

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Fully Alive

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TITLE

Jesus' Passionate Appeal

SCRIPTURE

John 17:1-26



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It is great to see you. I want to ask you to turn with me to John Chapter 17, if you brought with you a bible. If you didn't, there should be one near you, and if you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. We would love you to have that, but it is really, really good to see you. When I woke up this morning at 4:30, I asked the Lord, I said, "I wonder if I'm going to see anybody today," because with the whole time change and then snow, I can report there's no more bread or milk in Raleigh, and so hopefully, you have something else to eat today but it is great to see you. It is a beautiful sight isn't it, to see snow? I always love it because I just love all of the metaphors in the bible of snow.

One of his sovereignty to actually command that it fall in certain places but then also that metaphor where he says that for we who are so sinful and stained in our sin, that he makes us through Jesus Christ as white as snow. It's not probably going to be that really pretty snow that piles up on the grass to where everything is just really blazing white and yet it is just a great reminder of his grace in our life.

Welcome. We're really glad you're here. If you're in this room or in the amphitheater, there may be more than a few at home, so welcome. We're really glad that you're here with us as well, so if you will just bow. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, your word is true and we believe that it is, so we pray that as we read John 17, and as we seek to understand it, that you would do that miracle in our hearts to help us to believe. God, I pray that you would rescue us even from this time from being so distracted that we would fail to receive and to keep that which you really know we need, so word in a text that has so many different parts to it, and in a message that even has four different points, I pray that you would help us, Lord, to center in on your glory in each one of them. God, would you help us just to adore you today as we gather? We're so thankful for the family of faith here at Providence and to open up the bible together and to give, so would you help us to believe, help us to understand and as we walk out these doors, would you give us courage to put this into practice? We're grateful, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, last week, in fact it was most noticeable in this service, that halfway through the sermon, I sort of paused and I said, "Now I want to share with you one of my pastoral failures." It's really interesting to see just the human response. I don't know if you were sleeping or probably you were just taking just absolute amazing notes and so everyone's head was down and all of a sudden, in unison, it was like a choir standing. Everybody looked up and I think it was more than our love to watch a trainwreck, which is a sad thing for us is that we have a hard time looking away from things that are tragic as well as things that are beautiful.

It's interesting how over the years, that what people tell me of what they remember of the messages, you see I spend more than a few hours each week thinking through the very best way to say in particular the doctrine and I spend the least amount of time thinking about the most particular way to talk to you about my own weaknesses, and yet that kind of comes out and it's amazing that weeks and months and years after sermon, really the only thing anyone remembers are the stories that are told that hang the truth so that we can recall that truth or when the person up here is being vulnerable because it's so rare.

In our culture, not just our culture but even in this room, every single one of us, whether we like to admit it or not, we're just broken. We walk in that between these doors and we sit in these seats as if we're not, and so when somebody stands up and they say, "Well this is how I've messed up.", it's really interesting to see the human reaction to that transparency because what you're really saying when you raise your head is, "You too?"

It's something that we all know that we're all weak. There's something about being transparent I think that draws us together. It invites and allows us to be the broken people that we are and yet encourages us because of the grace of God not to be committed to stay broken, and so if you're broken here, you're in a good place because we're all more broken than you can imagine.

The bible in your hand is the most transparent book that's ever been written. If you think about things that are memorable in sermons and it's normally things that are transparent and really personal. What's amazing is the book in your hand, you're not going to find anything more transparent and personal than that book. If you think about it, every single page in that book, God is meeting people right where they're at, and this may have never crossed your mind as an American that loves privacy, that protects privacy and votes for privacy, but the bible invites us into the most private and sinful and fearful, hopeful, joyful, vulnerable moments of other people's lives without ever asking for their permission.

David never got asked if he really wanted his story to be put in the bible. Neither did Ahab or Peter or John, yet they're here and they're here for us. I think the main reason why it's so vulnerable and it's so transparent for us is one is the book, it really unveils who he is but it also advises us to be real, because we just know that if God can do miracles in people like this and we look like people in this book, then he can do those same miracles in our life.

