

Included! (Round 3)

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[0 : 00] In the midst of all the change in the world, in the city, in the church, in your life, and in my life, I invite you to once more join me in what can rightly be called the center of the universe.

I invite you to join me in the place, or better yet, the space where we hear the voice that spoke the world into being, pray.

In the space where we hear the one who saves the world, pray. In the space where the eternal Son of God, now one with us in our flesh and blood, prays for us.

I invite you to join me once more in the 17th chapter of the Gospel according to John. In this space where Jesus of Nazareth opens his heart in our hearing to the one he calls Father.

It is one thing to listen to Jesus preach. It is another thing altogether to listen to Jesus pray.

[1 : 29] On this third round, this third reading of John 17, pay attention to the verb given, to the noun one, and to the preposition in.

Kimo, would you come and read for us, and I invite you to stand. Jesus spoke these things, and lifting his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, even as you gave him authority over all flesh, that to all whom you have given him, he may give eternal life.

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work you have given me to do. Now, Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory with which I had with you before the world was.

[3 : 18] I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Now they have come to know that everything you have given me is from you. For the words which you gave me, I have given to them, and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from you, and they believed that you sent me.

I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on the behalf of the world, but of those whom you have given me. For they are yours, and all things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.

I am no longer in the world, and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, the name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are.

While I was with them, I was keeping them in your name, which you have given me, and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition, so that the scripture would be fulfilled.

[5 : 09] But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

For their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

[6 : 22] I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, even 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 sent me.

The glory which you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one.

I in them, I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you have loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, be with me, where I am, so that they may see my glory, which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, although the world has not known you, yet I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me, and I made your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

[8 : 22] The word of the Lord. Amen. Living God, will you give us all the grace we need now to stand in this space and seek to understand what it is that you, Lord Jesus, have just prayed.

Amen. Given. Given. Jesus speaks of those whom the Father has given.

Given to him, to Jesus. Six times. Given. Verse 2. To all whom you have given. Verse 6.

I manifested your name to those you have given me out of the world. Verse 6. They were yours, and you gave them to me. Verse 7. Everything you have given me is from you.

Verse 9. I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those you have given me, for they are yours. And verse 24. Father, I desire also those you have given me be with me where I am.

[9 : 41] given. Given. Do you hear what Jesus is saying about you and me? Those who believe in him are gifts.

Gifts of the Father. Gifts of the Father to his Son. I am a gift. You are a gift. All other followers of Jesus Christ are a gift.

from the Father to his Son. Jesus is the Father's gift to us, and we are the Father's gift to Jesus.

One of my favorite preachers is a man named Walter Lutti, a Swiss pastor of the 20th century.

Listen to what he writes about the word given in John 17. So that is how it came about that two men whom Jesus met at their work by the Sea of Galilee left their nets and all they had and followed him.

And two more who were with their father mending nets and did the same thing when he called them. So that is what has happened when he met Matthew sitting at the tax table and invited him follow me so that he left his job and became a disciple.

[10 : 57] So it was the Father who gave these men to the Son. In every new disciple, Jesus saw a new gift until their number was complete.

So it was not Jesus who won them by his fiery speeches or his miracles or the power of his personality. No. While Jesus was calling his disciples on earth, they were chosen for him in heaven, each one allotted to him by God.

Men whom thou gavest me out of the world. This is truly an astonishing assertion. Astonishing indeed. The Lord sees his disciples as gifts for which he is beholden to the Father.

Now does this not have huge implications for the church's ministry in the world? Each new believer, one by us, one by our compassionate outreach ministries, one by our exegetically sound, creatively crafted sermons, one by our winsome personalities, one by our wise, insightful, empathetic counseling, not one apart from anyone's ministry, but not one by anyone's ministry.

Not one at all. Given. Given. By the Father to his Son. not to us.

[12 : 27] Not to the church. All those won to Jesus through our ministries are given. Not to us, but to Jesus by his Father. They are his.

An astonishing assertion. And he gives them to Jesus. An equally astonishing assertion. The Father has given you to his Son as students, as disciples.

The Father has given you to his Son as citizens of his kingdom. The Father has given you to his Son as brothers and sisters, siblings in the family.

The Father has given you to his Son as members of his body. The Father has given you to his Son as his bride.

And Jesus fully owns this astonishing truth. They were yours, Father, and you gave them to me.

[13 : 34] He honors you and me as gifts the Father gave him. And then he honors you and me by praying for you and me and all other disciples.

