

# John 17:20-26

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[0:00] Let's pray together. Father, we ask that you would make us one and that you would show us your glory through your son Jesus and the words he has given us.

! Amen. Well, good morning. My name is Ben Roberts. If I haven't met you, it's nice to see you all. My main work at St. John's is the work of training in an organization called Artizo.

And if you've never heard that word before, come and find me so I can give you my pitch. Well, we're finishing our series in the Gospel of John.

So we're finishing this lovely time we've had in the upper room together with the disciples, with Jesus, listening and learning. Jesus has washed his followers' feet. He's eaten with them. He's taught them. He's comforted them.

And now his crucifixion and death are just hours away. But first he prays for them. And we've been looking at this prayer very slowly, which has been good, in three different parts.

[1:05] And so you remember the first part was Jesus prayed for himself. And then he prayed for his followers that were in the room. And in our text today, he's praying for us.

He's praying for his followers today. That's where we pick up in verse 20. So you can open there. And it'll help you. Because it can get a little bit convoluted in the Gospel of John sometimes.

So he says in verse 20, I do not ask for these only, that is the twelve disciples, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

So, 2,000 years ago, in the upper room, Jesus was specifically praying for those of us who trust him today. He had us in mind in this prayer.

And it's lovely, isn't it? We hear Jesus pray, and it's not a list of wishes and worries, which is what my prayers are like. He brings us into the conversation of heaven.

[2:04] Sometimes people talk about being in the room. They say, I just want to be in the room where the decisions are made, or I was in the room where this thing happened. And, well, with Jesus, we're in the room. We're hearing God's strategic vision for all things.

His plan is being laid out. So his plan from before the foundation of the world, today and forever, Jesus just unfurls it all for us in this little prayer. And so, while we're just a part of the way through the story in the Gospel of John, we're on the night before the cross.

As Jesus prays, we get the whole story. God's eternal purposes are mapped out in this prayer. And Jesus sees that, and he shares it with his Father.

He speaks it, and he prays it out loud so that we can listen in, and we can be brought into it as well. So, here's what the plan of God is. That Jesus has truly revealed and enabled us to know God the Father.

He does this through his death and resurrection. And that he has given the Father's words, the truth about who he is and who God is. He's given that to the apostles who received it, and were sent out with that same word.

[3:17] And we have received that same word from them, from Jesus, and were sent out with the same word. And now we're being made one as a witness to the world with the promise of future glory.

That's the plan. And we'll look at it in two parts, which is oneness and glory. So, those are our two points. Oneness is verses 20 to 23.

So, oneness. Jesus prays three times for us in just a few verses. That they may all be one. That they may be one even as we are one.

And that they may be perfectly one. So, the prayer is that we, brothers and sisters, receiving, believing his word, would share the same kind of oneness that Jesus enjoys with his Father. Oneness both with God and with each other. And you might be thinking at this point, why does he keep saying oneness instead of unity? Oneness is a weird word. But you're right.

[4:19] It sounds a little bit weird. And it's because unity is more about joining together around a common purpose. So, it's having a shared goal. But oneness is about perfect relationship.

It's about not just sharing something in common, but sharing each other. Sharing life together. And that's what we're being promised here. We're to share life with God and life with each other.

And he says, if you look there, he says, just as. So, in the same way that you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.

So, Jesus prays that our relationship with each other and with God would mirror the oneness of God himself. Now, the Father and the Son, clearly here, they're distinct persons.

And yet, they're one God. And the key word that describes this here is in. The word in. Jesus says he's in the Father, and the Father is in him.

[5:20] And they have this perfect sharing of love and joy and unity of purpose. They're one God, and yet, they're still the Father and the Son. It's difficult to understand.

This is what we call the Holy Trinity. This relationship that we're describing here. And if we can get our heads around that, which maybe we can, a little bit. But there's something even more wondrous.

Which is that Jesus prays for us to be in God in that same way. So, E. Stanley Jones said it like this. You can't get closer than in.

You can't get closer than in. Right? This is the closest relationship that could be described in using human words. I mean, you can think about one image you could think about is like a small child running to their parent.

