

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 17

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[0 : 00] want to begin with prayer. And so would you join me in prayer as we prepare our hearts and mind to hear God's word. Father, you are glorious. You are indeed the Lord of all.

You have made the heavens and the earth. You redeemed mankind from sin. You are worthy of our very life and worthy of our worship. And I pray as now your word is opened and that we would have our hearts and mind desires to hear from you and that our response to you today would be yes before we even know what it is that you're asking of us. We love you Lord and it's a near beautiful name. We pray, amen. We find ourselves today in John chapter 17. If you have a copy of God's word with you today, I encourage you to turn there.

In John chapter 17, if this were a music, let me just say it this way, directors in music and movies, they have music that kind of comes to a crescendo when you're near the point of the movie. The moment that the climax moment of a movie, music kind of in a movie moves you toward that climax. And if you will today, if there was a soundtrack to the Gospel of John, the music would be crescendoing. And we're coming to the climax of the whole story of the Gospel of John, of Jesus Christ's death, resurrection and payment for sin. And so we read and how do I know that we are there in our text because the text begins with Jesus praying and in John chapter 17 verse one he says, Father, the hour has now come. Now this is the sixth and final time that Jesus in the Gospel of John will say, my hour has come.

And so we know that this moment is crescendoing up to this point. And what I find interesting is if we recall Jesus is taking his disciples, they have met with him in the upper room, they are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is about 12 hours away from death at this moment and he takes time to take his disciples aside and he prays. So this is, if you will, the true Lord's prayer. We get a glimpse into the prayer that Jesus prayed that night. And so imagine knowing the heart anguish that Jesus knows what lays ahead of him on the cross and yet he takes time to pray. And he's going to pray for three groups of individuals here in this prayer. We're going to see that Jesus prays for himself.

He prays for his 11 disciples and then he prays for all who would believe in his name. So if you have trusted in Christ today, you will find yourself in the prayer that Jesus prayed. Jesus prayed for you over 2000 years ago. And I'm grateful that he did. So let us look and listen into the prayer that Jesus prays for himself first. And we will see that he is praying that the Father would glorify him. So let's listen to this in John chapter 17 verses one through five. 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 since you have given him all authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ to whom you have sent. I glorified you on this earth having accomplished the work that you have given me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Jesus' heart cry and prayer is that he would be glorified.

Speaking of his death, that the Father would glorify him, the hour has come for him now to die, to make a sacrifice for sin. This is this moment.

[4 : 23] And he's praying. And so you see in verse one, glorify your son is the request. Verse five, it says, glorify me. Jesus is asking the Father, glorify me. This word glory is an interesting word. If you will, the totality of the weight of the worth of Christ, His majesty, His splendor, it's the total worth of who He is. And so when He says glorify me, He is asking, Lord, would you put on display the total weight of the worth of my majesty and splendor? And this is hard for us to understand. How is it that the cross, this object of a curse, this object of the wrath of God being placed on His Son, how is that working to displaying the splendor and majesty of God? What an interesting prayer. And you say, well, Scott, just how is that? How did the cross, how on the cross did Jesus display His

immeasurable worth and splendor and majesty? Because He's the only one that could have died for payment of sin for all of humanity to display all of God's love is displayed on the cross through

His Son and His death. And then we get a glimpse of how Jesus, how the Father is going to answer this prayer, because in verse five, we see how this is going to be done. And now Father, glorify me. Well, how in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed? So after the cross, where did Jesus go? He went to the presence of the Father and He enjoyed the glory that He existed with the Father before the world existed.

So Jesus is praying, this is how it's going to happen. After the curse of the cross, after taking the wrath of God for the penalty and payment of sin on the cross, after that, providing a way for people to know the Father through the Son, believing in His life, death and resurrection, I will ascend to the Father and I will enjoy this glory, this splendor and the majesty that I had with the Father before the world existed. And so He's praying, Lord, glorify your Son. This is the end. The hour has now come. Jesus is the perfect display of God's goodness. And He did so. He displays God's goodness by securing eternal life to all those who belong to Him. I love also in this verse how when Jesus does die on this cross, when He does and He is glorified, what does He secure? We read in verse 2, and since you have given Him all authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given, and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus

