

# The Gospel of John

## Unity in This World

### John 17:21-23

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are nearing the end of the High Priestly prayer found in the 17th chapter of the gospel of John.

Last week we learned that Jesus was not just praying for the eleven disciples.

#### **John 17:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> "I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word,

Jesus is praying for all the people who will ever believe through their word. This could be those in that first generation who heard the word preached or it could be those of us who now read it through their writings in the New Testament that were inspired by the Spirit of God. He gathers all of those believers in His prayer.

**In verses 21-23, He is praying for "Unity in This World". Then in verses 24 to 26, He prays for "Unity in Heaven". We will save that for next time.**

#### Stand and Read Scripture

#### **John 17:21-23 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; just 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.

<sup>22</sup> The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup> 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 You loved them, just as You loved Me.

#### Prayer

Jesus prayed for our **spiritual unity** briefly at the end of verse 11. Not praying that we all get along together in life but that we have an invisible spiritual oneness. Just as Christ and God are one, Jesus wanted us to also be one with them. We receive this oneness because Christ is in us and we share his attributes. Including **eternal life** which we have **now** because we have been made alive by the very life of God.

As a result of His prayers and the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples will be transformed. Jesus told this group of men who were weak, and struggling to understand, and self-centered, and preoccupied with their own ambition that they would preach to the whole world. At this point the disciples probably thought about how unlikely this would

be possible. Jesus was leaving them. All of their expectations of Jesus were fading away fast. They did not understand the significance of Christ's death on the cross or that He would rise again from the grave. They were going to need **a lot** of help!

## **BODY:**

### **I. ONENESS WITH THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.**

#### **John 17:21a (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; just as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,

Jesus prayed this same request briefly back in verse 11.

#### **John 17:11b (NASB)**

...keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, **so that they may be one just as We are.**

This is not talking about us getting along with each other in the church. That is a different issue. We **do** need to have a real, practical, living unity among believers, but this prayer goes beyond that. His prayer is that we may be one even as God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one.

#### **I want you to listen carefully.**

Our **salvation** is not **just** a ticket to heaven. It is not **just** forgiveness of sins. It is not **just** an escape from eternal punishment. It is God pulling us into the **eternal life** of the Trinity. All of us who are forgiven of our sins are literally pulled into the life of the Trinity. We are **in** the Father; we are **in** the Son; and we are **in** the Spirit. It is also true that the Father is in us; the Son is in us; the Spirit is in us.

We have seen that all through this section of John. **We are one with Christ.** That is why Paul says...

#### **Galatians 2:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, **but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

I am in the Father and the Father is in me. I am in Christ and Christ is in me. I am in the Spirit and the Spirit is in me.

Jesus is praying for unity. In His final days on earth it has been heavy on His mind. All through the gospel of John, we know that the Father and the Son are one. Our Lord says it again and again and again. So He is now praying for a oneness that is like the oneness shared between the Father and the Son.

The Father and the Son are of the same nature, they possess the same life, and the Lord prays for such a union of shared life for all who believe. That is a staggering reality.

Believers are said to be in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit. We don't become God, but we share His life. He imputes (places) His eternal life in us. That is why the Bible says we are a new creation and old things have passed away.

You might say it this way: **"God became joined to man in the person of Jesus Christ so that man could be joined to God in the person of Jesus Christ."** **Let me repeat that again:** **"God became joined to man in the person of Jesus Christ so that man could be joined to God in the person of Jesus Christ."**

Jesus is one with the Father, and we are one with Jesus Christ, so we are one with the Father also. We share His spiritual eternal life.

### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and *that* you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Now, our Lord has a reason for our unity in this life. He tells what that reason is at the end of verse 21.

### **John 17:21b (NASB)**

...so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

If we live the kind of lives that we ought to live consistent with what God has done for us and in us, believe me, the world is going to see a massive transformation. If the world is going to see this internal unity, there is going to be an attraction to the gospel. They will believe that God sent Jesus for our salvation.

We are to be a light to the world.

The good works of Christ's followers are to shine for all to see.

### **Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor do *people* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

There is a similar idea and that is that the presence of light in darkness is something that is unmistakable. The presence of Christians in the world must be like a light in the darkness, not only in the sense that the truth of God's Word brings light to the darkened hearts of sinful man but also in the sense that our good deeds must be evident for all to see. Our deeds should cause those who look on to " **glorify your Father who is in heaven.**"

Jesus prays further in verse.

## **II. ONENESS IN GLORY.**

### **John 17:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one;

What glory is this?

Jesus was both God and man. **As God**, Jesus did **not** receive glory from the Father because He had always possessed glory. But when He became man, He was given glory by the Father.

