

“Make Us One”

TEXT: John 17.20-26

THEME: Jesus prays for the spiritual unity we will share with Him & the Father

INTRODUCTION — Few years back, Barna took poll

- that poll showed very little sociological difference between Xns & non-Xns
- in surveying Xn parents: 4 of 10 say good education their main goal
- said nothing else about faith
- characteristics these Xn parents wanted most in their children:
 - patience 36%
 - being understanding: 22%
 - good communication skills: 17%
- not bad, but is there trouble on the horizon, or perhaps here already?
 - only 4% desired their children to be a praying person
 - having integrity or good character only garnered 1%
- in testing the process used by Xn parents to raise godly children, Barna found no difference in the approach used by non-Xn homes
- some good news: Xn parents 2x as likely to teach moral absolutes
- bad news: less than 60% of Xn parents surveyed believed there were moral absolutes!

Why bring this up with the passage before us?

- Jesus has just prayed that His followers be sanctified
- set apart in the truth of God’s Word
- He’s stated clearly in His prayer before His Heavenly Father that God’s Word is truth!
- we must know this truth if we wish to be made holy
- we must be saturating our self with this truth if we claim to be Xns or our claim means nothing
- and now Our Lord goes on to pray even more specifically for all who will believe in Him because of the words of His immediate disciples

He prays for us

- He asks that we would believe the word, which is truth, and in so doing, believe in Him
- and now he prays that in this faith we would all be one
- before we go any further, it’s important, no, absolutely necessary that we understand
- what Jesus says here is God’s very word to you and to me
- no matter what we have been taught about Xn unity, it must come back to God’s Word
- no matter what convictions you have about this oneness of all Xns, it matters nothing if it hasn’t come from God’s Word
- if we want to make a difference in this world, we must stand upon the truth: God’s Word
- if we want to have our homes be different from those of the world, we must stand on Bible
- of course, if this isn’t our desire, then we can go on believing whatever we want
- we can pay lip service to the truth of the Bible but never use it, never let it use us
- but then we’d show our true nature: unconverted, unsanctified and lost in our sins

So, it’s vital we stand on truth

- God’s Word is truth; may He use it to set us apart, clearly apart, from the world
- now, let’s use this Word to see what Jesus prays when He prays that we all be one

I. WHAT KIND OF UNITY?

- it will serve us well to know the nature of the unity that Jesus prays about
- note carefully what the Word says
- I ask you to let the Spirit work these words into your hearts so you'll be made different by it
- this is not an external unity Jesus prays for
- this is not an organizational unity being lifted up to God the Father by the Son
- no, He's talking about something internal, something spiritual, something wonderful

1. Unity in the Trinity

- Jesus tells us clearly the unity He wants for us is like that which exists in God, Son, & Spirit
- even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us
- this is almost beyond us to even think about, let alone, comprehend
- there is a unity between Father, Son & Spirit; the Great Three in One
- they are three Persons, yet they are also One
- they are not three gods, but one God, one true & living God
- as hard as it may be to get our minds around this, we see Jesus praying that you and I will have this kind of oneness: inseparable, inscrutable, and marvelous

2. Unity in the Son

- Jesus Christ has two natures: He is fully God and fully human
- this was not always so: before He entered this world, He was simply fully God
- but now we see Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God, perfectly God and yet, also fully Man, perfectly Man
- these two natures were together in perfect unity in this One Person of Jesus
- they weren't melded together, they weren't mixed up together; they are distinct yet united
- it is this kind of unity that Jesus is praying about; He wants us to have this kind of wonderful unity: united together, separate but together

3. Unity "in Christ"

- that they may be in Us; I in them and You in Me
- Jesus had spent quite some time talking and teaching them about this in ch. 14-16
- He tells His disciples: "I'm going to leave you, but it's good that I do because then I'll be able to dwell within You thru the Holy Spirit"
- this is the glorious truth the apostle Paul spoke of more than any other: Christ in me
- Col 1.27—Christ in you, the hope of glory
- Gal. 2.20—Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God
- Christ dwells in each one who has believed on His name and received Him into their life
- this indwelling unity is what He prays for and it will be answered

4. Unity with one another

- one other phrase Jesus uses as well as Paul is that we'd have unity among ourselves
- know this full well: Jesus & Paul have the very same message
- they do not contradict each other
- Paul only speaks what Jesus Christ taught Him...
- in those "quiet years" before his own ministry
- so now, Jesus prays at end of v. 22: they may be one, just as we are one
- now note carefully, this unity is based upon the other three; it's internal, not external
- it's not about organizational unity, but spiritual unity among Xns

