeah, he right.” Did you know, however, that you have an Accuser? And that he doesn’t need to make stuff up about you? And day in and day out he lives to accuse you, indict you, and take you to court? About every trespass, every fault, every evil thought, every selfish desire, every blind eye turned, every everything? Did you know that?

Another question: Did you know that you have an Advocate? What does Hebrews 7:25 say? It says, “He [Jesus] always lives to make intercession” (ESV). Or what about 1 John 2:1? Even though the Accuser hurls accusations, “We have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” So that no

matter what the accusations the Accuser hurls your way, the Advocate, Jesus Christ, says to the Father, “No, I’ve got him covered!”

I was hanging out with a friend once and this friend had *another* friend with exclusive access to this country club in Los Angeles with a nice dining area, swimming pool, beach access, and so on. When I went I saw Ben Affleck there. True story! Now, you think that I could fancy my way into this club on my own merit? NO WAY! I would have put my little Honda Civic in park and the valet guys would have started “accusing me,” saying “Get this guy outta here! He’s not a member! He doesn’t belong here! He’s not up to snuff!” And they would have been right. But, ladies and gentlemen, I had an *advocate* with me. I had my friend and my friend’s friend. And those valet guys let us waltz right in because of that.

Here’s the point: the same way Jesus intercedes and advocates to the Father on behalf of his disciples, so too, albeit in a slightly different way, does Jesus intercede and advocate for you!

That’s a huge difference between the Christian “Someone More” and the modern person’s “something more” or the Shinto or Buddhist deities! For Christians, we can go to God in prayer knowing that Christ Jesus is *already interceding on our behalf* to God the Father.

So, Jesus prays for himself. And Jesus prays for his disciples. Now, here’s the last thing he prays for.

3. Jesus prays for us

It’s here that we get to one of the fullest, richest, deepest moments in Jesus’ whole prayer, and to one of the *crucial* differences between a “something more” and a “Someone More.” Look at what Jesus prays:

“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. *[Are you noticing the language? Jesus is “in” the Father. And the Father is “in” Jesus. There’s a mutuality here. A “mutual indwelling” as theologians call it. There’s a oneness. A unity. A depth. And that oneness can only be described as perfect love.]* O righteous Father *[Jesus prays to end this prayer]*, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:20-26)

In this prayer, we learn that in Christ Jesus, you and I enter the fellowship of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now, this is not an easy thing to illustrate, though many have tried. The Celtic trinity symbol tries its best to point to this deeper reality (view online sermon to see photo).

There’s a famous painting of the Trinity by an artist named Andrei Rublev (view online sermon to see photo). Here we see all three persons of the Godhead. While this maybe gets us a little closer to the idea, it still falls short.

The best illustration I can think of is the love between a husband and a wife and the love that they share with their newborn. There’s love between the two of them, yes, but when the child is added, there’s an outflowing of love. The Father holds his wife and child. The mother caresses the face of her child with

her arm wrapped around her baby. And the child looks up into the loving gaze of his or her parents, cooing all the while. Total love, total deference, total selflessness.

In the Trinity, we know that God has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The self-revelation of God as “Father” and of Jesus as the Son is no coincidence. Those are *familial* terms, terms that express *relationship*. This is who God is—Father and Son, and both the Father and the Son have existed as such eternally. They’ve always existed this way. They’ve never *not* existed this way. God has *always* existed as a Father loving His Son. The Father is the Lover. The Son is the Beloved. And the Spirit is the Love that they share, as St. Augustine says. That’s why the Scripture says, “God is love.”

This love that exists *within* the life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a perfect love. A love undefiled. A love with no reservations. Mutual submission. Total deference. Love without power plays. Love without competition. It’s an eternal love. A boundless love. An infinite love.

It’s also a selfless love. In the Trinity, the Father is always pointing to the Son and saying, “Look at him! I love him!” The Son is always pointing to the Father and saying, “I’m here to bring glory to him!” And the Spirit is always pointing to the Son saying, “Look at him! Believe on him!” And on and on it goes!

Perfect love, perfect harmony, perfect perfection between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And friends, ***this is the Divine Reality we are brought into if we’re in Christ!***

I recently had a conversation with an eighteen-year-old who doesn’t like coming to church because his parents made him go three times a week for over nine years. Now that he’s technically an adult, he decides not to go because he’s burnt out.

In conversation with him, I was like, “Yeah, man, I can totally relate because I grew up a PK.”

He knows I’m a pastor, so he asked me, “How do you do it? How are you able to go from all that growing up to being a pastor now?”

I said, “Because God has changed my life. And because I believe all of this is the most real thing.”

Essentially what I told him was that what changed my life was the reality of what we’ve learned here today. That you and I have a Someone More—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is bringing us to glory (as we learned from when Jesus prayed for himself), who is interceding for us (as we learned from when Jesus prayed for his disciples), and who brings us into loving fellowship with Himself (as we learned from Jesus’ prayer for us).

That’s something only a “Someone More” give you. And it’s something that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—*has*.

Here’s how I’ll end: As I thought about how all of this applies to us, I thought of three simple things I’ve garnered from time in this text:

1. If you’re “on-the-fence” with Christianity, I hope this gives you confidence.
2. If you’re a believer, I hope this equips you.
3. If you’re a non-believer, I hope this challenges you.