

John - Jesus' Prayer

John 17:1-26

Grab your Bible and turn to John 17. If you are new around here, we've been going through John's gospel since July last year. We've been in it for a while. We've taken a couple of breaks and we've just taken a significant break over Christmas and New Year, and have just now made it back with a timely finish as we lead up to Easter.

About 12 months ago, when we were thinking through the sermon series, we knew we wanted to do a Gospel and we chose the gospel of John, and we came up with what I thought was a series title "Hello, I am Jesus". But the key thing was that we just wanted to work through John's gospel. John's gospel is a great one to go through for those who have questions and are trying to come to believe. We thought that would be good.

But as we have gone through the series I have come to see how appropriate it is to where our church is at, and the vision and the mission that God is leading us on as a church. It's almost like, without us knowing, God was saying "You need to take some time as a church and get to know Jesus better." God is saying "I don't want you misrepresenting Him, I don't want you to get side tracked in to other stuff." I have enjoyed the series, and if you have missed some of it, go on line and do a bit of a catch up.

So, getting to know Jesus better, I think that's why we've been in John. And now we are looking at John 17.

This is a great passage of Scripture, but I wouldn't say it is an easy passage to get your mind around. This is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer, which sounds very, very formal. But basically all it means is Jesus is our 'High Priest', "God's chief advocate" and He prays for us.

You may remember that in early on in Matthew's gospel, the disciples came up to Jesus and said, "Jesus, would you teach us how to pray?" So Jesus does and He says, "'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'" It's a great prayer and it is only four or five verses long.

But here in John 17, Jesus actually prays. He doesn't just teach us how to pray, He prays. And as He prays, Jesus reveals to us what is important to him what

he values, what is concerning him, and therefore, as we strive to live like Jesus, what our values and what our convictions should be as a church.

This prayer is Jesus' dying desire and He's not praying for the world - He is praying for us, the church. He is saying, "This is what is important to me, and here is why I am going to the cross, and here is what you should be committed to as well."

Chapter 17 starts off saying "After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come."

As it has been a while since we looked at chapter 16, let me give you the context of this. Jesus had been talking with the disciples and this was his last teaching time with them, and so he was trying to cover the important points of his teachings, giving them the hard facts of life as they choose to follow him and so at the end of chapter 16 we read.

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²⁹Then his disciples said, "At last you are speaking plainly and not figuratively. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

³¹Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? ³²But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

As soon as He says that to the disciples, He turns and He begins this prayer to his father. And He lifts up His eyes and He says, "*Father, the hour has come,*" he is saying, "It is time for me to go to the cross. It's time for me to do what you sent me to do. I've been hanging out here on this planet for 33 years and it's time, time for me to go and to give up my life."

This is really interesting to me, as I was thinking about this, because I have been though a very similar thought process, very similar conversations with God – trivial compared to what Jesus was wrestling with, but similar all the same.

For visitors who may not be aware, I finish here in a few weeks, and that has not been an easy decision. I prayed – a lot!! I don't know about you, but for me whenever life gets turned upside down and I'm not certain about what is around the corner, when my circumstances are up in the air, I find it's pretty easy to pray. I find myself praying a whole lot more. I am like, "Dear God, you have to come through because I don't know what is going on here." I pray more fanatically when my circumstances are unclear. When I am not sure what God is doing in my life.

Right here though, when Jesus prays, He knows exactly what is going to happen. He knows exactly the circumstances. And it teaches us this—when we pray we often want God to change things. In fact, we even move beyond asking God. We tell God, "God, change this."

When Jesus prays, He wants to find God in the midst of those things. It is a fundamentally different way to pray. Let's read on.

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ²For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

This is Jesus saying, "God, I am ready." "God, I'm here to do what you've asked me to do. God, I am ready to be the Saviour of the world."

Let's read on.

⁶"I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you.

Who is He praying for? Yes he is praying for his disciples, his mates, but He is also praying for all believers everywhere. He is praying for this church today, you and me. He is saying, "God, this is my dying desire, for those who maybe

have a million reasons not to put their trust in you, but they are going to put their trust in you."

Now He is not saying that He doesn't love the world. He is just saying, "This prayer is for believers. I'll get to the world later, but right now, I'm praying for the church." Right now the church is God's 'plan A' and there is no 'plan B'. The church is where the Spirit of Christ is and he knows we are in kind of a spiritual battle, so he's lifting us up in prayer.

¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

Look at verse 11 when He says, "protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are."

If I was praying for you or for somebody else - what would I pray for someone I loved?" "God, protect them, please keep them safe from harm." "God, please keep them healthy." "God, please keep them provided for." Those are not bad things to pray at all. It's just not what Jesus prays here.

What does Jesus say, especially in connection with what He said at the end of chapter 16? "*In this world you will have trouble.*" He says, "I'm departing from the world. You are staying in the world. God, keep them *united, united in me.*" That's what He said. He's not saying I'm going to pull you up out of the trouble. He's not saying that I'm going to give you only peaceful circumstances in your life. What he's praying is that your foundation under your feet will be strong, and you have to stand united in Jesus Christ."

Jesus says, "Keep them in Me, God, because otherwise they're not going to make it. I want them to be unified so that the world may know."

¹³"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe

from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

Look at verse 18,

“Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”

To me this is the central idea for this entire prayer. It’s all built around this one word: *sent*. Jesus, for the remainder of this passage, says this over, and over, and over again. He says, “God, you sent me, now I’m sending you.”

Jesus was a ‘Man on a mission’ and he is passing us the baton .

I don’t know what thoughts, images, or feelings fill your mind when you hear the word ‘mission’? Maybe living in some third world country in a mud hut eating weird food! Or going door to door like Mormons on mission!

Sure this is mission, but don’t confine it to just that. To be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, means to be sent. To be sent to where you live, work, and play. This means that when we conclude this service in a few minutes, you are on mission, note the sign above the door. You are sent. You are being sent to be Jesus to a world that needs to know about him...the church either goes or it dies.

Jesus goes on in verse 20,

²⁰“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

Verse 21, *“I pray that they will all be one.”* Even for the sceptical, there is something undeniable about a group of people who come together, who come from different age groups, life styles, clothing styles, music preference, or whatever. They may look at this group of people and think, “They don’t look like they go together,” and yet they are hanging out with each other. And the world looks at that and says, “I can’t argue with that. I don’t even know what to do with that. I don’t have a category for it. I think this is a huge thing that we have going for us a church. As we wrestle with being a church with people

from cradle to grave and we enjoy hanging out together – don’t lose that characteristic – it’s Christ like.

That’s what Jesus is praying for. He is praying for unity, not uniformity. In other words, He is saying when people look at His church and say, “I don’t understand why those people are grateful all the time? Why are they so excited all the time?” Well, it’s not this pseudo excitement or pseudo joy. It is the Spirit of God within us.

Verse 22,

²²“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

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and righteous here does not mean good or perfect. Righteous means God will do what is right, and He’s always right, and He can be trusted. That is a character of God we need to remind ourselves of.

²⁵“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

That is a long and significant prayer! What does Jesus want us to hear from this? I think it is all established around this word “sent”. As Jesus was sent into the world to rescue us from darkness, to bring in the kingdom of God. He says to us, the church—He’s left us behind for a reason, “Go into the world and show the very nature of Christ and share the gospel message to others.”

I could boil down this prayer that Jesus prays into three simple things as He is speaking to the church.

He says, **“Listen, stay in Me.”** Stay grounded in Jesus. Stay close to Jesus.

The second thing He says to us, the church, He says, **“Be unified”**. You don’t have to agree on everything. In fact, if you did, that would probably be kind of

weird. But, together, keep your eyes focused upon Me. Keep the main thing the main thing.

Then He would say, thirdly, **“Move, get out, go”**. It’s in the Great Commission. Go and make disciples.

Jesus says this to the church. There is this simple thing that we can do to remove barriers that keep people from Jesus. **Stay in Christ, stay unified, and go.**

One of the things I was thinking about as I prepared this message is the impact that Christians have in our community. They say that Tauranga is a bible belt! I don’t know how you define that, but there certainly seems to be a church on every corner and new ones started up on a pretty regular basis. Someone said about 120 church in the wider Tauranga area.

We have churches everywhere, but that doesn’t mean that we have a majority of people who are connected in a relationship with Jesus Christ. There is still at least 80 percent of our city that is disconnected from Jesus.

One of the prayers on my heart, one of the prayers that we’ve been praying as a leadership is, “God, how can we help people outside the church take one step closer to Jesus?”

It’s not about growing our church. It’s not about how many people we can get in here on a Sunday. It’s about being Jesus in the community. We have to go to them and say, “I don’t know what your impression has been of Jesus or Christians. I don’t know what you’ve heard, but here is the real Jesus. I want to be Jesus to you.