John Chapter 17 is one of those really amazing passages where this moment in somebody's life, where he's really vulnerable and it just so happens to be your creator, the son of God. It really is an amazing little chapter. I say little, there's 26 verses and because we're really trying to get to John Chapter 20 when Jesus rises from the dead on Easter, I need to preach all 26 verses today, okay? We are on a committed pace, you can say it that way, right? Jesus is now just literally just a few hours from the cross. He's about to be falsely condemned. He's going to be accused. He's going to be beaten. He's going to be flogged and be put on a cross, and right before this all takes place, he says, he raises up his eyes to heaven and he begins to pray to God.

There's nothing more vulnerable to who you really are, your fears, your passions, your compassions at what you pray about. We get to see, this is an amazing thing because John Chapter 17 used 26 verses. It's the longest section in the entire bible where one member of the trinity is speaking to another member of the trinity and it's recorded. There's nothing like this in the whole book, John Chapter 17. What's amazing is no matter how vulnerable and real it is, John, the author, who was standing right next to Jesus and who heard the entire prayer, he records it down so that you and I can read it.

It's an amazing gift, so let's read it together. It says, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, that the son may glorify you. Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him, and this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do, and now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were and you gave them to me and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you, for I have now given them the words that you gave me and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I'm not praying for the world but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours and yours are mine and I am glorified in them.

I am no longer in the world but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except for the son of destruction, which is Judas. That the scripture might be fulfilled, but now, I am coming to you and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 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. The glory that 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 loved me.

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 love me, before the foundation of the world. Oh righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name and will continue to make it known that the love which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.”

Now, I don't know how many times this week I've read this chapter over and over and over and over again. There's a whole lot that we can't talk about in John Chapter 17. What I want to do is limit my words to I see as four dominant prayer requests that Jesus makes, and because he's interceding for us today, I believe he's still making. You see, the bible tells us in Romans 8:34 that Jesus Christ is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who is interceding for us. This is great news, Providence. It doesn't matter where you're at in life, no matter how challenging your circumstances are and you think nobody in the world knows how hard my life is right now, that's simply not true because Jesus sees. He knows. He cares and he's praying for you.

It's an amazing thing, and what this passage does in John Chapter 17 is it gives us some clarity into what he's asking on our behalf. Think to understand that you have to see verse 20, okay? From verses 1 through 5, it looks like he's praying for himself. Indeed he is, he's saying, "God, I'm asking this that you glorify me that I can glorify you." Then from verse 6 to 19, he's praying for the 11 men who were listening to him pray. He's saying, "These guys whom you know, whom you gave to me and they now believe in me, they believe that I came from you.", and then he has some very specific things that he's praying for them, then you get down to verse 20 and what it says there is this. He says, "Now these guys are going to be faithful. They're going to go and take this gospel out into the world and there's going to be a bunch of other people that believe."

He's praying for us in verse 20, that throughout the generations, as people continue to share the gospel one after the next after the next after the next, that these people will also. He says in verse 20, he says, "I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word." In other words, I believe that the things that Jesus prayed specifically and first for those 11 remaining disciples also apply to things that he's now praying for us for every generation of believer since. In other words, Jesus may be praying about many, many more things than these four, but he's not praying for less, for you and for me. The first thing is this, is that Jesus is praying that God be glorified.

He understands and I understand when he says God here, it means that he and his father, the trinity and the spirit, that the trinity would be glorified. The last thing he said in Chapter 16. He says, "I've overcome the world.", then all of a sudden, Jesus does something that we don't do very often. It says that he lifted up his eyes to heaven and he began praying. Just a minute ago, I asked you to pray, and instead of lifting up your eyes to heaven, you dropped your eyes to your feet. Why is that? I have no idea. That's just interesting to me. It's probably you were taught that way.

That's just what we do. We also know that there's various parables and stories in the New Testament to where the one that was justified before God was one that was so remorseful for their sin, they were contrite, and so this picture of bowing our head is almost like bowing our hearts, bowing our knees. We're saying you're God, I'm not. I'm lower than you.

What's interesting for Jesus, this is his father. Now if you have a father and he ever played sports and you did something good or if you did something in a band or dancer, whatever it is you did and you did it as well as you possibly could, it's interesting that our natural response, is it not to look up, "Where's mom and dad? Are they seeing me succeed?" My boys did this every time they score a goal, whatever. Often they'd look up. Is dad watching? They don't put their head down. They look up. Where's dad? This is exactly what he's doing. I think it speaks of his confidence, that he knows his father is really pleased with him.

