

# That They May Be One

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Good morning, everyone. I am Cherubha Prabhakar, and I have been attending Christ Church for almost seven years.

Today's reading is from the Gospel of John, chapter 17, as printed in your bulletin. After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

For you granted him authority over all people, that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

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.

[ 1 : 17 ] I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

All I have is yours, and all you have is mine, and glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.

None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction, so that scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

[ 2 : 26 ] I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. 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 have given 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.

[ 3 : 27 ]     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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ. Good morning, Christ Church.

My name is Andrew, one of the pastors here. Will you pray with me as we go to God's word? Lord, we come before you this Palm Sunday remembering our King, our King who prayed to you for his disciples and even for us.

Would you strike us with what an amazing thing that is that the King of Palm Sunday got on his knees and he prayed for us. Impress upon us just how gracious of a God you are, how loving of a God you are, how generous of a God you are.

[ 4 : 48 ]     As we look at your word this morning, we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. You know, as a pastor, I get asked to pray for people probably more than average, right?

It comes with the territory, right? That couple struggling with infertility. Could you put in a word with the big guy upstairs, the husband says to me. Or others, maybe some of us have asked me, you know, pray find a spouse.

Pray I pass my exams. Pray I win my basketball championship. It's one of the more recent ones. And hey, I'm down. Of course, I don't want us to be treating God like a magic genie.

But if it's not, you know, absolutely contradictory to what the scriptures teach about God's will for us, I'm down. I'll ask for that. And not to brag, but Eli Gilbert's middle school basketball team, they did win their city championship a couple weeks ago.

So, Eli, wherever you are, you're welcome, all right? But, you know, these kinds of prayers, prayers asking for more than our daily bread, prayers for things we really, really want.

[ 5 : 48 ]     A child, a spouse, the fulfillment of our career or academic or our hoop dreams, things God doesn't necessarily promise us. You know, with these kinds of prayers, I know that I'm at best, I'm shooting 50-50, right?

At best. And I wonder if many of us feel that way about prayer in general. Like, prayer is only mildly effective. Not a guaranteed way to get what we want.

For many of us, even when it's nice to hear people tell us that they're praying for us, you know, it's nice to know that they're thinking of us. It's nice to know that they're wishing us well. How many of us actually get our hopes up?

How many of us become filled with expectation that these prayers for us might actually be answered? You know, even when a pastor as righteous as Jonathan St. Clair prays for us, it's like, well, better than nothing, right?

But we'll see. We'll see what happens, right? Well, today on Palm Sunday, we're in John chapter 17, looking at a prayer that Jesus prays. It's five days after his entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, after all the palm branches, after all the celebration around his arrival as the Messiah King.

[ 6 : 57 ]     Here in John 17, we have Jesus' final prayer with and for his disciples. And maybe you're like, okay, Jesus prays, right? And water is wet and gardeners garden, standard stuff, right?

But what if I told you that what we have here in John chapter 17 is a model for the kind of prayer that God always says yes to? And what if I told you that in this prayer that Jesus offered in his final free moments of life, what if I told you that this final prayer that came not just from his lips, but from his very heart, what if I told you that Jesus prayed not just for his disciples then, but for all who'd ever follow him, even those not yet born, even those not yet following him, possibly even for you?

If I told you that King Jesus prayed from his heart in the last moments of his life a prayer that his father would surely say yes to and that he very possibly had you in particular in mind, wouldn't you want to know about this kind of prayer?

Well, that's what we have here in John chapter 17, sometimes called Jesus' farewell prayer. It's the longest prayer of Jesus recorded in the scriptures, more commonly known as his high priestly prayer.

Here in John chapter 17, we have the good news that if you are a follower of Jesus, or if you will someday become a follower of Jesus, you can know, you will know that King Jesus prayed for you.

[ 8 : 22 ] He's more than a prophet king who merely speaks to you on God's behalf. He's a priestly king who speaks to God on our behalf. And by the way, the God he prays to also happens to be his adoring father, his father who always loves to say yes and amen to all his son's prayers.

And this is the good news of John chapter 17 today, that the exalted King of the universe is also our great high priest who pleads on his knees for our good before his loving and listening father in heaven.

Now, to put that more succinctly, this is the main point today, is that King Jesus prays to his father for our good. King Jesus prays to his father for our good.

