

7/7/24 Christ Fellowship

The Vision of Jesus for the Church

John 17:20-26

I have a question for you. If you could get any person, living or dead, to pray for you, who would it be? A lot of us would say our mothers. There is just something special about a mother's prayer. And for what would you ask them to pray about? Would it be physical healing? Financial help? Relationship problems? All good things to pray for.

Now...what if you could get Jesus Himself to pray for you? How would you like that? And if you could get Jesus to pray for you, what would you want Him to pray for? The same things? Healing, finances, relationships? Well, think about it for just a second. Jesus is God and as God knows what is best for you. So, maybe we would do well to just ask Him to pray for that. Pray for what is best for us. Pray for His will to be done in our lives.

And if Jesus did pray for that, what do you think He would ask the Father for specifically? What would be the will of Jesus for our lives? Well, let's turn to the book of John and find out. Because in **John 17**, we see Jesus praying. He has been talking and teaching with His disciples. He has washed their feet. They had a meal. And now Jesus is praying. And for what is He praying? He is praying for Himself. He is praying for those disciples there in the room with Him. And He is praying for each of us as well.

In 1572, John Knox had just returned to Edinburgh, Scotland but that fall he became ill. He was struck with pneumonia, and he was bedridden. As the weeks of November passed, his condition worsened. On November 24, 1572, his wife and a longtime friend were reading Scripture to Knox, and at one point he looked at Margaret and said, **"Go. Go where I cast my first anchor."** She immediately knew what he was talking about, and she turned in her Bible to John 17. She began reading from that text.

As Margaret finished reading the chapter, John Knox turned to her and said, **"What a comfort that chapter is."** I hope you get the same comfort when you read the vision that Jesus has for you, His church. Let's read just **John 17:20-26**. We pick up just after Jesus has prayed for His disciples.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 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. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 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. 24 “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. 25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 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 are continuing our study of the visions that God has given people over the years. These visions or revelations are for every aspect of our lives and we find them all through the Old and New Testaments. We have seen God’s vision for our lives as a whole but also for our marriages and our finances and for how we are to live in this country. And here we see the vision Jesus Himself has for us as a church.

When I say “church”, I’m not talking about just Christ Fellowship but it applies to us as well, of course. Jesus here is praying for every believer that comes to faith in Him through the words and writings of those disciples in that room with Him that night. That’s how He starts out in **verse 20**. *I pray also for those who will believe in me through **their** message...*

You know, we joke around here that God’s vision for our church to minister specifically to the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated is not a very good business model. If this were a secular business, we probably wouldn’t last long, right? But God specializes in doing things that the world says is not a good business model. And for Jesus to put all the responsibility for furthering His Kingdom on earth with eleven fishermen, tax collectors and unschooled hooligans is the world’s definition of a bad business model. But think about it. We are only sitting here today because of what those eleven men went on to do. So, thank you, Lord, for your grace and protection of them and us!

And that grace and protection all started that night with this prayer. So, that prayer helped them and us to overcome man’s weaknesses, the world’s hatred and Satan’s opposition. So, when you get tired and discouraged and tempted and weak, just remember that Jesus has prayed for you to be able to overcome anything that might hinder you. In **2 Corinthians 4**, Paul said, *“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”* We have a merciful God who wants us to know His vision for us as a church and has given us the grace we need to do it and has even prayed for us so I’m running out of excuses why we can’t do what He has called us to do.

But in this passage, Jesus prays specifically for the unity of the church. And again, this is not just for the unity of Christ Fellowship – although it certainly applies – but mainly for the

church that is the whole body of believers from the first days of the church that met in houses or wherever they could until now. In **verse 21** He says, I am praying for all of them that all of them may be one. And the example and the goal He gives is that the church should be one with Jesus as Jesus is one with the Father. That's pretty "One" right there!

In **verse 23**, He prays that the Father will give us unity to show to the world that the Father loves us like He loves Jesus. That's more than I can conceive. That's mind blowing that God the Father loves us like He loves Jesus. That can't be right, can it? Why would God the Father do that? Why would He make the choice to love us with the same agape love He loves the Son? Well, again, I ask the question, why does God do anything? For His glory. And when God gets the glory, it spills over out of Him and onto us, just like Jesus says in **verse 22**.

He says there that He wants to give us the same glory He has. And what is that glory? We will never have that glory until we get to Heaven. That thought is repeated in **verse 24** where Jesus prays that He wants us to be with Him where He is (in Heaven) to see His glory and we will share in that glory when we are with Him. I know it's hard for most of us to believe but we accept it on faith because we know that He loves us, not because we deserve it.

So, Jesus is praying that the global church will be unified just like He and the Father are unified. So, what does that look like? How can we be unified when there are so many denominations? How can we be unified when it seems that two churches in Chico, Texas can't even get on the same page about much?

I hear people complain sometimes about how many denominations there are but I don't think it's always a bad thing. Do we need 90 different denominations? Probably not. Do we need 6-7 different churches just in little bitty Chico? Probably not. But it's okay. It's not necessarily a bad thing. We can still be family and still be unified in some big ways even if we don't all agree on some minor things.

I'll be honest with you. I'm not really comfortable worshipping with people that jump up and down and run around the auditorium and roll in the aisle. Are they going to Hell? Of course not. I just don't worship that way and I'm afraid it would be too distracting for me. So, y'all stay over there and let your freak flag fly over there and we will raise our hands and clap over here and we can still be united in the ways that really matter.

