

Make Them One

John 17:20-26

Good morning, it is great to be with you as we open God's Word.

- This is our 3rd and final week going through John 17 together.

ILL: I think about how we sang earlier that Christ is our sure and steady anchor.

- I think the picture of an anchor is fitting for this passage.
- Just imagine a heavy anchor being dropped into the sea.
- An anchor goes deep and reaches the bottom so that the boat would not be swept away.

My hope is that this prayer of Jesus would be like an anchor for your faith in your heart and in your mind.

- That it would draw you deeper and deeper into your relationship with the Lord as you behold him.
- That it would truly keep you steady and secure as you consider what Jesus prays.

I have been greatly encouraged by this chapter

- It truly is an amazing window to see the intimacy between the Father and the Son.

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Just by way of reminder, John 17 takes place on the night before Jesus was crucified.

- He shared the Last Supper with his disciples in the Upper Room.
- He gave his parting words as he would soon leave them.
- Then, he gives his disciples the privilege to listen as he prays to the Father.

What makes this chapter so unique is that it is the longest prayer of Jesus recorded in Scripture

- And, we also know what he prayed for.

In the first section of his prayer, Jesus prays for himself, that the Father would glorify him.

- We learned that Jesus deserves the glory he asks for.

Last week, we saw Jesus pray for his immediate disciples, that they would be kept in the Father's name.

- We learned the kind of priorities Jesus has in his prayer ministry.

Today, in the third and final section of Jesus's prayer, he prays directly for you and me.

- He looks into the future, and prays for all believers throughout every age.

He prays in John 17:20, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word..."

Not only for these, meaning his 11 disciples, but also for everyone who will come to believe in Jesus through the ministry of the disciples.

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For those of us who follow Jesus, at one point in our lives there was someone who shared the gospel with us.

- Maybe it was a parent or family member or a friend.
- Or a Sunday school teacher or youth group leader or pastor.

What that person did for you is simply a continuation of the ministry of the disciples.

- You came to believe in Jesus through their word.

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So, Jesus prays directly for you.

- There is perhaps no greater encouragement and comfort to know that the eternal Son of God is so concerned for the strength your faith, that he would pray for you.
- Prayer at its core is communing with God as an overflow of a vital relationship with Him.
- Through prayer our hearts are honestly exposed before God – whether for better or worse.

When Jesus prays for you, his heart is exposed before the Father to reveal his priorities, his desires, and his intentions for you in your faith.

- Jesus intends for you to hear him pray for you, so that you would be deeply encouraged in your faith, and strengthened as you continue to follow Him.

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So then, the question for today is what does Jesus pray for us?

- What are his priorities, and desires, and intentions for you individually, but also for us corporately as his church.

Jesus makes two main requests to the Father for you and me.

- He prays that we would be united to Him.
- He prays that we would be present with Him.

1) United to Him

John 17:21-23, “..that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one...”

Jesus prays that our lives would be characterized by a supernatural unity.

A. The Father and the Son are united

Now, we need to notice first how Jesus’s request for unity is grounded in the reality that the Father and the Son are united.

- “Just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you...”
- “That they may be one even as we are one...”

The Father and the Son are united in their relationship – they cannot be separated.

- Both are God along with the Holy Spirit.
- They are distinct persons of the Trinity.
- They have existed in a loving unity from eternity past.

One of the most significant attributes of God is his love – The Bible says that God is love.

- It doesn’t say God is justice, or God is mercy – although that does describe Him.
- But it says that God is love.

Before anything was created, God existed in a loving relationship with himself.

- He does not need anything outside himself.

- He is completely satisfied within himself in a loving unity.
- Yet, out of the overflow of his love, he created our world and he created us.
- Simply because he wanted to

That is the kind of relationship the Father and the Son have with each other.

- That's why he can say the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father.

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Their unity does not mean they are exactly the same in every way.

- The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father.
- Yet, both of them are God, and they exist in a loving unity.

It's outside the limits of our finite minds to fully comprehend what this means.

There is no earthly relationship that we can point to as an example of this.