This is the same posture we see in John Chapter 11 where he gets to the tomb of Lazarus. It says he raised up his head, his eyes to heaven. It's the same thing we see in Psalm 123 Verse 1. It says, "I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven." There's this constant refrain of God, you're there and I'm going to acknowledge that you're there. It's an interesting thing and it's probably going to give you a little angst when I say here in about 30 minutes, hey let's pray together, head up, down, I don't know. I'll shut my eyes. You do what feels right, okay?

With the confidence of a son looking up to his proud father, Jesus starts his prayer and he says the hour has come. Up until this, every time is it's not the hour. The hour has not come but now the hour's come. In other words, what he's saying is, "Father, that pre-determined hour that you and I promised long ago, it's now. It's time for me to go to the cross." Then his first petition is this. He says, "Since that's the case, Father would you glorify the son, that I can glorify you?"

It's a fascinating exchange. Father, lift me up so that I can lift you up. The word glorify can also be translated magnified. When we take things that are far away or really small, we magnify them. It allows us to see what's small or what's distant, right? I believe this is exactly what's happening here. You think about small things in the world. This is something that's small. There's a little shot I want to show you. What do you think this is? It's sand. You go to the beach and you get wet. You got sand on you, and you just flick it off. You kick the sand. You step on the sand. You don't care about the sand because the sand is the sand, and yet, look how amazing it is. It's intricate. It's beautiful. It's designed. It's creative. Every single piece has uniqueness, and yet we don't see it as such and so we treat it as inconsequential, and there's a bunch of it. It's just there.

When Jesus is saying, "Father, would you lift me up?," when he's saying, "God, would you lift me up so that people who think that you're small or think that you're inconsequential, that they'll see you and they'll see your glory and see your power and they'll see everything about who you are and who I am and they'll then honor you and they will honor me."

It's interesting that God has placed so many signs on the earth in order to point our attention. He lit up arrows to say, "Look there, look there, look there." Just this week, I had my eyes checked. I'm not sure if it was yesterday or Friday and it was interesting that my doctor, he said, "I'm going to put this draw pen, it's going to be really bright. I'm going to look at the back of your eyeball." I love to go to the doctor, no I don't like going to the doctor but when I'm there, I like to ask questions about the body because it's so amazing what God created and I said, "You mean you can look at the back of my eyeball?"

He goes, you know what's interesting, this just came out of him. I didn't ask him about this. He goes, "You know what's interesting? Because there was a time I didn't believe in God and now I went to school and I learned about the eyeball and I said there's no way that there's no God." An eyeball, if you really paid attention to it, if you go home and you study the eyeball, what it can do, it's the most remarkable uninventable camera in the world. It demands a designer. There's signposts everywhere and I want you to notice what Jesus says. It's the central, it's the pinnacle focus point of his glory on the earth, for him to be glorified. He says since you have given me authority to give eternal life to all whom you have given.

In other words, there's a lot of things in the world that point to his glory and his grace but the most concentrated display of his glory is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brings eternal life to those who have believed. Think about that for a second. All the beautiful amazing things and Jesus says, a few hours before he's about to die, if you want to see God magnified in your life, look at what I'm going to do and provide for people through my death and resurrection. It's a remarkable thing. You may be here and you may not care about his death and resurrection. You may be here and say, "I'm just learning. Someone dragged me here." We just want you to know that your sins can be forgiven, that you can actually know God, your creator.

He goes on, I want you to see what it says in verse 5, verse 5 and then verse 24, they're like book ends. In verse 5 he says, "Now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.", and then look what he says in verse 24. He says, "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 before you loved me, before the foundation of the world."

What he's saying is this, "I'm about to go and do something and at that moment, I'm asking that you would literally restore the glory that was mine before I came to earth and then eventually one day, I'm asking that everyone who comes to faith in me will be able to not only see but be able to enjoy my glory that existed before I created anything, that they would love me as you Father loved me." It's a remarkable thing, because this same John, he gets persecuted for his faith. He gets thrown out on to an island and when he's on an island, he has a vision, a revelation. He wrote it down and in Chapter 1 of that book that John, the same author wrote, he said this. He says he has a vision and he sees the glorified Christ, Jesus Christ and he says that, "His face was like the sun shining in all of its brilliance."

