

INTRODUCTION

Today we're on our third week through John 17, looking at the prayers Jesus prayed for himself, his disciples, and us. It's amazing to consider that in the most difficult time of his life, in less than 24 hours before his death, Jesus was thinking of you and thinking of me.

Prayer is an interesting concept. Prayer is a direct line to the Creator of the universe! You can literally ask him anything. And, I think kids, not necessarily my kids, have asked him everything. Here are some good examples of prayers from a kid's perspective.

"Dear God, I went to this wedding and they were kissing right there in church. Is that OK?"

"Dear God, it must be super hard to love all the people in the world, especially my brother. I don't know how you do it."

"Dear God, are you actually invisible, or is that just a trick?"

"Dear God, in Bible times, did they really talk that fancy?"

"Dear God, if you watch in church on Sunday, I will show you my new shoes."

"Dear God, please take care of my daddy, mommy, sister, brother, my doggy, and me. Oh, and please take care of yourself! If anything happens to you, we're gonna be in a big mess!"

Well, those prayers remind us that prayer from the perspective of an naïve child is much different than the perspective of us adults. Life experience and maturity has a way of changing the way we pray. Well, today, we're going to look at three requests that were prayed for you by Jesus. These are prayers from the perspective of our loving savior.

In his greatest moment of trial, as you were on his mind, what was he praying for you?

John 17:20-26. "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation. Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. I made your name known to them and will continue to

make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them."

As we dive into this passage, we're going to see Three Requests Jesus Made for You.

1. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

He said in verses 21-23 "May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you...I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one."

One thing that stands out in these verses is how Jesus describes our unity as mirroring the unity within the trinity. We describe the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, as one God in three persons. Three in one. We don't have time this morning to dive into the mystery of the Trinity, but I want to emphasize how the ONE God is comprised of three PERSONS. They are intertwined in a perfect unity of authority and power.

When Jesus described the unity he desired for us He was describing a unity that is not simply two things being put together, but two things becoming intertwined.

I grew up working with wood alongside my dad, who is a retired home builder. I've learned that when building something with wood, true strength comes not just when two pieces of wood are nailed together with nails, but when the two pieces of wood are actually joined together. This is most obvious in joints for cabinets and drawers.

Very often, when you make a joint like these, and add just a little glue, you get a stronger bond than if you placed two pieces next to each other and nailed them together. Intertwining the wood makes the two pieces hold on to one another. The glue sets them in place by binding them together.

When Jesus prayed for unity in the church, it was that we as the people of God would literally become intertwined together. Like God the Son and God the Father were one, we would be one, one unit comprised of many intertwined persons. That is what will make us stronger as a church, and more effective as a church. We intertwine our lives together, and we are bound together by the glue of our Savior. That's why Paul writes in Ephesians that we are to bear with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:2-6)

Our shared faith in Christ, that unity of the Spirit, is the glue that bonds us together. When we talk about what unity is, exactly, people have different opinions. Some people think unity means all us being the same, but that's not correct.

(1) Unity is not uniformity.

The primary definition of "uniform," the root of uniformity, is "remaining the same in all cases and at all times; unchanging in form or character."

Some in our church will tell us the only way to achieve unity in our churches is to erase the categories that divide us: categories such as race, rich and poor, urban and suburban. If everyone was the same, then we would be unified. They say Paul says as much in Galatians 3:28 when he says there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, since we are all one in Christ.

But, that is not Paul's point at all, and that is not the biblical model of unity. Paul doesn't mean that the differences disappear. He said the differences *don't matter!* In Judaism, the differences divided people. In Christianity, the differences just add flavor.

Thanks to the Coronavirus, we've been able to watch a many different worship services online, and I took the opportunity to spend some time observing how other churches conducted their worship services. I really enjoyed it! There are some churches that have a lot different flavors of worship than what we're used to. Some are a little more bland, and some have a lot of extra spice.

When you look at unity in the church as described in Revelation, you see a whole lot of different flavors. John describes one body of worshipers at the throne of Jesus: a single multitude, united, yet a multitude made of people from every distinct nation, tribe, people, and language. United, but not uniform. Full of flavor, variety, and uniqueness, stirred together to worship the one true king.