- Everything falls short.
- ILL: Just think of the closest relationship you have with another person on this earth.
- Whether a spouse or a sibling or a parent.
- You might think you have a close relationship with them.
- But at the end of the day, this pales in comparison to the closeness between the Father and the Son,

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Their unity means they are perfectly aligned in their character and in their purpose.

In their character – what is true about the Son is also true about the Father.

- Sometimes we can be tempted to think that God the Father is the bad cop – he's the one that is wrathful and brings judgment.
- Whereas Jesus is the good cop – he's meek and mild and gentle and gracious and saves us from the not so nice Father.
- But no, what is true about the character of the Son, is also true about the character of the Father.

They are united in their justice and holiness and wrath.

- They are also united in their mercy, and grace, and love.
- They are perfectly aligned in their character.

But they are also perfectly aligned in their purpose – they are united so that everything they do is done together.

- Jesus came to do the will of the Father.
- The Father sent Jesus to accomplish his will.

At the end of the day, any analogy we try to use to describe this falls short.

- We can't fully wrap our minds around a mystery like this.

But we know that the Father and the Son are perfectly united.

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<This is the amazing part – In the same way He and the Father are one, Jesus prays that we would be one with Him.>

B. Jesus desires that we would be united to Him

He prays, “Just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us”

What a shocking request from Jesus.

- That we, as his creation, would be one with Him, in the very same way that he and the Father are one.

Did you know that’s what Jesus desires for you?

- Have you ever truly pondered that truth before?
- That his desire for his relationship with you is that it would be so deep it would go beyond our full comprehension.
- The only word to contain that reality is oneness.

Jesus prays this for us, but he also taught this to his disciples earlier on that night.

- He taught them in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus prays that you would be so closely united to him like a tree branch is to a tree trunk.

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Again, this unity does not mean we are exactly the same in every way.

- We don’t lose our personality when we are one with him.
- Rather, this unity means that we would be aligned with him in his character and in his purpose.

In his character – that we would be made more and more into the image of Christ.

- That we would be made holy, just as he is holy.
- That our character would reflect his character.
- We saw last week that Jesus prayed for his disciples that they would be sanctified in the truth.
- Just as Jesus is perfect in his character, we too would be made like him.

In his purpose – so that our will would be fully aligned with his will.

- The desires that we have for our lives, for our world, and for those we love.
- Would be the same desires as his.

Jesus’s desire for you is that you would be one with him.

- We know he is seriously committed to making this happen, since he prays for this.

So, the Father and the Son are united.

- Jesus prays that we would be united to Him (what an amazing request)

<what makes this even more amazing is that Jesus prays just as he and the father are one, and we would be one with him, that we would also be one with each other!>

C. Jesus desires that we would be united with each other

Jesus desires unity within the church as the natural outcome of our unity with Him.

Now, a lot has been said about unity – some helpful things and some not so helpful things.

- But we mustn't think that this unity God calls us to is a superficial niceness like we are all gathered around the campfire with our arms around each other swaying back and forth singing Kumbaya.

This unity is not at the expense of the truth – but is dependent on the truth.

- ILL: Sometimes in an effort to achieve unity between people, the strategy has been employed where you lower your standard of truth to find the lowest common denominator
- There is a kind of superficial unity where everyone just tries to be nice.
- Being kind is certainly a biblical command.

But when you disregard the truth, then your unity is based on a weak foundation.

- We all have opinions, but our opinions may change, and we may not be correct about them (believe it or not).
 - o So our subjective opinions are a weak source of unity.

Our unity must be dependent on an objective reality that does not change.

- Our unity must be dependent on the reality that God is one within himself, and that we are one in Him.

This unity that God calls us to does not equal uniformity.

- We are all different, and that is a good thing.
- Just like we do not lose our personhood when we are one with Christ, we do not lose our personhood when we are one with each other.

Many places in the New Testament describe the church as a body.

- The head is Christ, and then each of us make up a different part of the body.
- The ear cannot say to the eye, "we don't need you!"
- We are different, and all of us play an important role in the body.

