Church, it is a great privilege to be invited here this year, though I will say I got a little nervous when I saw that David Irving did this last year. You went from the tallest speaker you could find to the shortest speaker you could find. But this is the second time in my life that I have followed David Irving in something, and so I think the next stop is I'll be the next president of RTS Jackson. Good.

I'm here this week to speak of the Reformation, and we will largely frame our sermons this week over John Calvin's work, the necessity of reforming the church. But before we get into that and our sermon passage, I want to spend just two or three minutes on what is the Reformation. Some of you may not know, and some of you may have forgotten. We only study it once a year, it seems.

And as I think of the Reformation, I think of Acts chapter 22 when Paul was arrested out at the temple in Jerusalem and he went to address his people. And what you find is a man appointed by God to holy office chose to address his people with the word of God in their own language. And he did it freely at the cost of his own liberty. Now, why do I use that to frame the Reformation? Well, when you go to the times of the Reformation, the Bible was in Latin. How many of y'all speak Latin? Well, one of y'all does. Everybody else, it would be gibberish.

Also, you saw many hirelings, many thieves and robbers who intruded into that holy and sacred office by means not of lawful calling, who saw the ministry as a way to enrich themselves. And we all know of Tinsel's favorite jingle with the indulgences on a coin in the copper rings, a soul from Purgatory Springs. So you see, in the Reformation, we have the Word of God taken away. The little bit of ministry given was given at great price with false teaching. We'll tease that out a little bit in the week. And men unlawfully called to office. The church was in dire disrepair.

And then you see Martin Luther, we know the famous story of him nailing the 95 theses to the church door at the Wittenberg Castle, and, well, the rest is history. If it was not for the hammer strike heard around the world, we would all be Catholic. But here we are, and you see men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Martin Busser, Swingly, and others, who began to go back to the scriptures, read them not in the Latin, but in their original languages, and translate them into the language of their people. The famous story of Martin Luther, who would go down to the butchery, and he would listen to how they described chopping up meat. Well, I don't know if y'all read the book of Leviticus. It's my favorite book of the Old Testament. And you know what they do a lot of in Leviticus? Chopping up meat. What did he do? He wanted to put it in the words of the people.

You saw the church begin calling men to office who had been called by God, confirming that, calling them, installing them, holding them to a high standard of pastoral care that, quite frankly, was nonexistent at the time. Need we talk about men like John Knox who wanted to ensure every child could read so every child could read the Bible? You know, Deacons had to work really hard back then to teach all them children to read. But that was pastoral care that was necessary. And again, you see men live sacrificial lives. John Calvin died at 54. Why? He worked himself to death. So many of those men lived hard lives of abject poverty. You read of Theodore Beza, the great reformer after Calvin that had to sell his entire library to make ends meet when he retired, because he gave everything he had to the cause of the gospel.

What we see is a ministry and a proclamation of the gospel that is returning to what we saw in Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 22 and what we saw in the life of our Savior Jesus Christ in the book of John that we will see for the next five

sessions. With that in mind, would you turn with me to John chapter 17. John chapter 17. And we're gonna pick up in verse 20 through verse 24.

And I wanna say this series really for me represents a point of spiritual and theological development in my own life. I love to tell people that I'm a recovering Baptist. Now, if you don't know what that means, it means that I am Presbyterian in faith and practice, but I own way too many crockpots, so. And when I first come to faith, I would read John 17 and I would say, wow, Jesus loves me.

Is that true? It's true. But then I would say, Jesus loves my church. Is that true? It's true. But what we see in this passage more clearly is that Jesus loves the church. and all other meanings flow from that ultimate truth that he loves his bride, his body, his people above all. And that brings us to Calvin's book on the necessity of reforming the church. As you know, the reformers were charged with being schismatic, and it's a charge that the Roman Catholic Church made, and can I be honest? It's really hard to deny it, isn't it?

