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John 17:20-26

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I really am amazed by Jesus. He's about to die. This is John chapter 17. In John chapter 18 he stands before Pilate and in chapter 19 he dies a slow horrible death and he's knows it's all coming. What's he thinking about? What would you be thinking about? Jesus is about to be tortured and killed and the thing that just keeps coming up is: "I want my followers to get along. I want them to love each other. I don't want there to be any rifts." The dying wish of the Son of God is that we would love one another and the dying prayer of the Son of God is that we would be united, that there would be no rifts between us. And so he prays to Father. Now this is special Son of God. He can ask for anything he wants. If God gave you one thing and you could ask for one thing what would it be? Jesus can ask anything from his Father and what he asks for is this: **"that all of them may be one, Father."** Let them be one, Jesus asks his Father. Let them be united. Let their not be any rifts.

And Jesus goes on, **"that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."** Did you know that the doctrine of the Trinity is VERY practical for our everyday lives? The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God, but there are three persons in that one God. Those persons are distinct and they are in a completely loving relationship. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and the Spirit loves the Father and the Son. And what was God doing before he created the world? The Father and the Son and the Spirit were enjoying each other. Jesus says later in the prayer in verse 24, "you loved me before the creation of the world." God did not make the world because he was bored. The Father the Son and the Spirit were enjoying each other and delighting in each other.

So then why did God make the world? Because the persons of the Trinity said, "This joy that we have in our relationship, others need to experience this joy." And So God created the world and it says God created the sun and it was good, God created trees and it was good, God created animals and they were good. The only thing that was not good in creation was that the man was alone. Man was not meant to be alone. Not even God is alone. God is the Father and the Son and the Spirit. Man is meant to be in loving relationships, whether it be with a spouse or with friends or with family. God is a loving harmonious relationship and if we are made in his image, then he wants all of us to be a loving harmonious relationship. And that So it makes sense that Jesus would pray, **"I pray for them, that all of them may be one Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."**

But I gotta tell ya. I think Jesus is asking the impossible. The apostle Paul in his letter to Titus says that at one time we were disobedient, **"We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."** And that all too often characterizes us doesn't it? And we shouldn't say, "Oh it's a sinful world" as if that takes blame off of us. It's a sinful world and that puts blame ON us.

I gotta think Jesus is asking the impossible when he says, "Let them be one." I think it's impossible because I've heard a lot of people say, "I could never forgive that person." I've seen a lot of relationships damaged beyond the point of repair and Jesus says "may they be one"!

Jesus did a lot of miracles in his life. He turned water into wine. He fed 5,000 men with 5 loaves of bread and two fish. He opened the eyes of a blind man. He said Lazarus come out and the dead man came out. But Somehow I think all of that is easier to do than to reconcile two estranged brothers, or two estranged Christians.

How's he going to do it? There's so much fighting among Christians, and that's not a very good witness to the world. Jesus says, **"so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me."** When Christians are united in love and in relationships that's a powerful witness to the world. But too often there's more fighting in the church than there is in the world.

How is Jesus going to do it? What is going to bring unity among Christians who are so prone to fight with each other? Well I believe strongly and the apostle Paul believed and the entire New Testament believes that the answer to all the world's problems is the cross.

Jesus starts his prayer in John 17 by saying, **"Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son."** If you get the hang of the Gospel of John you release that when Jesus says, "Glorify your Son" he means, "Lift me up on the cross." You see Jesus took every time you've hurt someone else and he lifted it up on that pole. And everyone who looks to him will live. And after seeing your sins up on that pole can you really point the finger and say, "But look at what my that person said about me"? Jesus on the cross provided a solution to your sins and mine and the sins that we've all committed against each other.

I'd like to end today with a story that not from the Gospel of John but it still has to do with what Jesus says here. It's the story of the New Testament book Philemon. Philemon is a letter written by Paul to a slave owner named Philemon. One of Philemon's slaves, a man named Onesimus, ran away and took a bunch of his Philemon's money. After taking Philemon's money and running away Onesimus ran into Paul. And Paul takes Onesimus in this arm and Philemon in this arm and brings the two back together and says, "You are brothers." Jesus, when he extended his arms on the cross he took you in this arm and God in the other arm and reconciled us to God. And when Jesus extended his arms on the cross he also took you in this arm and your fellow Christian in the other arm and said, "You are brothers. Be one, just as I and the Father are one." Amen.

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[e] 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."