Most of you remember when my parents were members here for a while. They were born and bred old school Baptists. You know, the kind that sit quietly and sing from a hymnal

and never show emotion. Well, they came here and I remember one time my mama told me that she just got all caught up in the worship that morning and she said, “*Todd...I nearly raised my hand!*” 😊

But there are big ways, major ways and much more important ways that we can be unified with all other churches and all other Christians besides how high we raise our hands. Let’s talk about some ways that Jesus was unified with the Father and let’s have it as our goal that we will do the same things.

First, the Father and Son (and the Holy Spirit too, by the way) are unified in the glory of God. Jesus began His prayer in **verse 4** by saying that the hour had come for the Father to glorify the Son so the Son could glorify the Father. And all through the ministry of Jesus, that’s what He did. In **John 7:18**, Jesus declared He was constantly seeking the glory of the One who sent Him. He didn’t need man’s glory. He wanted the Father’s glory and He got it. Do you remember the passage where Jesus was baptized in **Luke 3**? It says that the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and a voice from Heaven said, “*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*”

Those are just a few times when the Son glorified the Father and the Father glorified the Son. How are we doing in that area? Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10**, “*Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*” Does that sound like you?

We were talking the other night in Bible study about the importance of saying the name of Jesus and not just saying “God” and how there is such power in the name of Jesus. While God can be anything to anybody, Jesus is a name you can’t mistake. And my favorite illustration of that is Franklin Graham. Franklin is Billy Graham’s son and the one who started Operation Christmas Child. And if you have ever heard him interviewed on TV or the news or anywhere, he is going to bring up the name of Jesus, somehow, some way.

When was the last time you said the name of Jesus? It’s one thing to invite somebody to church. It’s another to mention God. But it completely changes things when you mention Jesus. Nobody else and nothing else can get the glory when you speak Jesus. Try it this week.

Another way the Father and Son are united is in the mission to redeem lost sinners. Earlier in His prayer in this same chapter, Jesus says in **verses 2-6** that the Father has given Him certain ones and Jesus has provided for their salvation. It was the goal of both of them to give sinners a way out of death and to have eternal life. And we know from verses like **Matthew 28:19-20** that Jesus expects us to be united with Him in that mission. He said we

are to go into all the world and make disciples. How's that working out for you? When was the last time you led somebody to Jesus? That is just another way that the global Christian church is to be unified with each other and with Jesus.

A third way that the Father and Son are unified is in truth. We didn't read it but in **verse 14**, Jesus tells the Father that He has given them (meaning us) the word of the Father. That word is now the Bible and we know the Bible is truth. Yes, there are different ways that the Bible can be interpreted but that shouldn't keep us from basing our lives on its truth. And when we base our lives, not on how we feel or what we think, but on the truth of scripture, we are unified with other believers and with Jesus.

Think about when Jesus was being tempted in the desert by Satan. Did Jesus respond by saying, *"No, Satan, I won't do that because it doesn't feel right."* Or did He say, *"Get away from me, Satan. You're messing up my aura"*? (I learned that one on Facebook.) No, Jesus quoted scripture because it is truth. We should do the same.

This is our last in the series of sermons on visions but starting next week we will start to focus on what would Jesus do. And I'll just tell you right now that is what we need to do. We need to know what Jesus did and what He said so we can live our lives based on it and not on the swirling winds of what we think or feel or what is the most popular thing right now. We have to know and live truth and when we do, we are unified like Jesus prayed for us to be.

Okay, moving on, another way that the Father and Son are unified is in their holiness. And if you thought Satan hated it when you try to live in truth, wait until you try living in holiness. But first, what does it mean to be holy? Being holy means to be different, separate, set apart. You don't have to go very far in scripture to find places where God is called holy. He told Moses in **Exodus 3** to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Why was it holy? Just because God was there.

In Isaiah's vision of God in **Isaiah 6**, the angelic beings were crying out, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!"* In **Hebrews 7** it says that Jesus is *"holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners."* And when unbelievers see believers living holy lives, separated from sinners as well, those unbelievers will be drawn to Jesus. Now, being separated from sinners does not mean we don't ever go around unbelievers or we shun them or carry ourselves like we are better than them.

Being holy means that we don't live like the world wants us to live. It's not usually how the pretty and popular crowd lives. We don't go to those same movies they go to. We don't use

the same language. We don't listen to that music or go to those places. We make church a priority. We just spend our time and money in different ways than unbelievers do and when we live that way, we are unified like Jesus prayed for us to be.

That leads to the last way I'll mention that the Father and Son are unified and that is in their love. In **verse 24**, Jesus acknowledges that the Father loved Him before the foundations of the world. In **John 5:20**, Jesus said, *"For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing."* And the ultimate way we know that Jesus loves is in **John 3:16** where it says that He died for us.

And one more verse to close this out. Jesus says in **John 13:34-35** says, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

And I'll end with this one quote from A.W. Tozer. "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. (A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God.)

So, we don't have to even try to be unified to each other if we are unified with Jesus who is unified with the Father. If we do that, we can change our world like the disciples changed theirs.

How about you? Has your life been changed by your relationship with God through His Son Jesus? Would your family say it has? Would your neighbors agree that you aren't the same person you used to be? Is your unity with the Father and Son drawing you closer to the church and other Christians? If you aren't sure about that then let's make sure today. We aren't guaranteed another breath.

Jesus died on that cross because the Father said sin requires death. So, you can either believe that Jesus paid the price for you and let Him come into your life and change you or you can just pay the price yourself with an eternity in Hell. There are no other options. What will you choose? I'd love to pray with you right now as the music plays.