What does he pray for? What does Jesus want for us? What is his heart's desire for us, for the gifts his Father has given him?

John 17. He wants to be glorified so that the Father is glorified. He wants us to know the one true God by knowing the one God sent and thus having eternal life.

He wants us to be set apart by this God and for this God. He wants us to be kept in the Father's name. He wants us to be kept from the evil one's attempt to destroy our faith. He wants us to be sanctified in truth. He wants us to be brought into the fullness of his own joy. and and and he wants us to be alive in the life and love of the Trinity.
[14 : 47] Really? Yes, really. He wants us to live in and be alive in the oneness of the triune God of love.

Listen, put your head on Jesus' heart in this text and listen, verse 21, that they all may be one. One, not uniform. Jesus is much too creative for uniformity, but one. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, Alliance, Pentecostal, Catholic, Orthodox, Emergent, One, INFJs, ENTPs, IETJs, One, Activists, Contemplatives, Prophetic Types, Administrative Types, One. He prays it three times. Three times. Isn't that a clue to his passion? Verse 11, that they all may be one. Verse 21, that they all may be one.

Verse 22, that they all may be one. And, and this is what I want to emphasize today, each time he says one, he gives a definition of this oneness for which he prays.

[16 : 08] Verse 11, even as we are one, even as you and I are one, even as we are one, even as the oneness for which Jesus prays is the oneness of God.

We one, even as not just one also, but even as meaning in the same way and to the same degree. Jesus prays that we will be one in the same way and to the same degree that he and the father are one. one. Yes, he wants us to be one like the oneness he and the father enjoy.

But more than like, he wants us to be one in the oneness he and the father enjoy. Look carefully at how Jesus puts it.

Listen carefully. Verse 11, that they may be one even as we are one. Verse 21, that they may be one even as you father are in me and I in you that they may be in us so that the world knows you sent me.

[17 : 27] And verse 22, that they may be one even as we are one I in them and you in me that they may be perfected in unity. You heard the little preposition.

You see it in in in in the oneness of God. There is nothing in all the universe like the oneness of the father and the son.

The father in the son the son in the father one because in one because in I will say it again they are one because they are in the father in the son the son in the father one because in the oneness Jesus wants for the father's gifts to him for his disciples for us for his church is not simply modeled on the oneness of God the oneness Jesus wants for his disciples for us for his church participates in the oneness of God it is because disciples are called into the oneness of God that they become one and are one in the latter decades of the 20th century the worldwide church was caught up in Jesus prayer for unity in his

John 17 text many conferences were held all over the world to talk about how the church might grow into unity and if my memory serves me right the discussion turned on God's oneness the oneness of the trinity as the paradigm for our oneness and thereby missed the wonder Jesus is praying we are not called to become one like the father and son are one we are called to join in the father and the son being one to be in Jesus is to be in Jesus being in the father to be in Jesus is to be in the father being in Jesus one because in it's not so much that we are called to imitate Jesus as it is that we're called to participate in

Jesus and therefore it's not so much that we are called to imitate the oneness of God we are called to actually participate in the oneness of God the oneness of God for which Jesus prays is the oneness of the life and love of the Trinity we are one not only because of the life and love of the Trinity we are one because we are in the life and love of the Trinity in one because in I in you father you in me I in them they in me they in us they in us they in us they in us in in him we live and move and have our very being the apostle Paul said to the philosophers at

[21 : 01] Mars Hills not just because of him we live and move and have our very being not just with him we live and move and have our very being but in him in him we live and move and have our very being linger here for a little while longer like the rest of your life you may know that the the the the the word for what Jesus is praying in John 17 it is it's a fancy word it's the word perichoresis peri around or surrounding hence we have the word perimeter around or surround choresis interact or indwell perichoresis means to interact around to indwell around I mean it stretches the mind indwell around now because this word choresis is related to the verb choreo which means to dance as in a chorus hence we have the word choreography some suggest that this perichoresis means

interacting as in a dance moving toward moving around sometimes even moving through