So, unity is not uniformity: Thank goodness.

(2) Unity is not unification.

Unity is also not unification. To be more clear, I should say unity is not ONLY unification. Unification is the process of coming together. Of course unification is involved the process of becoming united, but it is not only the process of becoming united.

In recent weeks, we've seen people of all shades, economic levels, vocational areas, and many other categories come together on the streets of cities across our country, peacefully calling for people's lives to be valued. I'm glad they have done it! One of the great thing about our country is that it allows people the opportunity to do so. However, simply gathering people together in a certain space with a similar mission doesn't make them united. It's a good step. It's part of the unification process but, by itself, it doesn't result in true unity.

The same can be said of the church. Folks, simply because we are all in this room together, and have sung the same songs, and have the same belief system, and share the same vision to transform lives with the truth of Jesus, does not mean that we are united. Proximity is aspect

of unity, but it's not the only aspect. Agreed upon belief systems is ONE aspect of unity, but it's not the only aspect. A common mission is ONE aspect of unity, but it's not the only aspect. There are many aspects of unity that must come together along the process of unification, but when it comes down to it, they are not the CAUSE of unity. Proximity, beliefs, mission, and other aspects of unity are truly the RESULT of unity, not the cause. There is only ONE cause of unity:

(3) Unity is our shared connection in Christ.

I want to go back to what Jesus said in John 17:21. He said, "May they all be one, as you, Father are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me."

There are two things Jesus is saying here. Let me mention the second one first. Jesus prays that we will be IN the Son and Father, which refers to the command Jesus gave us in John 15 to abide in him, to remain connected to the vine. This is how growth in godliness can take place, and is the means for us to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

But, the first thing Jesus says is what really pertains to this topic of unity. He prays that we would be IN one another, just as he is in the Father and the Father is in Him. So they example that we are to model ourselves after is the example of God the Father and God the Son, who are literally one and the same. The Greek word translated in literally means "in"—sorry if you were expecting something mind boggling, but it just means in.

But, even that word "in" is pretty profound when you think of it in the concept of unity. Unity is not sameness, uniformity. Unity is not proximity, unification. Unity is shared connection IN Christ.

Our shared connection in Christ is how we become united. We are intertwined together because of our common faith: one body, one Spirit, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. And we are bound together by the presence of Christ among us, the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

This is true in the church, and it's also true as the church seeks to impact our culture. Right now, the object of division in our society is, sadly, revolving once again around the issue of race. And the church should be the leader in changing that permanently! The only hope for peace between people of different shades is the message of Jesus Christ given through his mouthpiece the church!

I came across this quote recently from a major influencer in the church. "The Christian looks through the eyes of Christ at the race question and admits that the church has only partially solved this great human problem. We have let the sports world, the entertainment field, politics, the armed forces, education, and industry outstrip us. The church should have been the pacesetter. In the final analysis the only real solution will be found at the foot of the cross, where we come together in brotherly love. The closer the people of all races get to Christ and

his cross, the closer they will get to one another. The Bible indicates that we are all one in Christ. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. When Christ opens up our spiritual eyes we behold not color, nor class, nor spiritual condition, but simply human beings with the same longings, fears, needs, and aspirations as our own. We begin to see people through the master's eyes."

That sounds like a great quote for someone to say in our day and time, amen? Billy Graham wrote those words in 1953. How little progress we've made. All it takes is a look around the room to see that true unity in the church has not taken place as it should. And, if I may have a moment of confession, it's primarily my fault. The reason unity, especially racial unity, hasn't taken place in the church is not just because there aren't more people of color sitting down the pew from me. It's because I haven't had more brothers and sisters of color sitting across the dinner table from me. It's because my kids might play on the same sports teams, but I haven't had their families over to play in the backyard. Unity is not simply proximity. It is SHARED CONNECTION IN CHRIST. It is when we become intertwined in each other's lives that we become a strong and more effective church.