So let's dissect that. Let's talk about how King Jesus prays. Now, again, it's five days from Palm Sunday, and everyone's expecting this Messiah king to get to work, to establish the kingdom, because everyone knows what kings are supposed to do.

They're supposed to get stuff done. Meanwhile, Jesus knows that his time is running short, right? He's about to be arrested and crucified. The hour has come, he says in verse 1. And yet, this Messiah king who is rightly expected to establish the kingdom and to save the world, what does he do with only a few hours left to live?

[ 9 : 36 ] Verse 1. He looked toward heaven and prayed, Father. See, as we remember the kingly reception of Jesus on this Palm Sunday, John 17 also reminds us that we have a king, we have a king in Jesus, a king who's on his knees, that we have in Jesus a praying king whose gaze was set upward toward his father in heaven.

And I want us to linger, I want us to linger on this today, this notion of a king who prays, this notion of the one true king of kings who's responsible for saving the world and yet spending his final breaths in prayer.

Think about that for a second. Think about it. Like, this is an imperfect illustration, but what if nuclear missiles were headed toward this nation and our only hope was that the commander-in-chief would devise and execute a plan to save us?

Now, how would you feel with nukes dropping in just a few hours if your commander-in-chief's only move was to pray? Not figure out how our, you know, missile defense systems might protect us, mitigate the damage, not figure out how to evacuate or shelter the population.

What if you saw that all that they did was just pray? You probably feel frustrated, right? Disappointed? Maybe hopeless? Like, that's it? Prayer?

[ 10 : 56 ] Is that all you have to offer me? What kind of leader are you? But a question I want to challenge us with this morning, the question I want us to consider is, what if it's actually better?

What if it's actually better than anything else that Jesus, the King of Kings, spent his last moments in prayer? Let's think about this. Why did the King of Kings pray?

And how might that actually be better news than we think? What does it indicate about our King? What does it indicate about prayer that instead of doing anything else in his final moments of life, he looked toward heaven and prayed to his Father?

You know, I think the reason so many of us are underwhelmed by people's prayers for us is because we think of prayer often as just some kind of resignation to fate or chance or some kind of last-ditch effort, right?

Just a last-ditch effort to get what we want. Like, think of the nuclear illustration. If our Commander-in-Chief only prayed as nuclear missiles came toward us, most of us would assume that he or she had just given up, right?

[ 11 : 57 ] And honestly, this is how many of us see and how many of us use prayer. We only pray or ask people to pray for us when our lives and our circumstances very apparently have gotten outside of our control.

And it's just a last-ditch effort to try to get things back under our control. But you see, this is not at all what Jesus is doing here with this prayer. He's not throwing up a Hail Mary to heaven because this is his last resort.

No, even for King Jesus, prayer is option one. It's the first play in his playbook when it says in verse one that he looked toward heaven and prayed. This wasn't the first time or it wasn't even the most desperate time in his life that he did this.

Now, King Jesus, precisely as the king, he was always looking up toward heaven to his Father. He was always in a posture of prayer. Prayer was his lifestyle.

Here in John 17, he is doing what he had always been doing, praying the same prayer. What was he praying? Our Father in heaven. He lived his whole life in perfect and continual communion with God.

[ 13 : 03 ] For Jesus, prayer wasn't a last resort or a wishful means to an end. It was a way of being in the world. Even an act of defiance toward a world that tells all of us that we need to constantly be on our toes and sweat and toil to hopefully gain salvation.

Jesus wasn't exhibiting his resignation, but faith. Faith that God would indeed use him even unto death to still save the world. He was getting things done the way he'd always gotten things done, with confident dependence upon his Father.

Unhurried and unworried, with eyes fixed as ever on his loving Father in heaven, Jesus chose to be still and to know that God was God. Jesus chose to be a king on his knees and by faith trusted that what was actually the very way that the world would be saved would be through prayer.

Would be through prayer. And so an application question for us this morning is, if the King of Kings spent his final moments not trying to eke out one last task, right? One last sermon, one last miracle, but spent it on his knees, looking up to his Father in heaven in prayer, how much more reason do we have to devote ourselves to prayer?

And honestly, this is a convicting word for me. You know, Jonathan's sabbatical coming in just two weeks, the gravity of pastoring here for the following four months. It's really starting to hit me, right?

[ 14 : 28 ] And I've found myself trying to work ahead, examine possible inefficiencies and how I use my time, try to figure out how much sleep do I actually need, strategize about what relationships and responsibilities and ministries I can give less time to, identify, you know, who I can delegate this or that to, ultimately try to figure out how to maximize myself in order to accomplish more.