Christ to whom you have sent. I love, if you will, the definition of eternal life. We know the commonly first memorized verse for many of us, John 3.16, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whomever believes in Him shall not perish but enjoy or have eternal life. What is eternal life? According to Jesus now in John chapter 17, He says, and this is eternal life, verse 3, that they may know you, the Father, the only true God and in Jesus Christ to whom you have sent. What is eternal life? That we know the Father, the only true God. And how do we know the Father, the only true God? Through the Son, Jesus Christ to whom He sent to make payment for sin. And so in glorifying the Son on the cross that He will enjoy the glory with the Father, the means to enjoy that glory with the Father that He enjoyed before the world existed is the means of the cross and He secures eternal life. Hallelujah. And so He says, Lord, please glorify your Son. The hour has now come. And He's again about 12 hours away from being crucified on the cross. So if that is Jesus' heart's cry, so too it ought to be for us to glorify the Lord that in every single detail of our life it is intended to reveal and to celebrate God's goodness, to put on display God's goodness. Every action that you take during the week and the day ought to be for God's glory. Every thought that we think, every word that we say, every motive of our heart ought to be for the exclusive purpose to glorify God. This week I had the opportunity to be partnered with, through the ministry of world relief with a Syrian family.

They are a refugee family here in Spokane and I had the opportunity to meet the husband and the wife and they have five children and I look forward to the day. You see, I don't want necessarily my friendship with this Syrian family. They're a Muslim family currently and I look forward to the day one day. I don't want to just necessarily make converts for Christ. My aim for this family and for all who do not know the Lord is that they would one day glorify the Lord and they would be worshipers of Him and they too would enjoy eternal life. That is, knowing the Father and Jesus Christ and whom He has sent, the only true God. That is my hope and my prayer for this Syrian family and that is my hope for all who do not know the Lord. Perhaps even someone sitting here today.

[10 : 45] So then Jesus prays, He's prayed for Himself. Now He turns His attention of His prayer and He prays for His 11 disciples who are with Him and He prays starting in verse 6 we're going to work our way through verse 11. If you want to read along with me and we will see that the heart desire of Jesus is that the Father would keep His disciples and He would keep them. So let's look with me in verses 6 through 11. I have manifested your name to the people to whom you have given me out of the world. Yours they were, you gave them to me, they have kept your word and now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you. And they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me for they are yours. All are mine. All mine are yours and yours are mine and I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world but they are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as I am one. Notice in, there's a phrase that is commonly repeated. In verse 2 we read, everyone you have given him. In verse 6 we read twice the people you have gave them, I'm sorry,

the people you gave me from the world and then also in verse 6 you gave them to me and in verse 9 those you have given me. When Jesus uses this verb, have given, it's in the perfect tense. That is, there's a past action that has resulted in the present and that continues to result in the present. In that, God gave

Jesus a specific people that are going to be his and continue to be his. God chose these people not based on any merit of their own. He gave them as a gift to the Son and eternity past. God chose people not based on any merit. In the Apostle Paul we know in Ephesians 1 verse 4 says that people were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Prior to salvation we were cold dead sinners, enemies of God. By nature and by choice we rebelled against the Lord. And the only way that we could come to him is if he works in our hearts drawing him to ourselves and then we respond. And look with me how the disciples responded to the Lord drawing the disciples. In verse 6 we say, we notice that they kept the Father's

Word. They responded by receiving it through the teaching of Jesus. In verse 8, also in verse 8, they came to understand and believe that God, what God had said. So God does the initiation. He gave Jesus the Son people who were going to be his. And their job was to respond. Let's assume I were teaching children in the nursery and I was holding a 10 month old baby. And I look at this baby and I say, oh you smell so nice. Did you bathe this morning?

And the toddler would maybe nod his head and then you look so full. Did you eat a healthy breakfast? And yes. And then oh you have just the most beautiful outfit on. Did you dress yourself? You look so good. Yes. But what in reality do we know? That the parents drew the bathwater and bathed the child and washed him so he smelled so nice and clean. The parents did the job of preparing food and feeding the child. And the parents did the job of dressing this child so he would wear this beautiful outfit. It was all the parents' job but the child did respond. And so this is how the Lord works. He does the work and the people respond. Disciples respond. And that's how we are drawn to the Lord in salvation. I want to quickly though notice in verse 11 one other thing of how he prays for the disciples and he prays that they would be kept. Look with me in verse 11. And I am no longer in the world but they are of the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, here's the prayer, keep them in your name which you have given them, which you have given me, that they may be one even as you and we are one. One of the things that Jesus prays for his disciples is that the Lord would keep them. And notice how he is to keep them. That is in his name.

