

**Jesus' Prayer for You: Be United (John 17:20-26)  
That You May Believe: The Gospel of John  
Southern Hills Baptist Church  
October 29, 2017**

**WELCOME**

Welcome! It is an honor to be able to stand before you and proclaim God's Word. If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn over to John 17. We will pick up in verse 20 momentarily.

**INTRODUCTION**

This morning we have the joy of wrapping up Jesus' prayer for His followers or as it is commonly referred to, Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. This is a special prayer as we get taken into Jesus' private prayer life and get to hear Jesus praying to God the Father for us!

**Jesus Prayed for You!!!**

I want to make sure that before we go into this final portion of the prayer we have let this reality weigh upon us. Jesus prayed for you, He still does mind you, but we have a recorded prayer right here. Jesus prayed for you! Let me remind you whose mouth and heart this prayer came forth from...

**Colossians 1:16-19**

[16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

**God Prayed for You**

In Jesus the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Jesus is God! God the Son, who is coequal and coeternal with the God the Father, is lifting requests for your good to God the Father!

**Creator/Sustainer Prayed for You**

Jesus, the One who Created all things, the One who sustains and holds together all Creation by His will, loves you enough, cares for you enough to pray for you!

**He is Working for You!**

How incredible is it that you have God praying for you? It is more than amazing! Again, let the power of this reality wash over you. God loves you. God is working for your God, actively. God is upholding you more than you will ever know. One of the ways this is manifest is that the second member of the Trinity, God the Son, prays for you. Truth too wonderful for words!

**What is He Praying For?**

Now the question becomes, What is He praying for? That is what I want to know. Here is Jesus in His final private moments before He would be falsely arrested, lied about, beaten, and gruesomely murdered, He knows all of this is coming and He prays for you. What would this prayer be for? Surely it is for something of incredible importance, right? But, what? We have the chance to have this question answered as we consider John 17:20-26.

## PRAYER

Before we jump into our text let's pause for a moment and seek out God in prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father,

We come to your Word this morning a people in need. We need to hear from you. We are the sheep of your pasture and lost without you. Speak that we may hear you. Speak that we may know you. Speak that we may have direction. Speak that our souls grow in the joy of hearing from our Maker and Father. May the weight of your Word crash upon us this morning that we find it impossible not to be impacted by it for your glory and our joy. Unite us Father. Unite us as your children. Unite us that the world may see the power of the Gospel, the beauty of your risen Son, and the transformative power of your Holy Spirit.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus,

Amen

## OUR TEXT

Let's turn our attention to our passage. John 17:20-26. **Hear the Word of God.**

### John 17:20-26

[20] "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. [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. [25] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. [26] 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."

### Isaiah 40:8

[8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

## Future Believers – You and Me!

Again, this is our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final week considering this prayer of Jesus. The entire prayer has been offered up for His followers. He has not prayed for the world in general, but for those who had put their faith in Him and were following Him. As we enter verse 20 we see the scope of Jesus' prayer shift. It moves from praying for His followers in that day to those who would believe. Jesus is praying for all future generations of believers. He is praying for you and me!

## JESUS' REQUEST: OUR UNITY

And what does He pray for? Unity. Jesus' heart, His concern for future generations of believers is **that we would be united, that we would be one, that our love for Him would overcome the many differences that we have, demonstrating to the world around us that He is better, that He defines us, that our identities, our joy, our meaning, is all found in Jesus above all else.**

## **Unexpected Request**

I think something that struck me when I read this passage is that it isn't what I expected. Here is Jesus, in some of His last moments, talking to God the Father immediately before He was about to lay down His life for the elect of God. The timing of this prayer alone makes it significant. Additional significance exists in that we don't have many prayers from Jesus recorded. This is by far the longest prayer from Jesus that we have. As the Holy Spirit inspires and guides the Apostles to write the Gospels what prayer does He lead them towards to recall in great detail? The prayer on unity.