Despite our differences, we can have true oneness when we depend on the gospel as our foundation for unity.

Ephesians 4:1-3, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

We have been called by God to be united to Him.

- Therefore, let us live in a manner worthy of this calling.

APP: Make it your aim to pursue unity in the church

- Not begrudgingly, but eagerly seek to maintain unity
- In your LIFE group
- As you serve alongside others in ministry
- As you will inevitably have conflict with others (that's what happens when people are involved)

Make it your aim to pursue unity that is dependent on the truth of the gospel.

- Not based on our subjective opinions, but based on the truth of his unity and our unity to Him.

So, Jesus prays that we would be united to Him as He is united to the Father.

- This vertical unity will produce in us a horizontal unity among the church.

Unity is a worthy end in and of itself.

- But this unity that Jesus prays for us is not simply for the sake of unity.
- There is a purpose for it.

<The purpose of our unity is for gospel witness>

D. The purpose of our unity is gospel witness

Jesus prays we ought to be united to Him and united to each other so the world would believe in Him.

John 17:21, “...so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Our unity as believers is one of the first things the world will notice about us.

- A lack of unity has the potential to create an unnecessary barrier to the world hearing the gospel.
- “If you in the church can't seem to figure things out, then why should I listen to your message?”
- It is a very real objection we need to consider.

But on the other hand, having unity in the gospel can open one of the widest doors for the gospel to be heard.

Just think about the world we live in.

- It is full of disunity – it may seem like disunity is growing in our day. But our world has always been full of disunity.
- It's exhausting.

Just imagine the witness of a group of believers who get along with each other.

- They have a certain unity that is supernatural
- They don't lower their standards of the truth
- They aren't uniform in everything
- But they are one.

The world will notice that kind of unity.

- They will ask questions about us – how are they like that?
- Is that real?
- How can I experience that too?

When that happens, we will have the opportunity to say – we have been united in Christ

<So, we ought to be united to Him so the world would believe in Jesus>

Second, we ought to be united to Him so the world would know God's love.

John 17:23, "...so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

Our love for one another is a tangible way for others to see what God's love is like.

- Our invisible God becomes visible to unbelievers through our unity.

There is something particularly powerful about God's love when we experience it in our lives.

- But there is also something particularly powerful about seeing God's love displayed in our relationships with others.

When we forgive each other like God in Christ has forgiven us.

- When we show each other kindness even when it's hard.
- When we bear one another's burdens expecting nothing in return.

Others will see our love for each other and get a glimpse of God's love for them.

John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Pursue unity among the church in love, so that others will see God's love for them and believe in Jesus.

Don't miss the flow of thought in Jesus's prayer

- The Father and Son are united
- He prayed we would be united to him
- He prayed we would be united to each other
- So the world would know God's love and believe in Jesus.

That is the first request Jesus makes to the Father on our behalf.

<Jesus also makes a second request of the Father. He also prays that we would be present with Him.>

2) Present with Him

John 17:24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am..."

Jesus desires that you would be present with him where he is.

As Jesus was talking with his disciples in the Upper Room, one of the greatest sources of their unsettledness was that Jesus was leaving them.

- What did he mean by this?
- Where is he going?

Well, Jesus eased their unsettledness by explaining how it was actually better that he leave them, so that the Holy Spirit would come.

- But then he also explained to them where he was going, what he would do, and when they would be able to join him there.

In John 14:2-3, “In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Jesus is going to the Father in order to prepare a place for us in his presence.

- We look forward to the day that we will be in his presence for all eternity.

Jesus prays that we would be with him in the future, but also that we would be with him now.

- We know that his presence is with us through the Holy Spirit today.
- His desire is that we would experience his presence day by day.

Jesus prays you would be present with him, so that you can behold his glory and know his love.

A. To behold His glory

John 17:24, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

Beholding is giving your attention and your affection towards something

We saw two weeks ago in verses 1-5 that the glory of Christ is inseparable from the work that he accomplished.

- We grow in our faith when we put our attention and our affection on the glory of Christ.
- As we consider his work, we see him for who he is, and we are changed.

