**Livin’ the Life**

**Jesus’ Prayer for Unity**

**John 17:20-26**

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We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises us and are currently in chapter 17 looking at Jesus’ Great Prayer. So far, we have looked at Jesus’ prayer for himself (1-5), Jesus’ prayer for his immediate disciples (6-19) and today we finish by looking at Jesus’ prayer for his future church/disciples (20-26).

**Jesus’ First Request (20-23)**

Jesus looks to the future and prays for those who will believe and have eternal life through the gospel (20). This implies that Jesus’ disciples are sharing the gospel (Mat 28:19). We saw last week that faithfulness to Jesus leads to faithfulness to the mission of Jesus. Fulfilling the mission of Jesus starts with simply establishing relationships with those who God has placed in your life who do not know Christ. Then caring for and loving and spending time with them. Have them over for dinner or have your life Group have dinner and invite them. Or Invite them to church but many will not, so we need to go to them. If you do not have relationships outside your Christian friends, then find ways to get involved in the community. Specifically, his prayer is for unity is so that the world would believe, experience eternal life and unity with us. Jesus states this simply (21) and then expands on it (22-23). So let’s look at this request in more detail. First, unity is both positional and practical. Positionally, we have unity centered on what we have in common in the gospel, Jesus, salvation, his Spirit, his word, etc. Practically, we have unity as we work out in love and truth what we have in common positionally. The lack of unity is a spiritual issue and has a spiritual solution.

Jesus sees the source of our unity from God and so compares our unity to his relationship to the Father, just as you, Father are in me, and I in you (21). The Father and the Son have a mutual indwelling between them because they are one. The purpose of our unity is that the disciples be in them, that is united or in union with the Father and the Son by the Spirit (21; 23; see also 15:1-7). Specifically, we are united to the Father based upon the work of the Son which is applied to us by the Spirit. Eternal life unites us to the life of the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit and becomes the source of our unity. And it is by this union with we have with God that we become the focal point or the means of his work in the church and the world. I see this because unity has this purpose, leading others to believe the gospel so that they too are united with the life of God and united to God’s family (21; 23). Unity becomes a means of gospel witness to the world. As God’s people love each other, serve each other, encourage each other, we demonstrate the truthfulness of the gospel (see Mat 5:14-16).

Jesus says the same thing with different language in the next two verses, the glory you have given me, I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you love me (22-23). This time it is his glory given to us that is the source of and leads to unity and a perfecting unity so that the world may know that you sent me *and* that you loved them as you have loved me. This glory is the glory of the incarnation, God the Son humbling himself by leaving heaven and taking on human nature and die for his enemies (Phil 2:6-11). As we follow Jesus’ pattern, our unity is perfected so that the world knows the Father sent the Son and the Father loves us as he loves the Son. How can Jesus say that the Father loves us as he loves the Son? The Son is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature (Heb 1:3). How can he love us like he loves the Son who is a reflection of how own glory and nature? He loves us because he loves his own glory and his own Son above all things and so the cross becomes the means by which he includes us in that love by making sinful humans acceptable before a holy God.

**Jesus’ Second Request (24-26)**

Jesus picks up the theme of glory again, this time he requests that we be with him in eternity so that we see his glory (24). This is why the gospel is good news, eternity in the presence of Jesus, seeing and enjoying his glory. This is what will bring all of us the greatest joy and happiness in eternity. Eternal life is not so much about escaping hell as it is about being united with and enjoying Christ for eternity. It is good news because our union with him will be fully realized and our unity perfected. It is also good news because one day we will see the fullness of his glorious brilliance. Eternal life is seeing the glory of God in Jesus. That is why John starts out this gospel saying that we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father (1:14). This seeing includes a savoring of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4-6). The glory we see and savor of Christ in this life is but a foretaste, a glimpse of the glory we will see and enjoy in eternity. And seeing this glory has the power to make us like him now (2 Cor 3:18) and in eternity when we see him (1Jn 3:1-2).

Because of this request, Jesus promises that he will continue to make the Father known so that the love which the Father loved the Son will be in us and he in us (25-26). The world does not know the Father (1:9-11) but Jesus knows him and those given to Jesus know him. The plight of every human being is that they are born separated from God and under God's wrath (3:36) and you cannot know God outside of God's gracious intervention through the gospel. Jesus will continue his mission of revealing the Father through his disciples as we share the gospel (14:23) that those who believe are united with our Triune God and united to his family which becomes the means by which they experience his love and glory now and in eternity.

Union with God is the means by which we are united with each other and witness to our world.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you or that you should think about more?
2. What does union with God look like?
3. What does unity among God’s family look like?
4. What does fulfilling the mission of Jesus look like?
5. How is our faith the source of our unity in God’s family and mission to the world?
6. How would you summarize the main point ofb54 4b the teaching in one sentence?
7. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
8. How does this teaching affect my relationships with those in my church family?
9. How does this teaching affect my relationships with those who are not Christians?
10. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
11. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
12. How does this teaching affect Jesus’’ command to make disciples?