## **What I would have Expected**

Again, this isn't what I expected. Is this what you would have expected from Jesus? Is this the prayer you would have anticipated? Not me. I would have expected Jesus to pray for His followers to...

- Boldly and faithfully proclaim the Gospel.
- Be faithful in the face of persecution.
- Become more like Him in their daily lives.

These are all good things that Jesus could have prayed for, but instead He prayed for unity.

## **Theme of Unity in the NT**

Maybe we are surprised by the content of the prayer because we are out of sync with God's Word. Unity is not a secondary matter in the Christian life and we can see this with how often it is talked about in the New Testament. Let me give you a few samplings on this very important topic.

- **1 Cor 1:10** – “Be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”
- **Eph 4:13** – “For building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”
- **Rom 12:16** – “Live in harmony.”
- **1 Pet 3:8** - Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

## **Questions We Will Answer**

Unity, therefore, should be something of utmost importance in the Christian life, but why is this?

- Why is unity so important?
- Also, what does real unity look like? What does it mean to “be one” as Jesus prayed?
- Also, how can we live in unity with one another?

These are all questions that Jesus addresses as He goes before God the Father seeking out our good.

## **UNITY'S STANDARD: JESUS' ONENESS WITH GOD THE FATHER**

As we move deeper in Jesus' request for unity He helps us understand what this unity is supposed to look like by saying...

### **John 17:21**

[21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,

Our unity should reflect the unity that exists between God the Father and God the Son. There is no better standard to pattern our unity off of than this. Let me make a couple of observations about the unity that exists between God the Father and God the Son that should drive the unity Jesus is praying that we would live in.

## 1. United in Truth

Jesus has testified to the unity that He shares with the Father over the truth. Consider what He has already said in our study of the Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel...

### John 14:10

[10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

### John 17:17

[17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Jesus knows that God's Word is the standard and source of all truth and it is God's Word that dwells within Him and that He speaks.

### United in the Truth of God's Word

Church, we will only be united as Jesus prayed for us to be when we are united in the truth. **We must all commit to and rally around that which is the standard and source of absolute truth, which is God's Word**, which has been recorded for us the in 66 books of the Bible.

### Can't Unite with Different Maps

How could we ever dream of being united if we are all living by different playbooks **or taking direction from contradicting maps**? It wouldn't work, would it? Unity requires an agreement on truth.

### Living Out of the Truth

Now, notice that Jesus' commitment to God's Word **wasn't just a theoretical commitment** where He merely confessed that God's Word was truth. **Jesus took the truth of God's Word and lived out of it, it was His guide, it was His light, it was lens through which He saw the world** and subsequently He walked in it and spoke it.

### Being Shaped and Molded by the Word

To live in unity we must do the same. The Bible shouldn't just be a book that we hold up and exalt theoretically, we must live in it and live out of it. **We need to be in it daily that it may shape and mold our thoughts, affections, worldview, and self-understanding.**

### Act Like it is God's Word

I mean, **doesn't it sound foolish to proclaim that this book is the very Word of God, that it is definitive, absolute truth, and pick it up once a week**? If it is those things shouldn't we need it, shouldn't we run to it, shouldn't we desire to be in it?

### Application - United in Truth

Believer, Jesus has prayed that we would be united, that we would be one. To do that we must be united in the truth as He and the Father are, we must live in and out of the truth of God's Word. What is your plan to do that? **How are you going to immerse yourself in God's Word this week?**

- When will you set aside time to read and meditate on God’s Word?
- Will you use your commute time to listen to a sermon or Bible study?
- Will you be a part of Life Groups where we talk through God’s Word?

There are so many avenues to interact with God’s Word, which will you take that we may stand united in the truth as Jesus prayed?

## 2. United in Motive and Mission

With unity in the truth as the foundation God the Father and God the Son also share a unity in motive and mission. We see this as Jesus opens up His High Priestly prayer back in verse 1...

### John 17:1

[1] When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

Jesus’ goal, His motivation and mission in life was to see God the Father glorified. This is of course God the Father’s goal as well. Here is one of many examples we could go to in the Scriptures...