And there is a place for diligence, but the way of Jesus here in John chapter 17 has really convicted me over the past couple weeks about how little thought and time and passion I've resolved to commit to just praying.

Like what if what Christ's church needed was a praying pastor? What if God actually desires, right? What if God actually desires to accomplish more?

What if God is actually more extravagantly glorified? By people on their knees than people on their toes. What if, right? I mean, can you imagine if, what if we as the church, right?

If we as followers of Jesus were known, not just for whatever good things we've accomplished in this city, but what if we were known as the people whose prayers God answered? Far beyond our imagination.

[ 15 : 46 ] What if we gave our final, most crucial crunch time moments and our most mundane, everyday moments, to prayer? To being, just being with our Father. Not to just looking out at all the stuff that we want to accomplish, but to looking up, like our Savior, to our Father, apart from whom we can do nothing.

What if, right? Now, maybe you're here today and you're not even sure you believe in God, let alone prayer. And maybe you don't even understand what it means to look up to a Father in Heaven in prayer.

Well, could I suggest to you that prayer might not be as foreign or as strange as you might think. Maybe you don't roll out your prayer mat every morning, fold your hands, close your eyes, say these and thous and light candles, but all of us, all of us, we develop dependent relationships with the things we believe will save us.

And this is what prayer is. You might not go up to your boss at work and say, oh Lord, please save me from financial insecurity. But maybe you are looking up with a prayer-like dependence on your career and your income, hoping they will save you from financial ruin.

You might not say to your significant other or your spouse, Lord, please save me from loneliness. But maybe you are looking up at them with a prayer-like dependence on your romantic partners, hoping they will save you from loneliness.

[ 17 : 12 ] And see, what I'm getting at is, Christian or not, religious or not, we're all looking up to something that we believe to be heavenly. And I'm just asking, what is that for you? What is that for us?

And can we trust it to deliver? Can we trust it to answer our prayers and to actually save us? For King Jesus, even he looked up. But you know who he looked up to?

His Father in heaven. So now let's talk about how King Jesus prays to his Father. Now it might seem superfluous, you know, unnecessary to mention that Jesus prays to his Father because to some of us it's like, well, who else would he pray to?

But it's super important we don't gloss over this and take it for granted and miss the implications of this Son of God praying to his God and Father. We cannot miss this because remember, John's Gospel has gone to great lengths to try to persuade us that Jesus is indeed God, the Word who was with God, who was God, who was in the beginning, and by whom all things were made, right?

And so when Jesus prays to his Father, if we're paying attention, this can be quite confusing, right? Like how does this work? If there is only one God as Jesus himself surely would have believed as an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, how can it be that he is God and also prays to his God and Father?

[ 18 : 30 ] Well, see, what Jesus is implicitly acknowledging here is the explicitly Christian confession of the Trinity. Jesus' prayer opens up for us a window into the essence of who God is.

His prayer acknowledges the ultimate foundational reality of the triune God who eternally exists as one God and somehow also as three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Now we could talk about the Trinity forever, but the one thing I want to show us today, I hope to show you today from Jesus' prayer to his Father. The one thing that shines especially brightly here in this prayer is the glorious beauty of the triune God.

And I hope you'll bear with me because we're about to get a little bit theological, but please give me a second, all right? Because we have to understand that the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham and of Israel, the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ, he is not some generic, monotheistic God.

He isn't just some transcendent, unknowable, first cause and creator. He isn't just some impersonal force or energy in this world, nor is he the monotheistic Allah of the Quran who our Muslim neighbors worship.

[ 19 : 41 ] No, he is the triune God revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. So we're going to spend some time on this because the Trinity is not only absolutely foundational to the Christian faith, but it's mind-blowingly profound.

And it's the basis of all that is real and beautiful and harmonious. And this is really beautifully highlighted here in John chapter 17. All right, so look at Jesus' very first ask, his very first petition of his Father in this prayer.

In verse 1, he says, glorify the Son. Does that strike anyone here as odd? I mean, how many of you who pray, how many of you begin your prayers by saying, our Father in heaven, hallowed be my name.

Right? Glorify me. Make much of me. Exalt me. Bring me all the glory and all the honor and all the praise. Bring it all to me. Anyone here pray like this? Jonathan, do you pray like this?

