

John 17:20-26 That WE may all be one 21/1/2018

As Phoe and I went on our way up to Bendigo last week to visit some dear friends we were in the car and wanted to spend some time in prayer. At the time I had in mind another passage for this morning, but as we began to pray for you and us and Christ's church in Australia, I felt such a strong leading from the Holy Spirit and such a burning love for the church that I could not help but think about this passage. So we are in John 17 and before we begin, we must pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son as our Savior, thank you for the love you have for Him and the love you have for us. God, would you open our eyes and hearts to the glorious calling to which you have called us. In your name we pray Jesus. Amen.

So, we need to know what the context of our passage is so we can understand it best, we are looking at this in chapter 13, it is the evening of our Lord's betrayal, He has just shared the Passover meal with his disciples, Judas has just left the house to betray Jesus. Now I suspect that Jesus knew that his disciples were feeling anxious that his death was coming because he, from ch. 14 all the way up to our passage comforts them. **14:1 “Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me.”**

14:14 “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

14:16 “I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper”

14:18 “I will not leave you as orphans”

15:9 “as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love”.

And we can see that the disciples were somewhat aware that Jesus was going away to return to God, even if they didn't fully understand, because Jesus says to them, **16:6 “because I have said these things, sorrow has filled your heart.”** So Jesus knows his time is near and he wants to encourage his disciples. **16:33 “but take heart; I have**

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overcome the world”.

So we arrive at ch.17 and Jesus, having encouraged his disciples with many promises, he runs to his Father in prayer. It is important to note as well that Jesus doesn't retreat to a private room or a mountain to pray this prayer, and so we get the sense that this prayer is for himself and for his disciples as well.

I want to focus specifically on v20-26 where he prays these words:

“My prayer is not for them alone. 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. “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

We must ask one question before we get into the text's meaning: who is Jesus praying for? We know he is praying to the Father, because he calls his name 6 times in ch. 17. If you look with me at v20, Jesus says **“My prayer is not for them alone ”**. So we look back to v12, we can see that Jesus is talking about his disciples whom he has guarded and **“not one of them has been lost except the Son of destruction”**. Looking back to

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v20, we can paraphrase it like this: **My prayer is not for my disciples alone. “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message”**. This second group is who Jesus is praying for in our passage. Those who will believe are those believers who have heard and learned of Jesus by the teaching of the apostles. His church, us, you and me.

Having seen this, we must read this as the prayer of our Saviour for us right here and now.

I would just like to point out what an amazing concept this is. That by the Holy Spirit, John the disciple of Jesus has written down the prayer of the God-Man, the incarnate I AM, the Saviour of the world. And he recorded it for us, and the King is praying for us. I pray that you might see what this is and that your soul is stirred to wonder and be in awe at this.

I believe what Jesus is most concerned to pray for is this: **“that they may all be one”** I get that from verse 21. That who may be one? Us. His body of believers who have believed by the words of the Apostles. That is amazing! Jesus in full expectation of torture and death on a cross, AND to be raised to life again thinks to pray for the unity of the church. Wow.

So that is what I believe this passage is about and for the rest of the message I am going to try to show you the definition of church unity, the foundation or basis of this oneness; the reason why it is even possible, and the effect of this oneness.

Definition

Have a look at verses 21,22 and 23 what is the unity like?

In verse **21** Jesus says **“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you”**. And again in **v22** and **23** **“that they may be one, as we are one: I in**

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them and you in me. May they may be brought to complete unity”.

I hope that didn't lose you! What Jesus just prayed is what makes this passage so extraordinary!

What Jesus is praying is this: the Christians in this building and across the earth should now and always relate to one another the way that the Son relates to the Father and the way the Father relates to the Son, and the way the Son relates to the Church.

Let us look at the passage to understand what that actually looks like.

In v4 and 5 Jesus prays **“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”.**

So the Son lays down his life and obeys the Father, **always doing the things that are pleasing to him (8:29)**, and the Father will glorify the Son in the same glory Jesus had with the Father before the foundation of the world.

What does this glory/ glorifying mean? I think this is what it means from verse 4 and 5. It does not describe the relationship but the way in which they relate to each other. It starts with the love they have for one another and is expressed in glorifying each other. Where one esteems, honors, lifts up, magnifies, the other is esteemed, honored, lifted up and magnified. When Jesus is glorifying the Father, he displays his love for the praise of his Father over and above the praise of himself.

He loves to praise his Father! His desire is for the Father's glory not his own glory. And the Father relates back to Jesus in the same way. The Son lifts up the Father with the desire to please him, the Father lifts up the Son to make him glorious. The eyes of each

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are not on themselves but wholly on the other.