That is they don't belong to any other name. They will be kept in his name. They are his name and he is theirs. There is another astonishing thing that I want us to look at and that is how he prays for the disciples. He wants to pray for the Father that they would be kept and then also he prays that they would be unified. Look with me in the latter part of verse 11 that they would be one even as we are one. That they would be unified. Unity centers on the truth about who God is and how he has revealed himself in his word. Truth is the basis of unity. Truth is, this goes against everything we hear in society. We are told to minimize truth and to focus on that which we can agree upon, ignoring the rest or we are told how we feel is what is true. But genuine unity never comes where truth is discarded because unity is the byproduct of each disciple clinging to the truth of [17:15] God's word. Here in a little bit next month we will get to enjoy the Olympics. There is one sport that I enjoy watching. I began to have an affinity for this sport in college.

When I was in college I would go down to the river and I would watch the crew team, the rowing team row. I don't know why I found this fascinating but in particular there are many different variations of the sport of rowing or crew. I like the eight man boats because they have an extra person, a ninth person who is called a coxswain. He is the only person that is looking forward. Everyone else is looking at the coxswain. The job of the coxswain is to steer the ship because he is the only one who can see where they are going. Everyone is looking back and he is calling out to those rowers when to row and when to rotate the oars so it just skims across the water and then pull again and so he is just commanding those rowers to go. Here is the point. Watching crew teams at the beginning of the season toward the end of the season something is radically different. At the beginning of the season everyone is just rowing as hard as they can but that doesn't make a good team of rowers, a good crew team. What makes them good is that they pay attention to the one single voice they ought to be paying attention to and that is the coxswain. He is calling out commands. Row as hard as you can but do so when I command. Everyone's oar is in the water at the same time. Everyone pulls at the same time. Everyone rotates their oar at the same time. Everyone goes again and does it again and it is quite fascinating.

I enjoy the sport a lot. I never did it. I can appreciate those who do. Here is the point. We need how do we have unity? He is praying for unity for his disciples and think about what the disciples are about to face. Shortly after Christ dies they will all be scattered throughout the world. They will proclaim his name. They will be persecuted and they will have much adversity. The thing that will keep them and the churches surviving is unity over a common thing and they need to all be listening to one common voice. This is it. This is it.

[19 : 56] It doesn't matter how hard you row in a boat if you are not listening to the one voice you should. How is it that the church has unity? It is through listening to one common voice through his word. Then Jesus then turns his attention. He has prayed for himself, Father be glorified and glorify me. He prays for his disciples and then he turns his attention to all who would believe in his name afterward. We are going to drop down to verse 20. He is going to continue this theme of praying for unity for those who would come to believe in him after the disciples. Look with me in verse 20 through 26. I do not ask for these only but also for those who would believe in me through their word that they may all be one just as Father. You are in me and I in you and they are also maybe in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me and I have given them that they may be one even as you we are one. I in them and you and me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you have loved me. 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 have loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father even though the world does not know you I know you and these know you that you have sent me. 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. Unity is hard to maintain. Paul knows this in Ephesians 4 3 he says it this way make every effort to keep unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. Other translations translate that word to endeavor to keep the unity of spirit. Whatever you say endeavor or make every effort it implies that this is hard work to maintain unity.

We are to make every effort and why is it so hard in the church because we are all very different and fourth memorial church we are a very different bunch from one another and we have a lot of reasons for why we are different in here but this is what I love. We all didn't we all maybe scientists or accountants professors students blue collar workers those in management those who own their own small businesses retirees moms and dads husbands and wives singles and adding to that we didn't all go to the same college this is why we feel sorry for Pastor J having gone to the lesser college and so but our bond is far stronger than having gone to the same college or what our commonalities or similarities are. Here's what we all know all of us in here know this that we understand that we are sinners deserving of God's punishment and we receive God's grace because we have trusted in Christ through his the word of the apostles this is what we know this is where our unity is derived we share something more powerful than a common experience or shared interests we share Christ we share Christ and we don't need to compromise the truth to be unified our only unity comes from listening to a common and shared voice let me share with you one thing that causes disunity that