I mean, I'm from Jones County. Do y'all know where Jones County is? In Jones County, there's 364 churches. You could go to a different church every day. There's a wonderful church in Sharon, Mississippi. They're only two blocks away. They split over carpet color. Does that look schismatic to you? It seems to stick.

We see divisions not only in the popular culture, but even invading our own theological world. Not only the many different denominations, but even in our own denomination, the many different factions. Everybody's got their own blog and podcast now. And that charge of schism has an apparent correctness, but it's only apparent. What I say to you tonight is what we see in Calvin's work of the necessity of reforming the church. What we see in John chapter 17 is a very simple principle. We are bound together by Christ's glory. That will be our sermon in a sentence tonight. We are bound together by Christ's glory.

Can we pray and then I'll read our passage. Heavenly Father, we enter into a very special place in Scripture of our Savior and His prayers for us on His last night on earth. And His prayer was that we would be sanctified by the truth, for Your Word is truth. This is the reason He consecrated Himself for us. And as we gather around this word, that precious truth, oh Lord, we enter into the intercession of Christ and we ask in his name that this word, this truth would do its work in us. That would bring lost souls to salvation and it would further sanctify those who have already come to Christ. That his glory would be known among his people. In Christ's name we pray, amen. John chapter 17, verse 20. Hear the word of the Lord.

For 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 be perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. And 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 loved me before the foundation of the world.

And thus ends the reading of God's Holy Word. Originally, I'd planned to preach this same sermon from John chapter 2. And you know John chapter 2 is where you see Jesus is zeal for his church. He goes into the temple, you

know, he braids the whip, he flips the tables, he has what they call a conniption, and he cleans house. And you see a great zealous, the apostle John remembers the passage where it says, zeal for my father's house will consume me.

However, can I make a case here that if you really want to see the zeal of a man, it's not through just his actions, but it's through his prayer. I'm of the conviction that who a man is on his knees is who a man is. You want to see the zeal of Jesus Christ reach its peak?

I think we see it right here in John chapter 17. And what we see in this chapter is an emphasis on glory. He starts it in the very beginning. Father, glorify your son that he may glorify you. The theme throughout this prayer is glory. And that will be our theme for the next five sessions is glory. And when Jesus speaks to glory, notice in our passage tonight, he ties it to a central truth.

He ties it to unity. He ties it to unity. And if we are to understand why Jesus would pray for glory and for unity in the same breath, we need to know something about unity. What is unity? What is unity? Let me start by saying what unity is not. Unity is not centered around one place or One building.

I love it when people say, I'm a member of the Presbyterian Church of America. And I say, the what? That's not a denomination I've ever heard of. Have you? We're the Presbyterian Church in America. Words are important. You know, there's a Presbyterian Church in Scotland. And there's a Presbyterian Church in Korea, in South Korea, in Brazil, and all over the world. Is there unity between us? Yes. Geographic distance does not divide churches.

We read Revelation 2 and 3. John addresses a whole bunch of churches, seven of them, and he calls them church. He sees a unity. We read throughout the book of Acts, or dare I say, we read the book of Corinthians. Notice that Paul addresses the church in Corinth, and then later he tells them not to speak in the churches. Dare I say there was multiple congregations that Paul was addressing?

And they were unified, if I can use this language, as one presbytery. And when he saw that one grouping of churches, that grouping of congregations, he saw one church. They may have worshiped in different houses, but they were unified. They were one body.

Unity is not centered around a place or a building. Also, let me say, unity is not centered around one man. Unity's not centered around one man, and this is the Catholic church model. Unity is centered around the Pope, and all unity flows downstream from that submission to the Pope.

Well, that's not unity, is it? But I just have to say, that's not a Catholic problem, is it? How many people have we seen, they leave their church because they wanna follow their favorite pastor? They see unity in the wrong things. It's not a Catholic problem, that's a person problem, a people problem. Instead, what I would argue is unity is not centered around a place nor a person. Unity is centered around glory. It is centered around glory.