Jesus is praying about a perichoresis the likes of which we've never seen Elizabeth Humphreys says that the perichoresis of which Jesus speaks is the most intimate of interactions it is the most intimate of dances imaginable now this word was coined by the fourth century theologian Gregory of Nazianzus and he coined the term to help us understand the inner life of God the inner life of God he helped us to understand the way the persons of the Godhead relate to each other the way the persons of the Godhead belong to each other and this word attempts to articulate the mystery that father son and holy spirit not only live in constant communion with one another they actually live in one another the father son and holy spirit not only embrace one another they enter into one another they penetrate one another they permeate one another they indwell one another the son eternally indwelling the father the father internally indwelling the son the spirit eternally indwelling the son and the father back and forth in this great dance each of the persons of the trinity never living alone apart from the others each person of the trinity always giving himself to the others always pouring out himself for and into the others so the great german theologian your god mothman could say the divine persons exist not only in relationship to one another they exist in one another now actually we witness and experience perichoresis of one sort of another all the time for nothing exists on its own right nothing exists on its own all things are in relationship with something we live in a profoundly interconnected intertwined universe and this is the emphasis of a new book on the trinity by a man named peter light heart is entitled traces of the trinity signs of god in creation and human experience one commentator on this book says this will not be the last book on the trinity but it certainly is the first it is so good traces of the trinity signs of god in creation and human experience he points out for instance that in all kinds of ways our bodies do not exist on their own right we tend to think of our bodies as these separate units that kind of bounce up against other things and we can exist on our own we don't exist on our own we are constantly taking in from outside ourselves and unless the outside gets inside the inside doesn't work and much of what comes from the outside into the inside has to leave for the inside to work think oxygen comes in goes out think food comes in goes out and he points out that no person exists on their own we cannot make it as isolated creatures we are constantly relating to others and in a profound sense others are making their way inside us and we are making our way inside them and that's because the God in whose image we were created is not a solitary God even God lives an interconnected intertwined life as Father Son and Holy Spirit and Father Son and Holy Spirit not only exist in relationship with one another they actually exist in one another now the best illustration I know of this is to use the Russian Matryosko dolls no illustration finally articulates the mystery in fact I submit to you every illustration of the Trinity has a heresy in it somewhere but the one that I think can help us understand this best is the Russian Matryosko doll inside the visible doll is another doll right and inside that doll another one and inside that doll another one another one and it keeps going there have to be seven right in this one

I won't go all the way now the dolls illustrate this perichritic oneness or at least they point in the direction of it now why have I bothered with this rarefied air theology today I mean this is a holiday weekend we ought to be chilling out why have I bothered with this here's why I bothered by the mercy and grace of the trinity you and I have been brought into the perichoresis of the trinity by the mercy and grace of the triune God you and I have been brought into this perichoresis of the trinity let me show you how this is developed in Jesus prayer in John 17 I believe that John who records Jesus prayer believes in the divine perichoresis of the three persons of the trinity he never uses any word like it or even come close to it but he believes in the reality spirit in the son son in the father father in the son father in the spirit around it goes but in

Jesus prayer the perichoresis is not father son and holy spirit as Jesus prays using this preposition in we expect to hear father son and holy spirit instead we hear father son disciples not father in the son son in the spirit spirit in the son son in the father but father in the son, sons in the disciples, disciples in the son, son in the father, and disciples in the father and the son. Do you see? Do you hear? New Testament scholar David Crump sees and hears, and he observes that in John's gospel, the spirit is never said to share in the mutual indwelling of father and son. The spirit does. He does. He does, but it's never said that he does.

[29 : 22] And this is strange because divine union is at the heart of everything. John writes, yet says Crump in John's gospel, Jesus is the one sent from the father to lead his disciples into a provocative new terrain where the language of perichoretic union with the divine is more apropos of

the believer than of the disciple. Listen to this. Disciples are said to enjoy the very relationship that the spirit is not said to enjoy. The spirit does enjoy it. He does, he does, he does, he does, he does, but it's not said so. Instead, what is said is that the disciples are given the place in the relationship between the father and the son where we expect to hear the spirit has it. Now, linger here a little bit longer. Like through eternity. Nowhere in the gospel of John is it said that the father dwells in the spirit and the spirit dwells in the father.

