

Jesus Prays for Us: Unity
John 17:20-26
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Jesus prays for a unity in the church so mind-boggling that the world is forced to take note of him. He prays for a harmony so deep and genuine that, unlike the generals in Myanmar, church leaders ought, without fear of shame at the exposure, open their doors to the scrutiny of anyone.

I) What is the unity like for which Jesus prays?

A unity like that which exists between the Father and the Son

A) *John 17:20-21, 22B, 26B*

...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may be in us.

Not a unity that we can create, nor one that arises from similar interests or personalities
Rather, an organic unity that arises from being “in” the Father and the Son—of being caught up into the life of the Trinity.

B) What is Trinitarian love like?

A “God’s-glory-first” kind of love, in which each Person works for the glory of the others

1) The love of the Son for the Father:

v. 25: ...I made known your name, and I will continue to make it known

2) The love of the Father for the Son:

v. 24: ...to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

God’s-glory-first means devotion to breaking down the deep misunderstandings about who God really is and uncovering the truth.

C) Meaning for unity in the church

Unity arises indirectly, as we discover, revel in, and share the truth about God

II) How can we work towards the unity for which Jesus prays?

A) The historical answer to Jesus’ prayer for unity provides the key

v. 20: I do not pray for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one...

The first church: feisty, enthusiastic, largely ignorant.

And yet, they produced a book

B) The wonder and value of the book

C) Finding our unity in the book

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Why is social harmony so important to people?
- 2) What in your experience has stood in the way of harmony in the church?
- 3) Reflect on the following statement: “The unity for which Jesus prays is mind-boggling because it is not a unity that we ourselves could ever create. It is not a unity that arises from common interests or similar backgrounds. It arises, instead, from being caught up by the Holy Spirit into the dynamic, the priorities, the love, the mission and the longings of God himself.” Does the sort of unity described here attract you? Does it confuse you? Why?
- 4) The Father and the Son are deeply committed to each other’s glory—that is, to the revealing of what each is truly like. How do you react to God’s commitment to “God’s-glory-first”? Does it make sense? Is it off-putting? If so, why?
- 5) Reflect on the following: “Unity arises and deepens among us when we discover, are blown away by, and promote together the wonderful things about the God who has shown himself to us in Jesus.”
- 6) How is the New Testament an answer to Jesus’ prayer for the unity of the early church? How is it an answer to his prayer for our unity?
- 7) Discuss together stories in which the study of the New Testament has increased Christian unity in your experience.
- 8) Discuss ways in which the study of the New Testament decreased Christian unity in your experience. What happened? Why did things go wrong?