We see in Matthew 16, verse 18, that Peter says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. And what does Jesus say? On this rock, not you, Peter, not on your person, but on your confession, on this glorious truth, I will build my church. We see that in our passage, don't we?

They will believe in me through your word. That they will share my glory. That glory is the glory of Christ crucified. It's our mediator. It's that one thing that Paul was constrained to preach everywhere he went. The glory of Christ that he points out to in this passage is his glory is our mediator.

It is in this glory that we see the Father revealed. Don't we see this in John 14 when Philip says, Jesus, can you show me the Father? And what does he say? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. It is this glory in which the Son revealed the Father, John chapter 1.

It is this cross, this glorious cross that we see the power and wisdom of God clearly on display. It is in the cross where we see righteousness and mercy kiss. It is in the cross that the glory of God shines wonderfully. Christ's glory is bound up in the gospel. Now, do you see for a minute why Christ would pray such a prayer? Do you see why Christ would pray such a prayer?

What disunity does is sever the glory of Christ from the gospel of Christ. It severs the glory of Christ from the gospel of Christ. And in the necessity of reforming the church, Calvin focuses on four areas. He focuses on false worship, where the traditions of men are added to the worship of God, severing the glory of Christ from the worship of Christ. He talks about false teaching, where merits or works are added to the gospel, where the glory of Christ is separated from the grace of Christ. He will speak of false sacraments like the mass and additions to baptism. They separate the glory of Christ from the sacraments. He talks about a false government, hirelings, thieves, and robbers who separate the glory of Christ from the government he's instituted.

And dare I say Calvin's not writing to old problems, is he? Have you seen strange worship? Just Google silly worship services and you'll see guys dressed up as Chewbacca and Han Solo preaching. Is that bad? That's pretty bad, isn't it? Do we see false teaching? And I'm not talking about things in the world. What does Paul say in Acts 20? False teachers will arise where?

Among you. Have we seen that? We have. We see false sacraments. We see the baptism in the Lord's Supper treated like a light and insignificant thing today. How many horse troughs and swimming pools have been used for baptism apart from the worship of the Triune God? We see false government.

Paul warned about this in 1 Timothy 1 and in the end of 1 Timothy. How many times we see church government not modeled after scripture and in the ones where it is modeled after scripture, well, they're officers in the church because they're really good leaders in the community.

Well, doesn't that sound very familiar to Calvin's own day? And church, does this not break your heart? Does this not break your heart to see the body of Christ broken in such a way? It was about this time last year, my friend Judd

almost got his foot cut off. He was broken. And I was very tearful to see my friend in such a condition. And yet we see the broken body of Christ, and how often do we shed a tear? I mean, what was the famous book by Morton Smith? When the gold grew dim, we cried then.

What if now? Are we broken? downcast over the broken body of Christ. This is why Calvin said this is not a common cold of which we can take some Robitussin and sleep it off. He said this is a cancer that must be dealt with with extreme measures. The body of Christ is broken. So what's the solution? We paint this dire picture. What is the solution? Well, it goes back to what we started with, to be bound together by the glory of Christ.

And how does Christ pray to that end? Well, look at verse 20. He says, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. If we're to be bound together by the glory of Christ, we must hear the gospel of glory proclaimed in pulpits week after week, month after month, in perpetuity until he returns. It is this gospel of which Christ is lifted up when we see him in his humiliation and his exaltation. It is this glorious gospel that he uses to bring sinners to faith. It is this gospel where Christ continues to speak from heaven. Is that what he says in Romans chapter 10?

Faith comes by hearing, and church, can I remind you, I know it's 2026, all of you have little iPhones and you read your Bibles on your phone, but if you look in the Bible, what verb is used more, read or hear? It's hear. What do we spend all of our time doing? Is this reading if you do this, scrolling? Jesus doesn't say for those who read your word, they say what? For those who will hear.

