

SERMON FOR JUNE 2, 2019

TEXT: JOHN 17:20-26

THEME: THE HEART OF JESUS

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ 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 have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ 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 loved me. ²⁴ 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 loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ 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.”

In the name of Jesus:

The text before us is the last part of the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ before He headed to Calvary to be crucified. After teaching His disciples many things about Himself, the world, and what was to happen in the coming days, Jesus headed out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. We know one of the things that Jesus asked for on that night, when He prayed: “Father, if it is possible let the cup pass before Me, but not My will but Your will be done.” One of the last things that Jesus did here on earth was to pray. And so we have this great prayer of Jesus, in John 17, and the concluding words to this prayer where we see what

really was on Jesus' heart and mind. It has been said that you can learn a lot about a person by listening in on His prayers, and so we learn a lot about Jesus, and His heart, and His desires, in this prayer called the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus.

It is called the High Priestly prayer because like the Great High Priest, Jesus intercedes for us. In steps in our place and takes our place, in life, in death, in resurrection, and in prayer. Consider this, in the hours leading up to Jesus' death, He just wasn't thinking about what He was going to suffer, He wasn't just thinking and praying about His upcoming crucifixion, He was, that is why the Scripture says that He was in such great anguish that He sweated drops of blood. Jesus also was thinking and praying about you and for you! Two thousand years before you were born, Jesus was praying for you! Just listen to His words: ²⁰“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,” that is to say, Jesus is praying for you and me and for all believers who believe in Jesus through their word. Whose word is that? The word of the apostles, and we have the words of the apostles and evangelists today, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the letters of the apostle Paul, indeed the entire New Testament is an eyewitness account of what Jesus did in His life, death, resurrection,

and ascension into heaven, recording not only what Jesus did but also the work of His Spirit in the lives of the believers. Jesus is praying for you, one who believes in Him, because of what you have heard and read in the Bible.

Now what is He praying for? He is praying: “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 have sent me.” Here Jesus is praying for all who would believe in Him because of what the Bible says about Jesus. He was praying for you, for me, for your kids, your grandchildren, your friends and relatives who believe in Jesus. He was praying for the Christian church, this congregation, and all congregations, the “Holy Christian and Apostolic Church.” And note what Jesus asks the Father, Jesus prays that: “all believers may be one as He and the Father are one. Jesus prays that there would be such a unity of God’s people that the world might come to know and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in how the Christian Church lives out its faith in Christ in a living witness to the world. Jesus prays that the world might believe that God sent Jesus to be mankind’s Savior from sin, Satan, and death. Jesus doesn’t pray for the world directly, He prays that the

world will come to know and believe in Him through the unity of the Church's witness to the world.

Boy, do we need Jesus' prayer, especially now! Because it certainly doesn't look like the Christian Church is united. More and more churches are sprouting up on the scene, in an effort to meet the needs of a people in America who are more interested in being consumers of the faith instead of followers of Jesus. Church attendance in America has been on the decline. The excuses are many. Some leave because they said that they really didn't get anything out of church. It is popular for some today to church shop, hopping from congregation to congregation in an attempt to have their felt needs met, treating the local congregation as if it is a religious shoe store, they try on the church and if it makes them feel uncomfortable, then they look for another church, a bigger church that can offer more variety.

The Christian Church today in America is fragmented, and there is a disturbing lack of unity in the local congregation as well. At times there is a lack of concern for other members of our church, if we even know the other person's name sitting across from us in the pew at all! And to make matters worse, members can't even agree as to what the whole purpose of the church is, some say we should take care of our

own. Some in the church treat the congregation like a country club, attending or getting involved only if they “feel like it” or if they involvement will benefit them in some manner.

It is striking to hear Jesus, in His own words, pray for the Church and this congregation. He in His prayer reveals the true nature, the mission, and the reason why the Church and local congregation even exists. Listen in on Jesus’ prayer as He prays: “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 have sent me.”

God sent Jesus to bring us back to the Father. The Bible says that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Each of us are separated from God and we at times live lives separated from God, not loving God above all and not showing love to others the way God demands. We tend to think of ourselves first, putting God and the needs of others off to the side. But it is for this very purpose that Christ came, to bring us back to God, for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus desires that His Church be united with Him and in Him that is why He came down from heaven, enduring the cross, being forsaken of God, damned for the sins of the world, your sins, my sins,

and the sins of others. Our sins separate us from God, so Christ became sin for us, not knowing any sin, by becoming the payment for all of our sins. The mission and purpose of Jesus was to bring unity to God and His creation, taking on our sin and punishment, so that by faith in Jesus we would be united with God.

You are united with Christ in Baptism. Baptized in the name of Jesus, Christ now has taken residence in your heart and life by the power of His Holy Spirit. You no longer live for yourself; you have been purchased, won from the power of sin, the Devil, and death, by the precious blood of Jesus shed on the cross for you. He comes to you today to forgive you, in Word, and in the Supper, to strengthen and give you new life by His name.

You don't belong to yourself, you belong to God. You are united to Him in Baptism so that you can now live your life for Him. This is the very thing that Jesus was praying about. Praying, requesting God to help, asking God to tap into His supernatural power to enable you to live a changed life. The things recorded in Scripture were written so that you might believe in Jesus and by believing in Him would have life by His name.

Jesus prayed for you, that you might have faith in Him. And you do! All for the purpose of living your life in the Body of Christ so that the world would know and believe in God the Father who sent His Son Jesus into the world, not to condemn the world, but to save it through Him. So now, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed” by the living Lord Jesus Christ, for this is the prayer and the heart of Jesus, that the world might know Christ, and that by believing in Him may have life in His name. Amen