**John 1:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Hebrews 2:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of His suffering death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

This is the time of His glory. It will start with the crucifixion, be followed by the resurrection, then the ascension, then the exaltation, and then the coronation. It all begins on this night. This is **the** night that has been anticipated throughout all eternity and throughout all time up to this point. This is **the** night that begins a sequence of events that will shape the eternal destiny of all of God's people who will ever live on this earth.

So when Jesus left the glories of heaven to live among us on a sinful earth, He also became man. **He was both God and man.** When He accomplished all that the Father sent Him to do, God gave Him glory. And as our scripture says, Jesus turned around and gave the glory to us. This is not because we deserved it, but because He provided it by taking on our sins on the cross and imputed His righteousness upon us. He made us as if we had never sinned and restored our relationship with the Father. Now we will no longer fear a second death. We will be able to stand before God on Judgment Day and He will not use our sins against us because Jesus took them on upon the cross. He will only see Christ's righteousness that was imputed to us. We will be reflecting Christ's glory.

And even when we are in heaven and are radiating His glory and are as all glorious as we can possibly be, we will still only **reflect** that glory. We will turn and return that glory back to the only one Who deserves all the glory, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **III. ONENESS IN LOVE.**

**John 17:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> **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 You loved them, just as You loved Me.**

Give them salvation in all its fullness. Give them a common shared life with You and Me so the world will know that You loved them, even as You have loved Me."

Do you understand salvation is all about divine love? It is all about love. Behind all this work of salvation, behind this prayer for unity, behind the prayer for glory is love. All these promises from chapters 13 to 16 are because of love. All this praying and intercession is because we are loved. The Father loves us as He loves the Son.

So how does He love the Son?

He loves the Son intimately and eternally. He says, “**This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.**” And He loves us the same because He resides within us.

We **try** to live a perfect life. We want to glorify God in everything that we do and say. But we always fall short of pure perfection. The Father is offended by our sins. He was also offended with His Son when our sins were placed on Him. God is angry over our sins, but He placed His anger on His Son in our place.

Here is the good news; His anger is over. Love has replaced His anger. His anger was brief. But His love is forever. His anger lasted about **three hours** during the darkness when Jesus was on the cross. His love for us will last for **eternity**.

### **Romans 8:38-39 (NASB)**

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the **love** of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He loves us just as He loves His Son. He loves the Son because the Son is one with Him; and He loves us because we are in the Son. We are one with Him. He loves us as sons. We become joint heirs with Christ.

So what should be your response?

“**We love Him because He first loved us.**”

We are also told that if we love Him, we must keep His commandments.

### **1 John 5:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and follow His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;

And what is the greatest commandment?

### **Mark 12:28-31 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came up and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

On the very day that the perfect and sinless Son of God would suffer the full fury of His Father’s anger for all of our sins that were placed on Him, He can only feel how much He loves each of us as He suffers for us. **That is love to the max!**

### **John 17:23b (NASB)**

**23 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 You loved them, just as You loved Me.**

When Christians are united in Christ, the world sees two things clearly: **Jesus was sent by the Father**, and **Jesus loves His church**.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Many people believe that when they die, that will be the end of their existence. So they believe that they should enjoy life in its fullness by doing whatever gives them pleasure. But the scriptures give us a different picture concerning life. It tells us that we are not on earth strictly by chance. We were created by God and there is a life after death. It is an eternal life that will never end. In order to have a "oneness" we must have a common set of instructions to understand and follow. Jesus came to this world to seek and save the lost and to instruct us concerning the ways of God.

I would like to challenge you this morning. How certain are you that you are on this earth by pure coincidence?

How did you and everything around you become so perfect: the trees, the animals, all the necessary components on this earth that supports our life, the DNA in our bodies that makes you you.? **What are the odds?**

How certain are you, based upon your own experience, that your existence ends at death? Does your soul or spirit within you only exist while your brain is active and dissipate at death? Do you think it might be possible for it to continue to exist after you die?

The Bible says it will. So I ask you...what if the Bible is true?

**What if there IS a God Who created us. What if there IS life after death? What if there IS an eternal life waiting for us when we die?**

If you were to die and discover that the Bible was correct and there is eternal life after death, what do you think you would be willing to give to be able to have the chance to relive part of your time on earth in order to get right with God?

Listen to a parable that Jesus used while He was on the earth.

### **Luke 12:16-21 (NASB)**

**16** And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. **17** And he began thinking to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' **18** And he said, 'This *is what* I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and I will store all my grain and my goods there. **19** And I will say to myself, "You have many goods stored up for many years *to come*; relax, eat, drink, *and enjoy yourself!*" **20** But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is demanded of you; and *as for all* that you have prepared, who will own *it now*?' **21** Such is the one who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich in relation to God."

**What if the Bible is correct? Is it not worth checking it out? Eternity compared to our short life on earth is a very very long time. It will never end.**

**Family of God.**