We live in a world with many lesser glories fighting for our attention and our affection.

ILL: I think about what so many of us do in the summer during the 4th of July.

- Almost all the villages around here put on a fireworks display.
- So, you bring your lawn chair to the local park.
- Sit and wait for the sun to go down and the show to begin.

Often times, in the minutes leading up to the main show, you will see kids and adults walking around with sparklers.

- Handheld sparklers that put off small little flashes of light.
- They're fun! Aren't they?
- They are even a little mesmerizing!
- When someone has a sparkler you almost have to just look at it.
- It captures your attention.

But, once the main fireworks show starts, nobody cares about the little sparklers anymore.

- There are huge sparklers exploding in the sky, so why would I look at a little handheld sparkler?

Our world is full of lesser glories that are like handheld sparklers.

- They get our attention, they are even mesmerizing at times.

These lesser glories may not even be bad things.

- A career, a family, friends, leisure, being liked and respected by others.
- There is nothing wrong with those things by themselves.

But when you behold the glory of Jesus, all of the lesser glories fade away into nothing.

- That is what Jesus hopes for you!

Why would we focus on the little sparkler when there is a huge firework show right in front of us?!

- Jesus knows we will be tempted to behold lesser glories.
- He knows it is far better to behold his glory.

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What we behold forms us.

- The more you behold something, the more you will end up like that thing.
- If you give yourself to accumulating money, then eventually you will compromise your integrity to get more of it.
- If you give yourself to being liked by others, then eventually your every move will be driven by the opinions of others.

When we behold the glory of Christ, we will become more like him.

The apostle Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

We will become more like him to more we behold him.

- Jesus prays that this would be true of us.

APP: What are you beholding in your life?

- What are you giving your best attention to?
- What are you giving your highest affection to?

This doesn't mean we completely remove lesser glories from our lives.

- Rather, we must view them in light of the greatest glory, the glory of Christ

<Jesus's prayer for you is that you would be present with him, so that you would behold his glory. But he also prays that you would be present with him so that you would know His love>

## B. To know His love

John 17:25-26, “O righteous Father, 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.”

The Father has loved the Son from before the foundation of the world.

- Jesus's desire is that you would love him the way the Father loves him.

Tim Keller once wrote, "To be loved but not known is superficial. To be known but not loved is our nightmare. Only Jesus knows us to the bottom and loves us to the sky."

His prayer for you is that you would know in him you are fully known and fully loved.

- That in return you would know him and love him.

The more you are with him, the more you will know of his love for you.

This is Jesus's heart for you!

- He loves the Father.
- The Father loves him
- He loves you.
- His desire is that you would be filled with his love.

Do not neglect his posture towards you!

- We must not listen to Jesus pray this, and then carry on as if it never happened.
- Listen to what he prays for you
- Believe this is what he desires for you
- Respond accordingly.
- Strive to be present with him, so that you would see his glory and know his love, and be changed.
  - o Do not let this passage go in one ear and out the other.
  - o Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

## CONCLUSION

It is one of the most strengthening and comforting realities to know that Jesus prays for you.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne said once, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me."

- Take that deep into your heart today.
- That Christ is praying for you.
- You have no need to fear a million enemies

He knows what you need.

- He desires that you would be united to Him just as he is united to the Father.
- He desires that we would be united together in the same way.
- He desires that you would be present with him, to see his glory and to know his love.

He is so committed to seeing this through that he prays to the Father for you.

We know that Jesus forever lives to pray for his people.

- Let that encourage your heart today.

I began this series by saying John 17 is the most amazing chapter in the entire Bible.

- Although we have dug deep these past 3 weeks, I feel like a kid with a big bucket full of sand, while standing on the beach.
- So much is here, yet in many ways we were only able to scratch the surface.

I hope that you will continue to be caught up in awe and wonder at what Jesus prays to his Father.

- That truly is the only fitting response to this amazing chapter.

Jesus deserves the glory that he asks for.

- Jesus prays that you would be kept in his name
- Jesus prays that you would be made one with him.