Maybe sometimes, right? What the heck is Jesus praying here? Wasn't he the one who taught us to pray, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, thy name?

[ 20 : 48 ] How could Jesus be so self-centered, so occupied with his own glory? Isn't this counter to everything that we know about Jesus, the selfless Savior who gave himself to save the world, right?

How in the world could he begin his prayer with, Father, glorify your Son? Shouldn't it be, Father, glorify yourself? Well, actually, that's exactly what he is doing here if you understand the Trinity.

In verse 1, he says, Father, glorify your Son. What? That, that your Son may glorify you. See, his chief aim is still to glorify his Father.

It's still the glory of his Father, but look at how it works. It's a Trinitarian glorification. It's a Trinitarian glorification. And don't miss this because it's so important. What Jesus is revealing to us is that the glory of the Father is tied and wrapped up and bound reciprocally to the glory of the Son.

And you see, this is the essence. This is the beauty and the harmony of the Trinity. Look at what Jesus says in verse 5. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

[ 22 : 00 ] Do you realize what Jesus is revealing to us about God right here? He's saying that at the center of who God has always been is a Father and a Son and a Spirit.

Yes, receiving glory from one another as God rightfully should receive glory, but how? Well, because at the center of who God is is a Father and a Son and a Spirit not just receiving glory from one another, but a Father, a Son, and a Spirit giving glory to one another.

Now, try to process that for a second. That at the center of who God is is a divine receiving of glory because at the center of who God is is a selfless giving of glory to one another.

And see, this is the beauty of our triune God. It's absolutely profound if you let it marinate. Just let it marinate. Now, to help us appreciate just how profound this is, maybe it's helpful to consider the impossible alternatives.

Like, what if God were one but not triune? I want us to think about that. What if God were one but not triune? If God were a static, monadic being, solitary in and of himself without three persons, right?

[ 23 : 10 ] Like, sure, he might be all-powerful, but he wouldn't be essentially relational. He wouldn't be essentially harmonious. He wouldn't be essentially loving or active. Think about it.

Who would glorify and exalt him? He would either be glorifying himself like a self-centered megalomaniac or he would need and depend on his creatures, his creation to glorify him.

But think about these two impossible options. If he were a unitarian God who was glorified only through self-glorification, he and all those made in his image would by their very nature be self-centered beings, seeking their own glory above all else, which is also known as the very thing that's wrong with this world, right?

But with option two, if he didn't glorify himself, but was dependent upon, in need of creation to glorify him, then he wouldn't be worthy of glory in and of himself.

For how could we meaningfully call a creator who needed its creation a self-sufficient God worthy of all glory? But see, the beauty of the Trinity is that God is inherently relational without being needy and inherently glorious without being egotistical.

[ 24 : 32 ] He didn't need to be self-centered and glorify himself or to create a world that would glorify him because the Father and the Son and the Spirit have joyfully known and actively loved one another to the fullest from all eternity.

And man, if this doesn't delight you, if this doesn't at least intrigue you, I'm sorry, I've just failed. And I wish I was a better, clearer, more compelling preacher and maybe this was just too abstract or in the words of my wife when I was trying to run this by her, I said, is this too much, Chelsea?

She said, it's pretty deep, don't spend too much time on it. So I'm sorry, Chelsea, and anyone else who thinks the same, but I just had to, I just had to say all this.

I just had to because I so want us to understand this profound truth about the triune God because you know why? And this is the bottom line, all right? This is the bottom line. Love.

True love. Selfless, self-giving, affection and care. The kind of love that weaves itself into a rich and beautiful harmony where unity isn't at the expense of diversity and diversity isn't at the expense of unity.

[ 25 : 39 ] This kind of love is eternal. This kind of love is essential only if there is a triune God at the heart of it. Only if there's a triune God at the heart of it.

The dynamic and harmonious unity that all of our hearts yearn for, the sacred union and communion that we all long to have with something bigger, greater than ourselves, with God, with each other, with the whole creation.

All of this only makes sense if there is a triune God. A creator who is himself the archetypal unity and diversity, the archetypal union and communion, the world as we all know it ought to be only makes sense if there is a triune God.

Because behind and underneath all that is living and loving, good and glorious, happy and harmonious, is a father glorifying a son, glorifying a spirit, glorifying a father from before the world began.