And I had a child that I won't name right now that used to run and jump, which was pretty harmful to my back. But they would jump and wrap both arms and legs around me and just kind of want to fuse together.

[6:22] Right? And maybe you've seen a kid do something like that. And that's the image that I have. But, of course, Jesus is praying for something even deeper. A deeper, closer relationship with God than even something like that with a parent and a child.

Now, the prayer isn't that we would melt like snowflakes into the ocean. So, it's not that our identity is dissolved and disappears. Rather, it promises this truest fulfillment of our deepest need.

So, it promises intimacy and belonging and acceptance. Knowing and being known. And this is what we were created for. And it's what Jesus prays his disciples would have.

It gets even more scandalous, though. Because he's not just praying this for us. We're the people that already know Jesus. He says, not only us, but also the world.

And you may know that in the Gospel of John, the world, the world is the realm that is opposed to God. The world are those that don't want anything to do with him.

[7:29] They're going to crucify Jesus. They hate him. They hate his disciples. That's why Jesus was praying for protection, as we saw last week. But Jesus doesn't stop by praying for our oneness for God.

He goes one step further. And he prays that our oneness would be something like a message of hope. So that God's enemies could see it and hear it and become his friends.

And Jesus says it twice, so we won't miss it. He says, the result of our oneness is, verse 21. So that the world may believe that you have sent me. And verse 23.

So that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them, even as you loved me. So, this is the plan of heaven, prayed by Jesus.

That Jesus would come to earth, the Son revealing the Father, opening the way to the Father by paying the debt on the cross, bringing disciples into himself, and then leaving his disciples unified around his word.

[8:28] This welcoming, unified community where broken and lonely humans could find the embrace of God with other forgiven sinners. And together

we would find out that God loves us with his deepest love.

Now, this is the point in the sermon where I might be tempted to apply a little bit. And I'd say, don't you want to be a part of a church like that? But you should say, yes. And then I would say, Vancouver needs this, a church like this, right?

And you would say, yes. And then I would say, be more unified. Go home. And you'd say, oh, what a great sermon. But it's not going to work.

I think we know that. We can't manufacture unity. Especially oneness. I mean, some of you have families, right? You have siblings.

Parents. In-laws. Some of us have teenagers. Our race is a real issue. Oneness is hard to find.

[9:33] And much of our experience in life is actually relational brokenness. And not just in the world, but also in the church and also within our church, within, between us.

People that Jesus is praying will be one. So if we don't achieve unity by trying harder, how do we get it? Well, let's remember this is a prayer.

So Jesus is not praying to us. He's not saying to his disciples, please, please be unified. Please do better. No, he's asking the Father for something. Because fundamentally, this is something God must give us.

It's something only God can do. Oneness comes from him. God gives us oneness by giving us himself. And God brings us into himself by words.

So now I'm going to ask you to travel a little bit. So if you go all the way up to verse 8, if you have the passage open, this is what Jesus says. For I have given them the words that you gave me.

[10:38] And they have received them. And have come to know in truth that I have come from you. And they have believed that you have sent me. Okay, now look down to verse 17.

Sanctify them in truth. Your word is truth. So Jesus here prays, sanctify, set apart the apostles. So that they can be set apart and sent with the word, with the truth.

That's why he sanctifies them, to send them out with the word. Now verse 20. This prayer is for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.

And I think also in verse 22, when he's talking about glory there. If you look at commentaries, there's about 18 different takes of what in the world Jesus means.

Right? By sharing his glory. I think in the context of this passage, that glory is God's name and God's word. That's the thing that is given earlier. And that's the thing that he promises to give here, his glory.

[11:37] So, our oneness comes from being together in the Father through Christ, sharing God's oneness. And we belong to Christ. How? By receiving, trusting, and obeying his word.

And the world comes to belong to Christ when they do the same thing. And so, what this means is that we don't find unity by turning to one another, which is a temptation.

We find unity by turning to Christ together, trusting his word. One of my favorite moments in a wedding is when the bride walks down the aisle. And the back doors are open and the minister will say, please stand.