Conclusion

So let me give you three things I just want you to chew on, talk about, pray about, maybe discuss in your Small Groups, or with whomever you get together with this next week, or even just do an evaluation of your own heart.

Here they are: **Before God does anything in and through our church He must first do something in us.** Before God will ever do a transformational thing in the life of a church, or in our city, he has to work on individual hearts.

If we forget our experience of God’s grace, and that can sometime happen when we have been Christians for a while, then we cannot possibly share that with others in any sort of authentic way. If we do, it can sound condescending,

it can sound like we’ve achieved something that others cannot possibly achieve. Salvation is not something that we can achieve. It is something that has been given to us by grace, through Jesus Christ.

We go as one beggar to another beggar telling them where to find food. We say, “Just come meet the Jesus that I know.”

Here is the second thing: **God cares more about your availability than your ability.** Understanding our gifts and abilities is important, but not as important as our availability. I think that might be the reason I got the Central job – there may be a number of capable people, but I made myself available.

God simply wants a posture that says, “Here I am! Send me! Work through me!”

Here is the third thing, **how can I help someone take one step closer to Jesus?**

So often when sharing our faith we might think we are in some sort of competition or race and we are looking for success or the win. Often we can feel like a failure if we don’t seal the deal, get them to pray the sinners prayer. If I don’t lead my co-worker to Christ, if I don’t lead my spouse to Christ, if I don’t lead my friend to Christ, then somehow I have failed as a Christian.

How do I put this? Jesus is not asking you to take scalps for Christ. He is simply asking you to lean on your own experience, on the mercy and grace that you’ve been given and just help the person take one step closer to Jesus. That might be by removing an obstacle that the person has between them and God, a misunderstanding, a deep hurt that is preventing them from taking one more step, or just showing that you care and that God cares.

I love hearing people stories of how they became a Christian and who influenced their decision to follow Jesus.

Some of the common things you hear are things like;

- I had a friend, about five years ago, who said this to me.
- I had a grandmother who gave me a bible when I was a kid.”
- I had a boss one time who was a Christian and he prayed for me.”

None of those people sealed the deal, but they all helped in the journey.

Your task as a follower of Jesus is to allow the Spirit of God to continue to transform you, make yourself available and help someone take one step closer to Jesus.

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Chapter 17 starts off saying "After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come."

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Here they are: **Before God does anything in and through our church He must first do something in us.** Before God will ever do a transformational thing in the life of a church, or in our city, he has to work on individual hearts.

If we forget our experience of God’s grace, and that can sometime happen when we have been Christians for a while, then we cannot possibly share that with others in any sort of authentic way. If we do, it can sound condescending,

it can sound like we’ve achieved something that others cannot possibly achieve. Salvation is not something that we can achieve. It is something that has been given to us by grace, through Jesus Christ.

We go as one beggar to another beggar telling them where to find food. We say, “Just come meet the Jesus that I know.”

Here is the second thing: **God cares more about your availability than your ability.** Understanding our gifts and abilities is important, but not as important as our availability. I think that might be the reason I got the Central job – there may be a number of capable people, but I made myself available.

God simply wants a posture that says, “Here I am! Send me! Work through me!”

Here is the third thing, **how can I help someone take one step closer to Jesus?**

So often when sharing our faith we might think we are in some sort of competition or race and we are looking for success or the win. Often we can feel like a failure if we don’t seal the deal, get them to pray the sinners prayer. If I don’t lead my co-worker to Christ, if I don’t lead my spouse to Christ, if I don’t lead my friend to Christ, then somehow I have failed as a Christian.

How do I put this? Jesus is not asking you to take scalps for Christ. He is simply asking you to lean on your own experience, on the mercy and grace that you’ve been given and just help the person take one step closer to Jesus. That might be by removing an obstacle that the person has between them and God, a misunderstanding, a deep hurt that is preventing them from taking one more step, or just showing that you care and that God cares.

I love hearing people stories of how they became a Christian and who influenced their decision to follow Jesus.

Some of the common things you hear are things like;

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Your task as a follower of Jesus is to allow the Spirit of God to continue to transform you, make yourself available and help someone take one step closer to Jesus.