The glory of the gospel must be proclaimed. That is the foundation of our unity. The body of Christ will remain broken until the glory of the gospel is faithfully proclaimed. Calvin would look at the Catholic church and say, there is no gospel. And he would look at the church of the Reformation though they be scattered far and wide and say, look at those churches, what do you find? You find the gospel being preached.

If we're to be bound together by the glory of Christ, it begins with the glory of Christ being preached. Secondly, verse 22, that the glory that you've given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one. Not only must we hear the gospel of glory, but we must be bound together by the gospel of glory. We must have our identity in the glory of Christ. That glory should be the thing, the central thing that drives us together as a body. Don't we see that in Philippians chapter 2?

Paul says, have no self-conceit, no selfish ambition, but instead count each other as more significant as yourself. Have this mind among you, which is yours in Jesus Christ. And he lays out this beautiful, he was in the form of God, but did not count equality with God to be grasped, but humbled himself, took the form as of a servant, and was obedient unto death, even death on a cross. And now he has been highly exalted, given the name above every name. that every knee shall bow and tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

Paul isn't looking at them and saying, well, go look at your WWJD bracelet for a moment. What he's saying is, put your focus on this glorious Christ. And when that is your drive, your focus, your everything, All disunity begins to fade away. Beams of the sun become indistinguishable the closer they get to the source. Our identity must be in the glory of Christ. Have you seen that glory? Have you tasted that glory?

John McLaurin writes of that glory in what is called the greatest sermon ever preached. And he says this, It was the glory of the world that he who formed it dwelt on it. The glory of the air that he breathed it, and of the ground that it bore him. It was the glory of the sea that he walked on it, and of the elements that they nourished it, and of the waters that they refreshed him. And it was the glory of us men that he lived among us, died for us, and that he assumed our flesh and carried it into heaven. That is glory. In this church, and in the churches represented in this room, when you step into this church, do people see programs, personalities, and people, or do they see the glory of Christ on display?

So identity, our drive. Thirdly, Look at verses 23 and 24. I in them and you in me that they may become perfectly one that as the world may know you sent me and love them even as you love me. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see the glory that you've given me because you loved me from before the foundation of the world. We must hear the gospel of glory, we must identify with the gospel of glory, but we must also rest in the gospel of glory. These two passages for me mean the world. Notice in 23, the love of the father, that you love them even as you loved me. Can you fathom that for a moment?

Proverbs chapter eight says that the father was delighting in him, not putting up with him, but delighting in the Son from before the foundation of the world, that he is his perfect delight, perfect joy, that bond of love, that Trinitarian fellowship that has always been, and he says that he loves us the same way. He loves Zach. The same way. He even loves Jamie that way.

Can you fathom that for a moment? The glory that is wrapped up in the love of the Father and that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. That the prized pearl of heaven was pawned off for the salvation of our souls. Can we begin for a moment to fathom the love of the Father? But it goes on, doesn't it? Notice what Jesus says, Father, this is a strong word, I desire, I desire that those you have given me would be with me where I am. Do you not see the intercession, the heart of Christ pouring forth, the love of the Father for us matched by the love of the Son for us? That Trinitarian love on full display as the persons of the Godhead show that salvific love to their people.

And that Jesus doesn't use just any word, but he desires. You know, we just got done eating a wonderful meal. And I watched several, some of you get some bread pudding and you said, I really want one more. That's not the language Jesus used. He used the language of desire. If I stretch the bounds of the English language just a little, it's as if Jesus said, my heaven is not heaven until they are with me.

I desire them. And think of this, John 13 opened that Jesus has all things, all things. All the best places, Hawaii, Tahiti, Starkville, and he desires us. Us. Let that sink in for a minute. The love of Christ for us. Our heaven is two heavens to him. Streets of gold, nothing. Walls of jasper, nothing. Gates of pearl, nothing. The lamb desires to be with the people he shed his blood for. You know what I call that? A glorious love. A unity.