I have observed through the years and sometimes in the church let me say it this way unity is not uniformity sometimes in churches we want to push for uniformity that we all may think about ancillary things the same so for example if I were to say stand up here and say I would like for everyone to think the same about this political issue let's imagine if I did that and I would like for everyone in here to think one way about how we're to school and educate our children let's assume I chose two topics next week we will have dwindled down to like five percent of the church who actually agree on that this is why unity is so hard but but no because and so I want to stay away from uniformity unity and uniformity are not the same thing the beauty of diversity let me share the beauty of diversity is summed up well in the classic quotation in the essentials church we are to have unity in non essentials we have liberty and in all things we are to have charity with one another and that is a good way to think about how we're to have unity unity not uniformity is what Jesus is praying for I want us to look where unity is a participation in a shared relationship with Jesus unity is a participation in a shared relationship with Jesus look with me in verses 21 and 23 that they all may be one just as you father and are in me and I am you and that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me look drop down to verse 23 I am them and you and me that they may be come perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even

as you have loved me christian unity is the result of entering into this deep relationship that exists in the trinity

Jesus describes the foundational relationship between father and son son is in the father the son is in the father is in the son the son is in the father next he describes the relationship between believers in the son the son is in the believers and the believers are in the son as a result of believers are in the father do you see how christian unity is rooted in deeply in a relationship with Jesus so what I wanted to do is conclude this way there are four evidences in our text of a unified church and as I read these church I want us to think about how well are we doing at being a unified church with these four evidences that I find in the scripture here in our text and then secondly I want us to think how am I doing at promoting these things in the church am I a distraction and causing disunity in this way or am I a unifying force with and am I in alignment with Jesus on this matter so here's four evidences that I see as a unified church first there's a shared commitment to biblical instruction unity is not a byproduct of discussion and diplomacy rather unity flows from a commitment to the word there is a commitment to the teaching of God's word at all levels this is why I don't want to ever think about children's ministry toddlers and infants as not teaching the truths of God and here's what I mean an infant and a toddler so what when we when I say I want disciples of children and I want to start young why do I want us to communicate that because do you think a child knows what abuse feels like and what the difference between love and abuse they know they know you can communicate the love of the father when you hold an infant they know the difference between that and abuse they know that think about the eternal transcendent truths that you can teach an infant and a toddler that they get they know and I want at all levels beginning with infants all through adults this word of God these truths of God's to be taught this is what we're going to be listening to one common voice this is what unifies the church infant toddler children youth young adults senior adults I want to sing this is what I love about worship I want to sing that which is truth true about the Lord in our liturgy and preaching sermons when we consider the history of the church particularly the high tide moments of the church I see three things there's an impact of the world there's a unity that church enjoys and a commitment to his word listen to Acts chapter two they were devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to the fellowship to the breaking of bread to prayer everyone was filled and on many wonders and signs were being performed by the apostles now all believers were together and had all things in common there's unity there's impact to the world and a commitment to God's word so under this first thing what is one evidence of a unified church is that there's a commitment to biblical instruction we can have that as a staff and elder team but it's also it needs to be in our people as well the congregation needs to have a commitment to biblical instruction both personally also if as you are serving in a ministry if you see us deviating from a commitment to God's word please say something secondly there is a shared under what

[30 : 22] unified church there's a shared understanding of our new identity at salvation we were given a new position in Christ who we are wrapped up in at salvation we received a new identity and we were brought into a community of brothers and sisters who identity is found in Christ our position in him allows us to experience unparalleled unity amid incredible diversity this is beautiful our new identity in Christ makes us a family three times in our text Jesus used the word father in verses twenty one twenty four and twenty five you and I are brought into a family of God through the work of Jesus Christ no longer do we need to relate to each other as strangers we love one another as family members Christian unity is people from all ethnicities countries social circles circles becoming a family members it means caring for each man at fourth as you would care for your brother and they means treating each woman with the respect you would your sister we are a family and so firstly there is a shared commitment to biblical instruction secondly a shared understanding of our new identity in Christ thirdly there's a shared pursuit of sacrificial love twice in our passage verses twenty three and twenty six we are told that believers will know an experience that God's love is in us with the same love that he the father has with the son there is no way this understanding of God's supernatural selfless sacrificial love can do anything other than overflow in our relationships with one another I pray that we all would understand