### Isaiah 48:9-11

[9] “For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. [10] Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. [11] For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

All that God ultimately does is for His glory. Or to say it another way, all that God does is so that the world may see His beauty, His perfection, His power, His love.

### A Loving Self-Centeredness

Some could hear this and say, “Wow, God is self-centered and an egomaniac.” God is self-centered, but no egomaniac. **God’s self-centeredness is love towards us. God is looking to give us what we need more than anything else. He is looking to give us what will satisfy our souls more than anything else. Himself.** So is Jesus. They are united in their motive and mission as they do all they do for the glory of God.

### Our Mission: God’s Glory

As Jesus prays for us to be one, to be united, we have to be united in life’s motivation and mission. Our goal, our motive, our mission should be to see God glorified. Here is how Paul speaks to this...

### 1 Corinthians 10:31

[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

I love how Paul positions this. In even the most common, routine tasks that you go about in your day, eating a sandwich or drinking a cup of water, you ought to strive to do these things in such a way that the goodness of God, the beauty of God, the grace of God is put on display for others to see.

### Cosmic Importance – Great Storyline of Creation

This shared motive and mission gives us something common to work towards and not just anything, but **something of cosmic importance. We are contributing to the great storyline of creation!**

## **Southern Hills Mission**

We have tried to summarize this shared motive and mission in our church's mission statement that reads...

*We are a family of believers who exist to glorify God by helping people experience life change through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Church, if this is our goal, if this is our shared mission, if our shared motive is seeing God glorified, then we will be able to go through life together united. We have our eyes set on the same destination and we are looking at the same map, God's Word to get us there.

### **3. United in Love**

So the unity that Jesus is calling us to is founded on truth and is marching on the same mission out of the same motivation and it should all be carried out with a shared love. We certainly see a shared love between God the Father and God the Son.

#### **John 14:31**

[31] but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

#### **Matthew 3:17**

[17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus has called us to be one as He and the Father are one. The oneness of God is expressed in a shared love for one another.

### **Gotta Have Love**

In the same way we are called to love one another. This is important. **Even when we share the same truth and march on the same mission from the same motive we are going to stumble and fall at times or just rub each other the wrong way.** Love must be there to cushion those times. Here is how Paul speaks to this...

#### **Colossians 3:14**

[14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

A shared love for one another is essential to achieve unity.

### **Application: United in Love**

So the question I would ask you church is this, **how are you trying to grow in love for one another?** Love isn't something you merely decide in your head. There is certainly an element of love that is a choice, but **love also comes from a place of understanding.**

- Are you working to develop relationships with others in the body?
- Are you working to develop those relationships beyond your closest circle of friends?

If we are going to be united as Jesus prayed for us to be we must love one another.

## Transition

There is certainly more we could pick up on from the unity that exists between God the Father and God the Son, but we are going to keep moving through our passage for the sake of time.

## UNITY'S PURPOSE: DISPLAY THE TRUTH AND LOVE OF JESUS

As Jesus continues on in His prayer for us He explains the purpose of the unity that He is praying for. We see this in verses 21-23...

### John 17:21-23

[21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Why does Jesus pray for our unity? So that the world may know that Jesus is the Son of God sent to save us from our sins from the God who loves. Said another way, **our unity is to serve as a testimony to the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus.** Let me explain why these two statements ultimately mean the same thing as we evaluate the story that Christian unity tells.

## Remember Who the Church is

Again, our unity is to point people to the truth of Jesus and the love of God. How? First, remember who the church is. **We are a diverse body made up of all races and ethnicities, all socio-economic backgrounds and ages. These are dividing lines that our world has not figured out how to create harmony and unity around.**

## Differences Overcome by Transformative Power

Yet **in Christ we see our differences fade into the background because what we have in common is so much more important, right?** We have found unity in the truth, we have a unified mission and motive, we are united in love. This unity is born out of the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It made us new men and women, new creatures created in Christ Jesus.