John - Jesus' Prayer

John 17:1-26

Grab your Bible and turn to John 17. If you are new around here, we've been going through John's gospel since July last year. We've been in it for a while. We've taken a couple of breaks and we've just taken a significant break over Christmas and New Year, and have just now made it back with a timely finish as we lead up to Easter.

About 12 months ago, when we were thinking through the sermon series, we knew we wanted to do a Gospel and we chose the gospel of John, and we came up with what I thought was a series title "Hello, I am Jesus". But the key thing was that we just wanted to work through John's gospel. John's gospel is a great one to go through for those who have questions and are trying to come to believe. We thought that would be good.

But as we have gone through the series I have come to see how appropriate it is to where our church is at, and the vision and the mission that God is leading us on as a church. It's almost like, without us knowing, God was saying "You need to take some time as a church and get to know Jesus better." God is saying "I don't want you misrepresenting Him, I don't want you to get side tracked in to other stuff." I have enjoyed the series, and if you have missed some of it, go on line and do a bit of a catch up.

So, getting to know Jesus better, I think that's why we've been in John. And now we are looking at John 17.

This is a great passage of Scripture, but I wouldn't say it is an easy passage to get your mind around. This is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer, which sounds very, very formal. But basically all it means is Jesus is our 'High Priest', "God's chief advocate" and He prays for us.

You may remember that in early on in Matthew's gospel, the disciples came up to Jesus and said, "Jesus, would you teach us how to pray?" So Jesus does and He says, "'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'" It's a great prayer and it is only four or five verses long.

But here in John 17, Jesus actually prays. He doesn't just teach us how to pray, He prays. And as He prays, Jesus reveals to us what is important to him what

he values, what is concerning him, and therefore, as we strive to live like Jesus, what our values and what our convictions should be as a church.

This prayer is Jesus' dying desire and He's not praying for the world - He is praying for us, the church. He is saying, "This is what is important to me, and here is why I am going to the cross, and here is what you should be committed to as well."

Chapter 17 starts off saying "After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come."

As it has been a while since we looked at chapter 16, let me give you the context of this. Jesus had been talking with the disciples and this was his last teaching time with them, and so he was trying to cover the important points of his teachings, giving them the hard facts of life as they choose to follow him and so at the end of chapter 16 we read.

John 16:29-33

²⁹Then his disciples said, "At last you are speaking plainly and not figuratively. ³⁰Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

³¹Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? ³²But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

As soon as He says that to the disciples, He turns and He begins this prayer to his father. And He lifts up His eyes and He says, "*Father, the hour has come,*" he is saying, "It is time for me to go to the cross. It's time for me to do what you sent me to do. I've been hanging out here on this planet for 33 years and it's time, time for me to go and to give up my life."

This is really interesting to me, as I was thinking about this, because I have been though a very similar thought process, very similar conversations with God – trivial compared to what Jesus was wrestling with, but similar all the same.

For visitors who may not be aware, I finish here in a few weeks, and that has not been an easy decision. I prayed – a lot!! I don't know about you, but for me whenever life gets turned upside down and I'm not certain about what is around the corner, when my circumstances are up in the air, I find it's pretty easy to pray. I find myself praying a whole lot more. I am like, "Dear God, you have to come through because I don't know what is going on here." I pray more fanatically when my circumstances are unclear. When I am not sure what God is doing in my life.

Right here though, when Jesus prays, He knows exactly what is going to happen. He knows exactly the circumstances. And it teaches us this—when we pray we often want God to change things. In fact, we even move beyond asking God. We tell God, "God, change this."

When Jesus prays, He wants to find God in the midst of those things. It is a fundamentally different way to pray. Let's read on.

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ²For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

This is Jesus saying, "God, I am ready." "God, I'm here to do what you've asked me to do. God, I am ready to be the Saviour of the world."

Let's read on.

⁶"I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you.

Who is He praying for? Yes he is praying for his disciples, his mates, but He is also praying for all believers everywhere. He is praying for this church today, you and me. He is saying, "God, this is my dying desire, for those who maybe

have a million reasons not to put their trust in you, but they are going to put their trust in you."

Now He is not saying that He doesn't love the world. He is just saying, "This prayer is for believers. I'll get to the world later, but right now, I'm praying for the church." Right now the church is God's 'plan A' and there is no 'plan B'. The church is where the Spirit of Christ is and he knows we are in kind of a spiritual battle, so he's lifting us up in prayer.

¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

Look at verse 11 when He says, "protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are."