I don't know about you but the sun, it's a remarkable thing because there is points to where you can see the sun and look directly at it, in particular when it's just starting to rise and it's not going to burn your eye, but if you continue to look when it rises to actually receive all of its glory and all of its brilliance, you simply can't internalize it. It's too much. Jesus it says, he goes, "Father I'm asking that you would restore my glory that I set aside to take on this earth suit called a body and I'm asking that everyone who trusts me will be able to enjoy that glory, the glory that looks like the sun in its full strength." Now, who can look upon the sun in its full strength and enjoy it? The answer is the Father.

Matthew 17, remember, Jesus walks up a mountain. He's transfigured and it says that his face shone like the sun. When everyone else is paralyzed with fear and not knowing what to do, there's a voice from heaven and it's God the Father and he says, "This is my son." He says what, with him, I'm what? "Well pleased." In other words, I don't look upon him and my eyes are blistered. I look upon him and my eyes are pleased. What he's saying here is this, one day your eyes will too, if for those of us who trust Jesus, he's going to give us the capacity to look upon the glory of the son of God and instead of being blistered, we will be enthralled forever, forever, so if Jesus is praying that God be glorified, primarily through redemption, then the application is this, let's glorify Jesus by making much of redemption.

If he's praying for it and if the peak of his glory is the cross, then let's give ourselves to remembering the cross and singing about the cross and sharing the cross. Let me ask you this little question that I've asked myself several times this week. Could my previous week or could your previous week, the last six days since we've gathered, in any way represent an answer to Jesus' prayer? Are we living our life in such a way that we're so enthralled with the glory of the cross that over the last six days, that for somebody who thinks that God is small and inconsequential like a grain of sand, that because of the way we're living, singing and rejoicing and hoping and loving, then they go, "He must be consequential and now I can see him to where he's glorified." Is that happening in our life?

I pray that it is, and if it's not, praise God he's given his mercy today. There's a week ahead of us, right? Let's be praying, let's be seeking to make much of Jesus by making much of what he's done for us in his cross and resurrection.

The second thing I want you to see is that Jesus is praying for our spiritual protection. He says this, as he's preparing to leave to go up to first the cross and then eventually up to heaven, he's led to pray for the protection of everyone who is coming to him, who is believing that he came from God the Father. He's concerned about that because he's leaving them. See, up until this point, everything that has come their way has always come to Jesus. He's been their protector. He's been their defender. Everyday that I leave the house or leave for a night, trip or something like that, instinctively as I'm about to leave, one of the last things that I say to the boys is, "Protect your mom." See, when I'm there, I'm going to stand in front but when I'm not there, I need you to stand in front.

This is exactly what Jesus says. He says, "Father, when I'm here, I'm standing in front of them but I'm about to go, so I'm asking would you stand in front of them? Would you protect them? Would you keep them in your name? Would you keep them close to you? Would you guard and watch over them?" This is exactly what was promised, isn't it? Jesus himself in John Chapter 10, he says, "My sheep follow me and I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand, and my Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

This is amazing news if you really think about it. Jesus says not only am I holding on to you because I'm praying for you. My Father's holding on to you to guard you, to protect you and your faith, so if Jesus is praying this, then let's hold fast to his provisions and rest in his security. You notice there's really two things. First of all, if God the Father is holding you tight, then say thank you to him everyday and rest in his security. I mean aren't you glad that it's not up to you? I am, I'm so grateful that he loves us enough to pray for his Father to keep us, to protect us in this way, but the bible has a lot of different instructions specifically given to us, that he tells us to hold on to even when he tells us that God is holding on to us.

One of them is in Hebrews Chapter 3 Verse 13. Listen to what it says. It goes, "Exhort one another everyday as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." You can also translate the word exhort to encourage. Encourage one another everyday. Have you ever thought about how we use that word? When you've done with the launch, and that was really encouraging, and usually what we mean by that is I feel good. That was positive, right? If you think about what the word actually says though, it means to infuse courage. In other words, when we get together, I go in and I don't feel a lot of courage for the things that God's calling me to do. I don't feel a lot of courage like to do the hard work of repentance or confession or obedience or reconciliation.