## Unity Amongst Diversity by the Gospel

**So as the world struggles with trying to create unity amongst diversity they should be able to look to the church and see what they are striving towards.** It is our job to explain what has wrought this great unity, namely the superior satisfaction that we have found in Jesus. The goodness, the hope, the grace that we have found in Jesus is better than anything else this world has to offer. It is He and His truth that defines us.

## The Story

So the story that our unity is intended to tell is that the **Gospel transforms and that Jesus is better and bigger than anything else in our life,** thus we can set aside differences and come together.

## The Importance of our Unity

By the way, this makes our unity a very important issue. The way that we love one another and live with one another is telling the world a story about the power of the Gospel and the goodness of Jesus! **When you live in unresolved conflict, fighting, or bitterness towards other believers you are communicating that those differences you have are bigger than Jesus, that those differences**

**define you more than the love, grace, and forgiveness found in Jesus.** Now this isn't to say that we won't have conflict at times, we will. We are far from perfect, but we should seek reconciliation as quickly as possible.

### **Application: Seek those Different**

As a point of application, we should seek out relationships with other believers who are very different from us. We have unity in Christ! What a beautiful picture this paints of the superior satisfaction that is found in Jesus. Jesus breaks down barriers that no one else truly can. So go tell this story by building meaningful relationships with those who look differently than you, with those who live differently than you, with those who talk differently than you, all to the glory of God, that the world may believe that Jesus was sent from the God who loves.

### **Transition**

Our unity has a purpose, it is to proclaim the truth and love of Jesus and this purpose is strengthened by the transforming power of the Gospel.

### **UNITY'S STRENGTH: TRANSFORMED BY JESUS**

Jesus speaks to the gift that He gives that strengthens us to live in unity in verse 22...

#### **John 17:22**

[22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,

### **What is Glory?**

Jesus has given us the glory that was given to Him by the Father in order that we may be one. What does this mean? Well, let's start by answering the question, what is glory? We have already spoken of the glory of God, but let's take a step backwards to ensure we get what Jesus is saying. **The glory of God is the character of God on display.** For example, the glory of God is communicated through creation because creation displays the power, the creativity, the beauty, the provision, the absolute genius of God. Creation puts God's character on display. And so do many other things. When we talk about the glory of God that is what we are referring to, the character of God on display for others to see.

### **Given Jesus' Glory?**

So what does it mean that we have been given the glory of God and how does that empower us to unity?

### **Uniquely Gifted to Display God's Character**

I believe what Jesus is communicating here is that as His followers we have been **uniquely gifted with the opportunity to communicate the character of God through the way that we live.** Listen to this description of the transformative work that God does in our salvation, specifically in what God does in calling us to spiritual life in the work of regeneration.

#### **Ezekiel 36:26-27**

[26] And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

In the work of salvation God changes us from the inside out, giving us a new heart, giving us His Spirit, and this provision causes life change in us. This new heart, the Holy Spirit causes us to walk in obedience, we have a new appetite for obedience to God.

### **Fruit = Communicating God's Attributes**

Now **when we live in obedience to God**, when we obey His call to love others, to serve others, to share the hope of the Gospel with others, **we are communicating His attributes**, right? God is a God of love, of hope, a God who works for us. Jesus says as much back in John 15...

#### **John 15:8**

[8] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

### **Conclusion: Gospel Transforms Us to Glorify God**

So, my conclusion is that when Jesus says He has given us His glory that we may be one, He is saying that **by the power of the Gospel we have transformed to uniquely glorify God in our lives as His redeemed. It is this transformed life that imparts to us the appetite for the truth of God's Word and the mission for God's glory.** So our unity is possible and strengthened by the fact that God has fundamentally changed us at the point of salvation.

### **Making God Known to Us**

Additionally, Jesus goes on to say that He will continually lead us to a deeper knowledge of who God is. We see this in verses 25 and 26...

#### **John 17:25-26**

[25] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. [26] 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."

Jesus, who knows God intrinsically and fully, will continue to make God known to us. Presumably this will be through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our deepening knowledge of God will only deepen our commitment to the truth, mission, motive, and love that unites us.