We could spend more time on unity, but that's not the only thing Jesus prayed for us here in the Garden that night.

2. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL BE WITH HIM TO SEE HIS GLORY.

Jesus said, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory." (John 17:24)

Wow, I just want to say, I'm so thankful that this world is not my final destination! Is anyone else thankful that there is a better world waiting for us? And to add to the beauty of our future home, Jesus wants us to be there with him.

Can you remember what it was like when you were a kid, and it was the day of your birthday party? If you were like our kids, you anxiously awaited the arrival of your party guests, and ran to the door to let them in when they got there. I truly believe that is what Jesus is like right now, as he awaits our arrival. Why do I think that? For many reasons in the Bible, but one in particular. When Stephen, the first martyr, was being stoned to death for his presentation of the Gospel, he looked to Heaven and said, "I see the Heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Why was Jesus standing? Because one of his party guests was arriving, and he was welcoming him in with open arms. What Stephen saw was essentially Jesus running to the door, throwing open the door of heaven and saying, "I've been waiting for you! Hurry! Come inside! I can't wait to be with you." Jesus wants us to be with him, but not just so we can be with him but, so we can see his glory.

Paul said in Romans 8, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18 CSB)

Brothers and Sisters, I don't know what you're going through. I don't know if you're in a season of victory or a season of loss, a season of confidence, or a season of fear, a season of hope or a season of despair, I promise you that for the believer in Jesus, these sufferings we go through now are nothing compared to the glory that we will see later on. Jesus longs for us to be with him and to witness His restored glory.

In reference to this passage, Charles Spurgeon wrote, "He did not say he wished his people to be in heaven; but WITH HIM IN HEAVEN, because that makes heaven heaven. There shall we have no fields to till, no garment to spin, no wearied limb, no dark distress, no burning thirst, no pangs of hunger, no weepings of bereavement; we shall have naught to do or think upon, but for ever to gaze upon that Sun of Righteousness, to be satisfied forever with his favor, and full with the goodness of the Lord! Oh! if we have only to die to get to such delights as these, - death is gain, it is swallowed up in victory!"

Jesus knew the future for those who would follow him; it was what was leading him to the cross! That's why he prayed for us to be with him and have the awesome privilege of beholding the greatest reality in the universe, something no one since the Garden of Eden has been able to see: the full and complete glory of God.

But, there's one more thing Jesus prayed for us in the Garden that night.

3. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL BE FILLED WITH HIS LOVE.

Jesus said, "I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them." (John 17:26)

Jesus' prayer here is that we would be filled with his love. But, a couple of questions come to mind. First of all, what does it mean for Jesus to make the Father's name known to us. And, second, how does that fill us with love?

Basically, Jesus is saying that he is going to continually make God's name KNOWN to us. Someone's name in that time and sometimes even now carries with it their message. It holds their character. It represents their mission. In today's political climate, we might say their name represents their platform.

I can prove this with a little exercise. Let's assume you are candidate for a job, and the interviewer says "Give me a name of a famous person in history that defines who you are." You can only pick one name, and no other explanation is allowed. Whose name would you choose? Winston Churchill? George Washington? Mother Teresa? Moses? Whatever name you choose, carries with it an inherent message.

For us, Jesus is going to continually make KNOWN the platform of the Father so we can learn and better understand his message.

The biblical concept of making something known is much more than mental knowledge of something. To know a concept in Scripture is to make it an experienced reality.

Think about John 8:32, which says, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." We know that having an understanding of what the truth is doesn't by itself lead to the freedom of forgiveness and salvation. It's not until you apply that truth or experience the truth at work in your life, that you receive salvation. Which is why Jesus says in the preceding verse, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. (then) You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

So, in our text today, in John 17:26, As Jesus makes known God's name, His message, it is obvious why would be filled with the love of God: Because love is the message. Let me paraphrase this verse for us to make it a little easier to understand. "Father, I have made your platform and mission known to them, and will continue to teach them more about it, so that they will be able to experience the reality of the perfect love that you have loved me with."

