

Oneness

Series: Ten Messages from John 17

Rod Myers

April 10, 2022

There is nothing we have made a greater mess of than oneness in the kingdom of God. Yet, when we have found that sweet spot we have built hospitals, placed Bibles in many parts of the world in the language of the people, transformed villages into sustainable water and agricultural oasis, transformed nations into places where Jesus is known, respected, and served. The breakthroughs into oneness are beautiful, but the scars of division are repulsive and disgusting. The “every effort” admonished by Paul is often partial and weak. The priority of unity among believers has been replaced by tradition, power, greed, and selfishness. Loyalty is the brother of oneness and this too has suffered great harm. The tension between what is best for me and what is best for us has often been too hard to maintain. I think “best for me” is winning.

I am reminded as I have begun reading the four volume set of Carl’s Sandburg’s Abraham Lincoln: The War Years that national unity at that time of our history was only maintained through the loss of 620,000 lives and the assassination of one of our greatest leaders. The forces of evil so hate oneness that hell is unleashed against God’s people on every level: our homes, our businesses, our schools, our local churches, our denominations, and against the kingdom of God itself. Jesus said a house divided cannot stand. Remember the words of Abraham Lincoln:

The Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

*Abraham Lincoln
November 19, 1863*

Here is how Jesus said it in John 17: 20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

- Jesus looked far into the future to see the centuries of converts who would carry the torch of his kingdom and he prayed for them. If he prayed for us then, shouldn't we be praying now as diligently?
- Jesus defines the standard of oneness to be “just as you are in me and I am in you.” We will never be one with each other until we are one with the Father and the Son, experiencing the essence of eternal life. Then, we should be able to get “into one another.”
- Jesus sets unity among God's people as an essential mark for catching the attention of the world in knowing that the Father actually did send Jesus. Unity is tangible evidence of the incarnation.
- Jesus provides shared glory among his people making it possible for us to be one. Jesus, who is the hope of glory, dwells in his people equally and without discrimination or favoritism so that nothing detracts from our unity.
- Jesus says unity among God's people will prove to the world that we are loved by God. A parent's love for each of their children causes the children to love one another. This love in turn points outsiders to the love of the parents.
- Jesus' desire for unity includes each Christian seeing his glory as it existed before the creation of the world—a pure and unadulterated glory produced by God's love for his Son. Jesus' desire for unity also includes the necessity of being with Jesus. The closer his apostles were to him, the closer they were to each other. When Christians focus their conversations, affections, desires, thoughts, and service on Jesus we are drawn together.
- Jesus proclaims the work of unity is to make God known within the world. Unity thrives in an environment of evangelism and discipleship. When we are more focused on bringing many sons to glory we will spend less time focused on the differences among us. Unity will arise out of the inclusion of others into the kingdom.

John 17 is the most important prayer Jesus ever prayed (which is recorded). Jesus packed the prayer with enough truth to preserve his disciples and to insure that his life on earth was not in vain.

Our journey through John 17 included:

Jan.23: The Glorification of the Son

Jan.30: Authority to Give Eternal Life

Feb.6: Eternal Life Is Knowing Jesus and His Father

Feb.13: Revelation

Feb 20: Praying for His Disciples

Mar.6: Protection for His Disciples

Mar.13: Full Measure of Joy

Mar.20: Not of This World

April 3: Sanctification

April 10: Oneness

As I close I want to remind us that Jesus' prayer is an intercessory prayer. On this subject Richard Foster writes: "When we move from petition to intercession we are shifting our center of gravity from our own needs to the needs and concerns of others. Intercessory Prayer is selfless prayer, even self-giving prayer. In the ongoing work of the kingdom of God, nothing is more important than Intercessory Prayer. People today desperately need the help we can give them. Marriages are being shattered. Children are being destroyed. Individuals are living lives of quiet desperation, without purpose or future. And we can make a difference...if we learn to pray on their behalf." P.191, **Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home.**