### **Application: God Equips for that which He Calls**

The application that we should take from this is that even our unity in Christ is a work of Christ and thus He should receive all the glory in our lives. I love being confronted with the reality that **whatever Jesus calls us to He equips us for.** Here He is praying that we would live in unity and He purchased what would be necessary for this on the cross. We have a responsibility in our unity to be sure, but we only have the ability to do so because of the completed work of Jesus and the power of the Gospel towards us. This truth should give us hope and confidence as we strive to live in unity with one another. It will be hard at times to be sure, but we know it is possible because Jesus purchased this on the cross.

### **UNITY'S ULTIMATE REALIZATION: JESUS' FULL PRESENCE**

Jesus closes this prayer for unity by asking that this unity would one day be fully and ultimately realized. We see this picking up in verse 24

#### **John 17:24**

[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.

Our unity will not be complete until **all believers from every nation and every generation stand fully satisfied by the very presence of our God and Savior**. That day is coming brothers and sisters.

### **2 Corinthians 5:8**

[8] Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**

[15] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.

So whether we pass from this life or we are still live at the return of Christ we will one day stand in the presence of Jesus, beholding His glory and that will be glorious brothers and sisters.

### **Psalm 16:11**

[11] You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Amen! This life is good, but I long for what is ahead. The hurt you carry, the pressure you face, the angst that you live in, the concerns that follow you, the regret that haunts, the sorrow that weakens, it will all be gone one day as the body of Christ lives in fully and ultimate unity with our Head, Christ.

## **APPLICATION: LIVING IN UNITY**

Let me close this morning with a few concluding thoughts of application on our passage...

### **1. Do you pursue unity in the body of Christ when all is peaceful?**

What I mean by that question is this... Sure, unity and reconciliation will be on your mind when conflict is front and center, but we need to go deeper than that in our pursuit of unity. **We can't only be concerned with fires when one breaks out, we need to reduce the number of fire hazards in our home when nothing is ablaze, right?**

### **Pursue Unity in Peace**

The same is true of our pursuit of unity. We should pursue unity now while everything is calm and quiet. How do we do this? **We go deeper in relationships with others so that we can share what we are united in, the truth, motive, mission, and love.**

### **Go Deeper with Others in Christ**

Are you presently looking to do deeper in friendships you have in the body? Are there relationships you would like to cultivate and invest in here? What are you doing about it? There are so many things you could do, right?

- Grab a cup of coffee with someone and share your testimony
- Have a family over for dessert one night and share your favorite Bible verses
- Be a part of Life Groups
- Find out how you can pray more specifically for someone and text them encouraging notes
- Ask people questions about how God has worked in their life

## **2. Do you recognize what is at stake in our unity?**

The way that we live with one another in the body of Christ was meant by God to communicate the transformative power of the Gospel. **When you allow division to arise between you or another brother or sister the story you tell of the Gospel is that it is impotent, it is powerless.**

Listen to the Revelation John recorded...

### **Revelation 7:9-10**

[9] After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

### **What Is So Beautiful Here?**

Do you see what is so beautiful about this picture? **The God that we serve is not a tribal God. He is not a God over a certain class of people or people of a certain skin color. He is God over all** and His people will be made up of every nation, every language, every generation, and every socio-economic status.

### **Who Else? No One!!!**

**Who else can unite a people so diverse? No one! That is the point! God stands above all. His Gospel transforms like no other.** And this diverse crowd which will come from every land, language, culture, and status will unite their voice and cry aloud in reverence and joy that "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

### **Give the World a Taste of Heaven**

This picture of unity glorifies God immensely and **we should give the world a taste of it in the here in and now with the way that we can overcome our differences through our shared commitment** to God's truth, staying on mission for God's glory, and living out of love towards one another, all empowered by the work of Jesus.

### **Join Me!**

Will you join me in being who Jesus has empowered and prayed for us to be? Will you walk with me in unity?

**LET'S PRAY**