Nowhere is it said the son dwells in the spirit and the spirit dwells in the son. The spirit does, it does, he does, but it does not say so. What is said is the spirit comes upon the son, that the father gives the spirit to the son, but it's not said that the spirit dwells in the father and the son and the son and the father in the spirit. Now, I believe that John believes the spirit mutually abides in the father and the son, but he does not say so. What he says is that the father dwells in the son, the son dwells in the father, but there's no text that talks about the spirit dwelling in the father and the son. Instead, instead it is disciples who are always the ones dwelling in, in the son, abide in me and I in you. And in the father, because we are dwelling in the son who is indwelling the father, the father indwells disciples via his indwelling his son who indwells the disciples. Again, think Matryoshka dolls. David Crump again. Disciples and the father are bound together through their mutual simultaneous indwelling the one and only son. And there's the line. Oh, if perichoresis is an appropriate description of the son's interpenetration of the father, then it is equally and amazingly descriptive of the disciples' interpenetration of the son and the father. That is the wonder of salvation. That is the mystery of salvation. Disciples' inclusion in the exchange of divine life and love. That is what Jesus wants. That is what he prays for, full inclusion in the perichoresis of the father and the son. In this perichoresis inclusion, Jesus' heart's desire is that all who name his name will be one in the oneness of the mutual indwelling God. Disciples in Jesus, Jesus in the father, the father in disciples, Jesus in the disciples. Whoa!

Whoa! And it turns out, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings us to the son, to Jesus Christ, and with the son, to the father. Actually, I didn't put that accurately enough. The spirit brings us into the son, to the father. To live the perichoretic life of father, son, and disciples. Father, son, and the gifts the father gives his son. We are one because we're in. We are not one because we agree on everything.

We are not one because we hold the same doctrines. We're not one because we have the same form of government. We're not one because we hold the same political persuasions. We are one because we are one in the perichoretic oneness of God. Which is why Jesus can then say in verse 22, a line that will blow your mind. I have given them the glory you gave me. What? I have given them the glory you gave me.

That's because we're participating. When we participate in the oneness of God, we also participate in the glory of God. This glory that's finally manifested in Jesus laying down his life for the world. He gives us that glory. We too get to live glory. We too get to experience the glory of giving our lives away for the life of the world. The glory of God is a human being made fully alive, said Saint Irenaeus. I would restate it. The glory of God is a human being made fully alive in the glory of God. [34 : 45] And this, says Jesus, is what will make the world believe that he is who he is. The world is going to see this emergence of a mutually glorifying society. The emergence in the world of groups of human beings who live out this mutually glorifying perichoresis of God. And so Jesus prays in verse 23, glory that the world may believe that you love them even as you love me. Holy moly. Even as when you're in the in, the father loves us in the same way and to the same degree that he loves his son. Glory.

And when the world sees disciples living in the oneness of God, the world will conclude that the father sent his son and that the father loves disciples in the same way he loves the son. And hopefully the world will want to come in and enter with disciples into the perichoretic life and love of the Trinity. I in you, you in me, that they may be perfected in unity. One because in. Once you and I are in, we are one with everyone else who is in, no matter what else. The rest doesn't matter because we are one in the oneness of God.

So what does Jesus want? What does the Lord and Savior of the world want for his disciples?

Father, I want you to keep them in my name. I want you to keep them from the evil one.

I want you to sanctify them in the truth. I want you to give them the full measure of my joy. And I want them to participate in our oneness. Father, include them in the deep interconnected, intertwined union we've shared from all eternity. I in you, you in me, they in me, I in them, and they

in us. Oh, the apostle John lived the rest of his life in the wonder of this astonishing truth. And towards the end of his life, he wrote that little letter we call 1 John.

And in the opening lines, he declares the gospel. What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have beheld in our hands, handled concerning the word of life, the life was manifested. We've seen and bear witness and proclaim the eternal life, which was with the Father and now manifested to us. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. And then listen.

[37 : 49] And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write, that our joy may be made complete. Did you hear, John? Our fellowship is not just with other human beings.

We are not just fellowshiping with each other. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son. And so J.B. Phillips renders this so powerfully. We want you to be with us in this, in this fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ, his Son.

We must write and tell you about it because the more the fellowship extends, the greater the joy it brings to us who are already in it. At the center of the universe, the voice that spoke the universe into being prays, Father, I desire that they all be one, even as you are in me and I in you, that they may be in us.

That is the purpose for which God made the world. And that is what the Savior prays, participation in the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Father, I want them to be in it with us.

He prays for even more, which we'll listen to next Sunday. I leave you with the observation of Dallas Willard. It is being included in the...

[39 : 21] I'm going to wait until whoever got the phone answers that so everyone can hear this. It's coming. That gave you a chance to pause up. Okay.

Dallas Willard. It is being included in the eternal life of God that heals all wounds and allows us to stop demanding satisfaction.

What really matters of a personal nature when once it is clear, you are included.

You... are included. You... are included.

Who... are included. You...

[40 : 35] are included. You... are included. You... included you are included