There's things that I don't feel like I can do it, right, but what He's saying here is this, is that one of the things that we've been called to hold on to while God the Father is holding on to us is each other, and He says encourage one other. In other words, gather together. This is why we do small groups of providence. This is why we have things called life groups, almost all of the meets on Sunday mornings, there's a lot of groups that meet in people's homes throughout the week. What's the goal of those things? Well, I suppose there's many, but really there's one of the very top and it's this, is that when people go into those groups and at any particular time, they may be really struggling with courage to do what they know they need to do, but when they gather together with other believers, and those believers are reminding them of the promises of God, and all of a sudden they leave that and all of a sudden they have courage to do what they know what they should do, and so I just want to encourage you.

Some of you are living separated from God's provision and I want to encourage you, this sounds like a weird thing, right, because I mean can Jesus pray a prayer that doesn't come to pass? You know I mean, it's Jesus right? Part of what I think he wants to do, I think that the motivation of the heart when we hear what he's praying for is to say, "Well, I want to be the kind of man that my life is an answer to his prayer."

I want to glorify God, and I want to be protected. I want to stay close to him.”, and so let me just ask you, are you taking full advantage of everything that God is giving you in order to stay close to Him? I would just encourage you if you're not, that you turn directions and you run down that path.

The third thing I want you to see is that Jesus is praying that we be set apart for the mission, you see this in verse 15 to 19, thing is fascinating is that, “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one, so God, I'm asking you if you'd protect them from Satan.” You see, Jesus knew that Satan would not sulk in defeat when Jesus rose from the dead. He knew that he would come after his followers by putting temptations in front of them in order to defile our hearts and to sabotage our witness and so Jesus prayed in response, “I'm not asking you to take them out of the world. I'm asking you to sanctify them in the truth.” Sanctify, it means to make holy. Sometimes we think of holy and we say, “that sounds like a bunch of rules.” Holy simply means different, set apart.

If you have like one suit, right, and you wear it at special occasions, you could say your suit is holy. It's set apart for special occasions, and he's saying here is this, “God, would you set them apart for the mission that I have?” You say, is it really for the mission? It is because if you keep reading, he tells us the reason that he tells us to be set apart. He says as I said, I'm sorry, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” In other words, it's for the sake of the mission of telling people about Jesus so the world doesn't see him as inconsequential, is the reason that Jesus wants us to be made holy. In other words, Jesus wants our lives to be as authentic as the gospel.

II Corinthians 5:20 says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” If you think if it was possible to have an accurate picture, an actual picture of the cross of resurrection, you stuck it in a frame and then you put glass over the top of it, right? People can look through that glass and they go, “Wow, what an amazing consequential action in life. What glory, what power, what strength.” The bible says that you and I are the glass that people have to look through in order to see the picture. If you take that glass and you draw on it and you smash it and all of a sudden it gets cracked, and all of a sudden all those little cracks that are there, they're like forming all these lines. You can still see the glory of the picture and yet they have to look through a distraction, and he's saying is simply this, “Father, as they go into the world to proclaim the gospel, would you sanctify them in the truth so that people don't have to look through so much mess in order to see the picture of my glory.”

He's not calling for us to be perfect. He's calling for us to be forgiven. “God, would you help them to grow.” You see, without authentic holiness in our life, our lives even at church become like a masquerade ball where we walk in, “Hey, how are you doing?,” “I'm doing well. I'm really lying to you right now, but I'm really doing well.” It feels fake because it is fake. You see without holiness, our lives become fake or our spiritual activity, it seems plausible but it lacks power and appeal, and if you wonder how significant is this for Jesus, notice what he says in verse 19.

He goes, “For their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.” In other words, what Jesus just said there is this, not only am I consecrating myself in order to save them from sin, but I’m also consecrating myself. I’m going to a cross in order that they would become holy so that other people could see that I went to the cross.

It’s an amazing gift that he’s given us so if this is what Jesus is praying for, then our heart should want to be answer to that prayer so let’s pursue personal holiness. His prayer should be motivational to us and sometimes we look at what it means to be holy, and our mind naturally drifts back to a time in life where we just assume where there’s a long list of stuff I’m supposed to do to be holy. What I want you to see here and this is really, really simple, you’re going to leave here and you think, “Gosh, it can’t be that simple.” but providence it is. There’s only one thing you have to do to become holy, and there’s only one thing that if you don’t do it, no matter what it is you do, you can’t become holy and so what’s that one thing?