The name of God, the message of God, the experience God wants you to experience is his love. I can't say it any better than John did in 1 John 4:7-12 (NLT). "Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us."

Jesus prayed that you would know that one true sacrificial God, and be filled with the love of his message, the Gospel message that Jesus came to pay the price of sin on our behalf, so that we could receive eternal life if we put our faith and trust in him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was similar. "I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-19)

INVITATION

You know, it's not until we know God and his love, until we experience the grace of God provided to us through faith in Jesus Christ, that we even have the capacity to stand united in and with the people of God. The foundation of unity is faith in Jesus! Listen, unity, whether it is in the church or in a culture, will ultimately fail unless those unified have the foundation of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

SO, you might be saying this morning, "I want to make a difference in the world! I want to bring unity and healing in my community, or my family, or my social circle. What can I do?"

The first and primary thing that you MUST do, is the receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. We all have to recognize that without Christ we are powerless to make any lasting difference in the world, because no lasting difference has taken place in our own hearts. If you want to change the world in a way that makes true impact, your heart must first be changed. That means coming to a place where you admit that you are a sinner. Each one of us has committed an act in rebellion to God, whether great or small, and any one of those sins separates us from our loving God. But, because of his great love for us, he sent Jesus Christ to die for us, so that if we put our full trust and dependence upon him and him alone, he will forgive our sins, save us from our hopeless situation, change us on the inside, and begin the process of making us a new person.

If you want to make that choice this morning, to leave behind a hopeless situation, and fall into the only means of salvation, then I want to ask you to do something bold this morning. I want to ask you to surrender. In your heart right now, with full sincerity, I want you to say, "Jesus, I'm a sinner without hope, and I need a savior. I believe you're the only one who can save me from my sin, so I ask you to save me now! Forgive my sin, and give me eternal life. I receive it by faith in you this morning." If you prayed something like that this morning, then I want to ask you to do another bold thing. Receiving forgiveness and salvation from Jesus is not the final step in your faith journey, it's the first step. Now, you'll need help to know how to continue learning more about the message and mission of God, to begin experiencing the reality of the love we talked about this morning. We want to help you in that process. In the back of the room, are some tents setup with some great folks who would love to talk with you more about the decision you just made. SO, here in a moment, I'd like to ask you to head back there and talk to someone today about the decision you made. You can go right now if you want to! In fact, that would be great!

For those of us who know Christ as our Savior, what do we do with this? I want to give you a takeaway for each of these prayers Jesus prayed. Maybe these can give us a head start in seeing these prayers produce fruit in our lives.

1. Jesus prayed we will keep the unity of the Spirit. How about we make an extra effort to intertwine our lives with other believers in our church. I would even encourage you to reach out to someone new, who has something distinctly different than you, and ask them for dinner or to hang out in some way. The beauty of the church is in her variety. Are you young? Mingle with someone older. Are you white? 95% of you are. Get connected with a family someone a few shades darker than you. You'll be surprised what you both learn. Are you a spiritual veteran? Connect with a spiritual newbie, and pour in to their lives.

2. Jesus prayed that we will be with him to see his glory. If you're a believer, then this is a done deal for the future—but what about those around you? Are they headed in the Jesus glory direction? Jesus invited them to the party, but do they know they way? I want to encourage

you to be a witness to the good news of Jesus. Share your faith with those you know who need to experience the reality of the love of God.

Speaking of that love,

3. Jesus prayed we will be filled with his love. This week abide in Jesus. Soak in the word of God. Let it permeate you to the core. Experience the truth of God's message in your life in a fresh way. I promise you, if you spend time in God's word this week, and pray for him to show himself to you, that you will come out of this week having experienced God in a fresh way. Will you do that this week?

OUTLINE

1. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you...I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one.
John 17:22-23

- (1) Unity is not uniformity (sameness).
- (2) Unity is not unification (human effort).
- (3) Unity is our shared connection in Christ.

2. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL BE WITH HIM TO SEE HIS GLORY.

Jesus said, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory." *John 17:24*

3. JESUS PRAYED WE WILL BE FILLED WITH HIS LOVE.

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