God's supernatural selfless sacrificial love by the way we relate to one another we're to bear with one another's burdens instruct one another forgive one another pray for one another submit to one another encourage one another provoke each other not to anger but to love and good works Christ is not praying for us to embrace a concept concept but rather a conduct he wants lives marked by

unity and the unity that leads us to walk hand in hand with one another when one family member hurts we we don't just merely take note of it we hurt as well when a sister feels rejected we welcome her and accept her when a brother begins to stumble we pick him up real unity requires sweat unity takes effort and demands sacrifice fourthly of these evidences of unity the fourth one is a shared discontent with selfish division a shared discontent with selfish division in verse 23 we read I and them and you and me that they may become perfectly one Jesus prays that we would be perfectly one it does not mean that we will achieve this sinless perfection or without blemish but it does contain the idea of pursuing unity to the highest degree it keeps unity as the target always in front of us we are never content to say well at least I think we're unified enough we can never say that unity and broken relationships are like a poison in the church we can't be content until every last drop of division is removed not by getting rid of someone or asking someone to leave the church but dealing with it biblically as with division there is a Puritan preacher Thomas Brooks who wrote this discord and division become no Christian for wolves to worry the lambs is no wonder but for one lamb of God to worry another this is unnatural and monstrous do not contribute sorry do you contribute to making force a unified place are you proactively and humbling dealing with differences and disagreements maintaining unity in the church it is all of our responsibility to maintain unity if there is any division or broken relationships among us here at fourth I plead with you this week to take steps to to unify with that brother to reconcile with that brother or sister a few years ago somewhere around the year 2020 there was someone who approached me and in the in the church and and they said Scott you have hurt me and I I regret this now but I chuckled I I laughed because we had been communicating via email and we were doing so well at trying to work these things through we've met in the office and we were helping I was helping her with some things and then and then this have her say you've hurt me I I chuckled and then I realized she wasn't laughing and she was serious but I had no idea how so I said oh ma'am I'm so sorry would you please share with me how and she shared with me how it was that I hurt her and how it was that there was this offense between the two of us I was so proud of her for saying that and it gave me the opportunity to be reconciled to her I I once she articulated what had happened and the circumstances I agree with her I hurt her so I I said would you please forgive me it was not my intention to do that and I'm so thankful it was a few weeks later she came and gave me a hug and as evidence things were better now and all I'm saying is all of us to be unified we have to listen to one voice let's work toward unity not uniformity and it takes work we endeavor make every effort it takes work for us to be remain as a unified church and why is this so important you say Scott you spent a little much time on that look with me one more time in verse 3 23 and we'll conclude with this thought I and them and you and me that they may become perfectly one there's that striving for unity all the time but look at the purpose clause found in verse 23 why should we become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me so that the world may know the supernatural work of a church being unified points to a supernatural reason that the world may know that Christ was sent to make payment for sin the mission of the church is to make disciples among the nations beginning here in Jerusalem Judea Samaria in the end of the world and what compromises that mission what compromises that mission in the its division disunity Thomas Manton said it this way very pointedly divisions in the church breed atheism in the world good news the reverse is true a unified church reveals power life changing truth to the world Christian unity reveals Jesus actually did come to earth he sent was sent by the father to die on the cross to make penalty to pay the penalty for sin the church is a visible display of God's goodness to the world each local church is a visible display of God's kindness to its community we don't have photographs of Jesus but the church is the photograph the church is a picture of his love and his mercy there is a picture frame around every church and a sign that reads above it come and see what God is like and can you imagine if someone came and saw what God is like and we're a disunified bunch what that would communicate about the God we serve it would be an anathema so that's why we're to endeavor and strive hard to maintain the unity in the spirit of bond of peace so that the world may know that you sent me so forth let us not compromise our mission with petty divisions let us be quick to reconcile with one another the last thought I want to share with you is this is Jesus's prayer he prays for the church but this is something he does 24 7 in the heavens because we read in Hebrews 7 that he lives to make intercession for the saints he's he's in heaven continuing to this day lives living to make intercession on behalf of the church I have full confidence in the unity of the church I have full confidence in these things because I know our heavenly Father he prays for us continually let's pray

Father thank you so much for this day thank you for the opportunity to open your word to hear from you Lord I pray if there's any divisions among us that we would take the time this week to be reconciled that we may with one heart and one voice worship you tomorrow more purely or next week more purely and holy Lord thank you at the beginning of your prayer you prayed that the son would be glorified and that you would return to the Father the one true God and there you were receiving glory Lord we want to glorify you today with our lives with every intention of our heart every motive every word I look forward to declaring that which is true about you more in song and that you would be glorified chiefly in this church or help us to endeavor to be unified thank you for the unity that you've allowed us to have over many several years and you are to be praised.