And what do we have left but to fix our eyes on heaven? We speak so little of heaven and yet we see Calvin lays out this wonderful meditation on heaven in book three, three eight or three 10, where he lays out this glory that it

should be our longing and our desire that we should desire heaven as much as Christ desires us. And why does Christ desire us to be in heaven? Because there we will see his glory.

No sin, no suffering, no affliction, no temptation, nothing will impede the brightness of that glory. And in the brightness of that unfiltered glory, what we will see is a perfect union. in that perfection of glory is a perfect union of his people where there will be no more division, no more schisms, no more 364 churches in one county people. There will be unity. Because we're one with him in glory. Church, tell me something.

As we rest in the heart of God and that triune love for us, does that not shape all of our desires, all of our longings, all of our hopes? Does that not make us willing to work, die, and be forgotten for the glory of Christ? Does it not draw all of our focus to magnifying that precious glory in heaven as much as we can on earth? Church, I close with just simply two words of application, one for us as individuals. John Calvin says, there's nothing in which all men ought to feel a deeper interest, nothing in which God wishes us to exhibit a more intentional zeal than endeavoring to see that his glory remains unimpaired, that his kingdom advance, and that his gospel flourish in full vigor.

What of us? Are we willing to go the distance to bear shame and suffering and all sorts of affliction that the glory of Christ may be exalted? Are we willing as a people and as individuals to see the body of Christ united over the gospel? John Calvin would say that he would cross 10 seas to heal the broken body of Christ. What of us?

There's a dear story of the Methodist Church in Raymond. Well, there's a lot of dear stories. I mean, it's the Methodist Church. They have all kinds of stories in Raymond. And there's these two ladies. They were mad at each other for 20 years, sat on the opposite side of the church. That doesn't happen here, does it?

Would you walk across the aisle to heal the broken body of Christ? Would you go to another church and pray for another church in Yazoo City so that the glory of Christ would be seen and the broken body of Christ would be healed? Would you cross 10 counties in this Presbytery to see the broken body of Christ united around glory, that there would not be a pastor, elder, or member in Christ's church of which is severed from his body? How far would you go? to see Christ glorified in this body.

And as a church, let me remind you, no church stands alone. The glory that terminates is not out in here, but it is in Christ. I say that because I have a heart for small churches. There's 15 in our presbytery, 15, 15 that have no pastor. They're filled every Sunday. Or there's churches that may have a pastor but not be very big. I mean, this isn't First Press Jackson. If it was, I definitely wouldn't be preaching in it, so. And it may feel like you are small and insignificant, but let me tell you something.

If the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed from this pulpit, the glory of Christ is on full display. There was a famous pastor that spoke at Wayne Hearings Church in Brookhaven, and it was spring break, and you know what that means. No one was there. And he apologized. He says, oh, I'm so sorry. There's no one here. And the man said, young man, I have preached to two naked Indians. Numbers do not matter. When the gospel is preached to two or 2,000, the glory of Christ is on display.

Let not the world be more united in their hatred of Christ than we as a church are united for his glory. Go across the aisle, across the street, across the presbytery, across the denomination, let the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ be proclaimed in word and in deed that we can be bound together by the glory of Christ.

Can I pray for us? Heavenly Father, how gracious you are that we who have wandered so far east of Eden, when there were but Adam and Eve and two brothers, even there in that small body was great disunity. And yet we find no other source of unity, not in social programs, not in well wishes, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ, our savior who sought us when we were wandering like sheep, brought us into his body, his house, his fold, his church. And Lord, we want to see that glorious Christ lifted up here.

And in every pulpit that faithfully proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ, Lord, would you send more men to proclaim that gospel? Would you send us as members of this body to the rest of this body to proclaim that gospel? That we would see the glory of Christ be the thing that unites us no matter what the world says and no matter what division Satan would seek a foothold. Would you let the glory of Christ overwhelm and unite us as a body? Until that day when we get in heaven and your glory is all that we know. Father, we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.