And then everyone will turn and face their body towards the bride. And then as the bride walks down the aisle, the whole room in unison will follow the bride like this.

And I just want you to imagine if we tried to coordinate that together. Imagine if we looked at each other and we were like, okay, let's, let's, okay, nope, nope, nope, too much, nope, right?

[12:38] We can't even imagine it. We couldn't do it, right? We're not looking at each other and trying to figure out how to be unified together. We're looking at the bride, right? We're looking at Christ. We're submitting ourselves under his word.

And that's what makes us one. And of course, it's more than what we believe. It's also how we belong to Christ. We're brought into oneness by keeping our eyes on Jesus. This is the one foundation of the church.

It's what everything else is built on. And what it means is that our church will never be more unified than when we're studying the word of God together. And it means that Jesus and his word are the starting place for evangelism.

So when we share in Jesus together, when we're looking at him and we're delighting in him and his word together, it builds a community that is able to welcome, that's able to share, where people can come to know and believe.

When we're excited about Christ, when we're caught up in him, when we're looking at him, there's this natural thing that happens where we want to share our joy with other people. When people have a new home, they invite their friends over to come and see it.

[13:45] When people have a new baby or when they baptize a baby, everyone wants to hold the baby, right? That's what it's like. We look at Christ and we're caught up in the joy and we're able to bring other people into it with us.

Now, practically, what does this mean? Well, I think it's a posture that we have as a church and it's a commitment that we have as a church. It means that we're coming under the authority of the Bible in our own lives.

It means that we're living humbly with one another, that we're sharing a common Lord together. And of course, it calls us to pray. We want to pray like Jesus prayed, that the Spirit would illuminate that word as Jesus promised he would.

As it talks about in Luke, didn't our hearts burn within us when we heard the word he was speaking to us? We pray that the Spirit would do that for us when we hear the word together. So, that's oneness.

That's how God gives it to us and gives it to the world. So, let's talk about the second point, which is glory, verses 24 to 26. Now, I know this word can be a bit confusing. If you've been in a Bible study going through the book of John, I bet that every time glory comes up, you're like, what does that mean again?

[14:57] And someone told me this morning that this is how Dr. Packer used to describe it. Glory is G-O-D. It's God. God on display.

And I thought, wow. That was better than what I wrote. I wrote that glory means God showing his true self.

God showing his true self. And the reason it can confuse us a little bit is it happens a lot of different ways in the Gospel of John. But in these last verses, it points to the final, final goal of Jesus' prayer, which is that oneness that we experience partly now would become complete in eternity.

You might know this scripture from 1 Corinthians. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

And that's what verse 24 is talking about. Look at it with me. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, face to face, right?

[16:07] To see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. So this pulls us again into heaven's perspective, doesn't it?

And this is what Jesus wants. And what Jesus wants is the same as what the Father wants. Jesus wants us.

He wants to be with us. First, he came to be with us on earth. And finally, he'll bring us to be with him in heaven. Now we've heard this promise before, that he goes to prepare a place for us.

But here we see the beauty a little bit more deeply. Which Jesus says, when you get here, when you get to heaven, you're going to see who I truly am.

You're going to see my glory. And yes, you've seen it already. But wait until you get there. There's more to see. There's much more to see. It's an ancient love from before the foundation of the world.

[17:11] A love that reaches forward forever and reaches backwards forever. And you're being broadened into that. You'll see it. You'll be in it. You'll share it. It will be yours. C.S. Lewis wrote, C.S. Lewis wrote, And Jesus here is describing the world that we were made for.

Coming into love and intimacy and oneness and belonging and glory from before the world began, within the God who made it, until forever.

That's what we're made for. That's what we're made for. That's everything that we want. And it's our future glory that we share with Jesus. That's what Jesus prayed for 2,000 years ago.

So, we gather under his word. We turn towards him. And as we do, Jesus will continue to make the Father known to us. Christ is still giving himself to us today, personally and in this community.

By his Holy Spirit, he's empowering and making his word come alive to us. The word that God has given us, creating in us oneness and promising glory. So, let's hear and believe and receive this final promise of Christ together, starting now into forever.

[18:38] That the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them. Amen.