You have to admire Jesus. Okay, not, it can’t be that simple. Look what Paul says, II Corinthians 3:18, “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord.” That means seeing. We’re seeing the glory of Jesus. What happens if we do? We’re being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. That’s what holiness is, it’s becoming like Jesus. Godliness is becoming like God in His character, and everyone of us, we become like what we admire. You want to be a great shooter, you’re a little kid, you see Steph Curry, and he’s like look at the drills that he does and it’s natural, our response is to want to emulate what he does. It’s the same thing with Jesus. If you want to become holy in your life, you have to see the holy one and the only way to do that is to open up the bible, which is why it says sanctify them in the truth.

We have to see Jesus in the pages of scripture and when we do, all of a sudden, the natural instinct when you see his glory, “Wait a minute, I don’t look like that.”, and so what that does is just lead us to repent where we want to repent, and all of a sudden, we find something that it really want us to do and we’re like, “Man, I’d love to do that.” All of a sudden, holiness is not a white knuckle project where we just strain all our heart. Holiness is really about loving what we see and wanting to become like it.

The last thing is this that Jesus is praying for our unity. A few verses there from 20 to 23, he says, “That they may all be one just as you father are in me and I’m in you, that they may all be one, so that the world may believe that you’ve sent me.”, and he says in verse 22, “That they may even be one.”, and verse 23, “I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one.” It’s interesting how much God loves unity and then He says why? He says that the church’s unity is the launch pad for its evangelism. This is how He says it. He says, “So that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you love me.” You see providence, unity shows that Christ is the savior who not only transforms diverse people, but harmonizes diverse people, and if Jesus is so passionate to pray for unity, then our lives, not only in our marriages but in our homes, within our siblings and within a church family, that we should long to be exactly what he’s praying for, so let’s pursue unity in the body.

There's been a lot of us who've remarked to me even, how much unity, it's been pleasurable over many years of providence that we've enjoyed as a church family. It really is pretty amazing if you think about all the years of providence and how unified the body has been for most, if not all of it. It's a remarkable thing, but what I want to encourage you is this, never lean on unity. You never lean on unity. You enjoy it, but you don't lean on it and this is why. You see if you have \$500 in the bank and you go to a store, and there's something that's \$200, you can lean on that \$500 by writing a check because you know that it's there. Why you can't do that with unity is because we never really know what's left in the bank after our sin and unpredictability have made their hidden withdrawals. How unified is providence today? Really unified? How do you quantify that? If you constantly lean on it, then what happens is you presume upon it.

You see just like a garden, unity, it doesn't survive on the memory of one great big rainstorm. It survives and grows on daily rations of water, and so instead of leaning on unity as a body, let's lean on what creates unity in the body. This is the last slide that I want to show you. This is from Ephesians. This is what it says. "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called." I'll just pause, it says I want you to do four things and each of these things are called participles. I don't know for a lot of you, you got a bunch of college students over here, but probably not a lot of majors in english, are like participles, what a participle is, okay? The easiest way to think of a participle is it helps you get the verb done, okay.

He gives four them, with all humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with them, with each other and then here's the verb, be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. That's what he's after and then to reinforce it, this is what he says, "For look, there's one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Now why does He talk about all these things that are one? One body, one spirit, one, one, one, one, one. What he's saying is this. If you want to glorify God who's one, you can't be two. You cannot be divided and expect to glorify him. You cannot be two and expect to show him he's consequential to life and relationships.

What he tells us to do is don't lean on the verb, right. Be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit. What he says is, "If you'll be faithful to pursue humility with one another and gentleness with one another and patience with one another and you buried each other in love with one another, then unity will be developed." They're like seeds you put in the ground and you harvest unity. Providence, let's not lean on our unity. Let's enjoy it. Let's lean on what creates unity, okay? Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, you've been good to us. We're grateful for your love for us and as we sign to you and as we give, we do these things because you're worthy of it. I pray Father that you would take these truths and you ingrain them deep within our heart. I pray Father that perhaps if one of the areas of what you're praying for is something that we're lacking in, that you would help us to repent and to see you as glorious and powerful overall. We love you. We're grateful and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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