This is the triune God of the scriptures, the most fundamental reality. And isn't that beautiful? Isn't that profound? Isn't that amazing stuff? That the highest glory of God himself is at the same time a dynamic of self-giving, love, joy, and delight and admiration expressed within the union and communion of father, son, and spirit.

[ 27 : 00 ] And that this is the kind of God who made the world. That this is the kind of God who made you and me. And don't you want to believe in this kind of a God?

And don't you want to believe in a world made by this kind of a God? And I mean, as much as this may seem abstract, right, and mysterious and so paradoxical and mind-boggling and just hard to believe that God is one and three at the same time, can I just ask, if it were not true, who could make this stuff up?

Who could be so profound? Or on the flip side, if this were not true, who would make this stuff up? Who would be crazy enough to actually think they could fool people into believing this?

This is the glorious reality that's in view here in Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17 as he prays to his Father. And I know we're only in verse 1.

But let me close here by talking about, let me talk about why this all matters, all right? That King Jesus prays to his Father for our good.

[ 28 : 10 ] Now you may be wondering if the glorious, self-sufficient, triune God didn't need the world, why did he create it at all? If he didn't need more glory, what was his intent?

Well, the Bible doesn't give us a very explicit answer to this question, but here in Jesus' prayer, we get a broad hint. So let's read closely again from verse 1 again.

Jesus prays, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

Do you realize what Jesus is indicating here? He is indicating that for some reason, though our Father in heaven was content from all eternity with the triune hallowing of his own name, he still willed to glorify the Son on earth as in heaven.

[ 29 : 24 ] Even though he had it all, he willed to glorify his Son on earth as it is in heaven out of love for us. He chose to do so by sharing eternal life, his communion, his joy, his love with his creatures, his chosen people, even us.

Like, look at us. Do we look worthy of this kind of communion? I don't. Do you realize what this means? Do you realize what this means?

Look at verse 13. King Jesus prays that we might know the very joy of the triune God. Verse 20. King Jesus prays that we, his creatures, creatures who've all walked in darkness, that we might be in him, united as one with the triune God.

Verse 24. King Jesus even asked that we not only be with him, but get this, that we would see his glory. The eternal, triune glory that he had and enjoyed from before the creation of the world.



The glory that Moses and all of Israel could not even bear to see and still live. This is mind-blowing stuff and perhaps most mind-blowing of all. Look at verse 23. Jesus prays, I in them and you in me, then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

[ 30 : 45 ] Yo! Do you have any idea how much the Father loves the Son? Do you have any idea how much the Father loves the Son?

It's more than we could possibly imagine and guess what? He wants us to know that love as well. He wants you to know that love as well.

This prayer in John 17 is the good news that King Jesus prays to his Father for our good and not just for some superficial good. He doesn't pray we can afford a house, find a partner, or even enjoy good health.

The Son of God asks his Father who has eternally adored him, his Father who has always said yes to him. He asks his Father that we might be united with the triune God, communing with Father, Son, and Spirit in the eternal life, love, joy, and glory that we never deserved but always longed for.

And guess what? He doesn't just pray for us to be united in the glory of the triune God. He dies on a cross for sinners like us to be united in the glory of the holy triune God.

[ 32 : 04 ] The self-giving Son who gave himself to the Father from all eternity with his whole Spirit in heaven, this same Son gave himself to us with his whole Spirit on a cross here on earth.

And this is the gospel. This is the gospel. Now Christchurch, what if we believe this? What if we believe this? That the Son of God, Jesus Christ, prayed this kind of a prayer to his loving, listening Father for us and at his own expense?

How then might we live? Will you pray with me? Lord, blow us away with all that you are.

Blow us away with the truth of who you are, the triune God, perfectly content, self-sufficient in and of himself, glorious and beautiful love itself.

Blow our minds that you would invite us into that fellowship. That you would send your Son to pray that we might be grafted in, united to this wonderful, harmonious reality.

[ 33 : 34 ] Strike us, Lord, with what a privilege it is that Jesus Christ, the King, prayed for this for us. And that he didn't just pray for it, but he wanted for us by dying for our sins and rising again and giving us his very spirit.

Lord, who are we? Who are we? The world would tell us we are nothing. And if you were only a holy God, you would tell us the same, though we are nothing.

But thanks be to God that you are a holy and gracious God. And you tell us that though we were nothing, you made us everything and you brought us into yourself in a love that we can't even imagine.

Make us people who believe that, Lord. Help us to live like we believe that, we pray. In the name of Jesus, Amen.