Paul says it perfectly like this in Phillipians 2:6-11 Jesus **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

That is how they treat each other! From all eternity to all eternity! So the result is the Father is always glorified by the Son and the Son will always be glorified by the Father. Think about this, the Father and the Son are eternally seeking the good of each other, over themselves. That is what it looks like in the God-head.

And Jesus has displayed the same love to us. He came from heaven to earth, not just to wash feet, but to wash souls! Not for his sake, but for ours, not for gain, but for love! It is by Jesus selflessness towards us that we are caught up into the love of God. So He calls us to lay down self, to step down from the throne of self and abdicate, to the honour and praise and glory of God. So when Jesus prays in v22, **“I have given them the glory that you gave me”** by faith the church, the bride of Christ, you and I are caught up in the heavenly dance of self-giving with God.

Do you see how we should relate to each other, brothers and sisters? Paul says it like this in **Philippians 2:1-5 “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if**

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any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus”.

If within a marriage, each partner desires the good of the other above the pleasure of themselves, each will always have someone to lift them up. If in a group of 5 christian people, each person has 4 other people giving up themselves with the desire for the others good, no-one could ever be in need.

If the all the members of the body of Christ across this nation, considered themselves less then their brothers and sisters, abdicated the throne of self to serve each other first! What unity! What a God-wrought, blood-bought miracle on earth! Can you imagine what it would look like? I believe there is no clearer picture of the experience of heaven than that of the church giving themselves to God and to one another. And I do believe we do not need to wait around for heaven to live like that.

Foundation

How is that possible? What gives us, the people of God, the ability to be in “complete unity” or to relate to each other and to God the way God relates to Jesus?

I believe the only foundation on which we can stand to have this accomplished amongst us is in v6 in John 17. **“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world”**. Jesus has revealed the Father to the people He was given out of the world (God has given us to Jesus, and we have been taken out of the world and put in the kingdom of God).

“They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word”. We

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were saved, called out of darkness into his marvelous light, and then we believed Jesus, and he gave us the power to live as he lived, to speak as he speaks, and to hold fast and keep his word.

So here is the answer to the question 'how can the church be complete in unity?': in V6: Jesus showed us what God is like, we were taken out of the world and we were enabled to keep his word. HOWEVER we, as a church, will never be able to do this except by a child-like reliance on God alone. It is only because we were given to Jesus that we could keep his word. Jesus is the living bridge between God and man. So God can love us the way He loves his Son. And Jesus is the bridge between Man and Man.

That means this: If you want to love God and to know the love of God you must be in Jesus. And if you want to love another Human being the way God loves you must be in Jesus. He prayed for a radical love among us, the kind of love which has only one source. Jesus's love for his bride the Church is the greatest display, and He is the greatest source and the only hope for love like Gods. And so it the truth when John writes in **1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us”**.

Effect

What happens when the church is one? V21 says **“so that the world may believe you have sent me”**. And 23 **“so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them, even as you loved me.”**

What an amazing promise! The unity of the church will witness to the world that **“God so loved the world that he sent his Son, so that whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life”**.

And of course it would witness to the world that the Father sent Jesus, first of all because I don't know of any other teaching in the world that says **“in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil 2:3-4)**, the world will notice because it will look weird to

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people who have been taught all their lives to care for themselves first, and the second reason it will witness to the world because the only way this love can even be accomplished is by the Church leaning wholly on the amazing love and power of Jesus.

The implications of this teaching for us are enormous. And I truly believe, if we were, each of us, to take Jesus's words to heart, this nation would change for good.

Here are three things for us to do with this teaching.

1. Would you commit to reading this passage everyday this week. Yes that is a lot, and so it should be! Jesus said in John 8:31-32 “ If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”. I believe that the more you and I read this passage the more we will understand what it meant that Jesus made himself a servant, and how we also may be servant to him and to each other for the glory of God.
2. When you pray this week would you pray that the church might see the glory of Jesus that the Father has given him as in verse 24? **“I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory”** Would you pray that God would open the eyes of this people, yourself and those around you! That we might see Jesus and be in awe and praise!
3. And when you have prayed would **YOU** show the world that very glory! Jesus has given it to you by dying on the cross for you. Look back at verse 22 : **“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one”**. Now how should you show it? Love your brothers and sisters in the church! Love them more than you love yourselves! Love them as Jesus loves them when he died in their place. Lift them up every opportunity you get. Work for their good every time you are able to bless them. In word and in deed towards them.

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And if you find that bitterness begins to rise up in you against a brother, or rumors and murmuring against a sister, or the constant criticism against the whole church, BANISH IT! Cast it out of your mind in Jesus name. You people were bought with the blood of God! Shed willingly because He loved and still loves you. My friends let us be so filled with a knowledge and love of God in Christ Jesus that those traits and behaviors may find no place in us or this body!