If I was praying for you or for somebody else - what would I pray for someone I loved?" "God, protect them, please keep them safe from harm." "God, please keep them healthy." "God, please keep them provided for." Those are not bad things to pray at all. It's just not what Jesus prays here.

What does Jesus say, especially in connection with what He said at the end of chapter 16? "*In this world you will have trouble.*" He says, "I'm departing from the world. You are staying in the world. God, keep them *united, united in me.*" That's what He said. He's not saying I'm going to pull you up out of the trouble. He's not saying that I'm going to give you only peaceful circumstances in your life. What he's praying is that your foundation under your feet will be strong, and you have to stand united in Jesus Christ."

Jesus says, "Keep them in Me, God, because otherwise they're not going to make it. I want them to be unified so that the world may know."

¹³"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe

from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

Look at verse 18,

“Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”

To me this is the central idea for this entire prayer. It’s all built around this one word: *sent*. Jesus, for the remainder of this passage, says this over, and over, and over again. He says, “God, you sent me, now I’m sending you.”

Jesus was a ‘Man on a mission’ and he is passing us the baton .

I don’t know what thoughts, images, or feelings fill your mind when you hear the word ‘mission’? Maybe living in some third world country in a mud hut eating weird food! Or going door to door like Mormons on mission!

Sure this is mission, but don’t confine it to just that. To be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, means to be sent. To be sent to where you live, work, and play. This means that when we conclude this service in a few minutes, you are on mission, note the sign above the door. You are sent. You are being sent to be Jesus to a world that needs to know about him...the church either goes or it dies.

Jesus goes on in verse 20,

²⁰“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

Verse 21, “*I pray that they will all be one.*” Even for the sceptical, there is something undeniable about a group of people who come together, who come from different age groups, life styles, clothing styles, music preference, or whatever. They may look at this group of people and think, “They don’t look like they go together,” and yet they are hanging out with each other. And the world looks at that and says, “I can’t argue with that. I don’t even know what to do with that. I don’t have a category for it. I think this is a huge thing that we have going for us a church. As we wrestle with being a church with people

from cradle to grave and we enjoy hanging out together – don’t lose that characteristic – it’s Christ like.

That’s what Jesus is praying for. He is praying for unity, not uniformity. In other words, He is saying when people look at His church and say, “I don’t understand why those people are grateful all the time? Why are they so excited all the time?” Well, it’s not this pseudo excitement or pseudo joy. It is the Spirit of God within us.

Verse 22,

²²“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵“O righteous Father...

and righteous here does not mean good or perfect. Righteous means God will do what is right, and He’s always right, and He can be trusted. That is a character of God we need to remind ourselves of.

²⁵“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

That is a long and significant prayer! What does Jesus want us to hear from this? I think it is all established around this word “sent”. As Jesus was sent into the world to rescue us from darkness, to bring in the kingdom of God. He says to us, the church—He’s left us behind for a reason, “Go into the world and show the very nature of Christ and share the gospel message to others.”

I could boil down this prayer that Jesus prays into three simple things as He is speaking to the church.

He says, “**Listen, stay in Me.**” Stay grounded in Jesus. Stay close to Jesus.

The second thing He says to us, the church, He says, “**Be unified**”. You don’t have to agree on everything. In fact, if you did, that would probably be kind of

weird. But, together, keep your eyes focused upon Me. Keep the main thing the main thing.

Then He would say, thirdly, **“Move, get out, go”**. It’s in the Great Commission. Go and make disciples.

Jesus says this to the church. There is this simple thing that we can do to remove barriers that keep people from Jesus. **Stay in Christ, stay unified, and go.**

One of the things I was thinking about as I prepared this message is the impact that Christians have in our community. They say that Tauranga is a bible belt! I don’t know how you define that, but there certainly seems to be a church on every corner and new ones started up on a pretty regular basis. Someone said about 120 church in the wider Tauranga area.

We have churches everywhere, but that doesn’t mean that we have a majority of people who are connected in a relationship with Jesus Christ. There is still at least 80 percent of our city that is disconnected from Jesus.

One of the prayers on my heart, one of the prayers that we’ve been praying as a leadership is, “God, how can we help people outside the church take one step closer to Jesus?”

It’s not about growing our church. It’s not about how many people we can get in here on a Sunday. It’s about being Jesus in the community. We have to go to them and say, “I don’t know what your impression has been of Jesus or Christians. I don’t know what you’ve heard, but here is the real Jesus. I want to be Jesus to you.

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