- He prays that we would have this unity & something else very special
- He doesn't pray we'd figure it out or try to produce it
- He tells us it is like a gift, given to us
- that means this unity already exists as soon as we believe
- and He prays that it will be preserved

II. HOW DO WE GET THIS UNITY?

- quickly, let's see the conditions in getting this kind of unity
- Jesus has begun this portion of His prayer in v. 20:
- there we have it: we believe because of the Word, the Word of God about the Living Word
- it is thru this Word that we come to know God
- Romans 10.17: "faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ"
- there it is: Jesus says, these men You've given Me believe in the Word You've given thru Me
- and the Word will be preached to others and they will believe in You and be joined with Us
- it is this very Word which brings this unity
- it is this very Word which preserves our unity
- it is this Word which teaches us what this unity really is
- so you can see it's way different than just organizational unity
- and it's more than just a group of people saying:
- "We agree to all get along, no matter what"
- this unity is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism
- it is the One Person of God's Son, come to live and die and save us from our sins
- it is believing in that Son, accepting all the truth about Him
- it is being joined in that truth thru baptism; the sign of this unity we have with Him
- it's not about being Baptist or Methodist or Lutheran or Presbyterian
- it's all about this wonderful Lord we have, God's very Son
- there are many who would say: Let's abolish denominations; they've only brought trouble
- but the problem with that, even if we just had one universal church:
- there'd still be those within it that are not truly united with us
- until Jesus returns, there are unbelievers in every church
- they think they are safe because they are in church
- but they are not joined with Christ, the Father, or us

III. WHAT KEEPS US FROM THIS UNITY?

- oh, but we must move on: what keeps us, what hinders this unity?
- 1. Deviation from the Word of God**
 - when we begin to depart from the truth, the truth is not going to sanctify us
 - if we begin to leave out certain parts because they're offensive or too delicate, no unity
 - how can you be united with those who say: Bible is God's book, but leave it alone? Can't
 - 2. Adding to or substituting for Word of God**
 - to do this defeats the basis for fellowship that we have in Christ & His word
 - you cannot change the gospel, add to it or substitute someone else's teaching and have a foundation for fellowship in the unity of the Spirit
 - there so many groups who add to the Word of God:
 - they follow tradition more than Word of God
 - or they exalt the teachings of another man, as in all cults, to the level of Scripture
 - we cannot have unity with such untruth

3. Exalting secondary issues over primary & other matters

- there are certain great doctrines that must never be changed or we lose the gospel
- the Trinity, Bible is Word of God, Jesus is Son, come to die for sins, only way, etc.
- but secondary issues: timing of rapture, whether women should wear headcoverings, etc
- in 17th century, Rupert's Meldenius said,
- in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas
 - In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity

IV. WHY DOES JESUS PRAY FOR THIS UNITY?

- Jesus answers this question for us: v. 21; also in v. 23
- many things to say, but focus on just this one: Jesus prays for unity for a clear reason
- why is this unity important?
- Jesus wants us to be one in Him and perfected in unity w/ each other for a reason
- that may world believe that God the Father has sent God the Son
- it would be too childish if we could just do away with denominational names and think: the world is saved!
- no, the world didn't believe in the Son before there were denominations: why would it now?
- no, our unity in Christ & w/ each other shows world God has done something to us in Christ
- we are the way we are because Jesus is God's Son and He's done something to us
- He's come into the world, He's borne our sins, He's given us a new birth; He's sent His Spirit
- Jesus prays that our unity would show this off to world
- He also prays that our unity would show that the love of God for Jesus is same for us
- do you know this? That right now, if in X, God in heaven loves you like He does His Son?
- our fellowship & unity is to demonstrate this to world around us? Does it?
- can world look at us and say: Wow, they're different. Look how they suffer & yet love God.
 - Look how they're persecuted & yet love God. See how they go thru trouble & hardship & yet love God

CONCLUSION—

- do we have this unity here? If we are in Christ, we do!
- do we realize this truth? Are we being changed by this truth from God's Word?
- this is Christ's prayer for us and it will be answered!
- this is the truth and it will change us as we lay our lives before it and upon it
- we don't need to start changing things organizationally in order to build this unity
- it is here in Christ: we must realize it and teach it and live it out
- it does mean being a pure church, one that is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness