

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 17:11-23 (August 16, 2026)
The Lord's Prayer for His Disciples and Future Believers

Central Truth: Jesus prayed for His followers then and now that they would be safeguarded by the Father's power, sanctified through God's truth, sent into the world with Christ's mission, and united in love so that the world may believe the gospel and their joy would be made complete.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Key Passage (23): "I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

Opening Question: As Jesus' prayer the night before He died included you, what do you think would be His greatest concern for your life today?

Lesson Objectives: 1) understand the purpose of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, 2) be able to explain why Jesus prayed for the protection and holiness of His disciples, 3) be able to describe what biblical unity is and what it is not, and 4) recognize how Christian unity becomes one of God's greatest testimonies to an unbelieving world.

Background: Jesus and His disciples have left the Upper Room and are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane where He would be betrayed and

arrested. Along the way, He prays for Himself (verses 1-5), His disciples (verses 6-19), and for those who would believe because of their testimony--including us (verses 20-26).

I. Jesus Prays That His Followers Will Be Kept (11-19)

A. They would remain in God's keeping (11-16)

1. Jesus is leaving the world

- a. The disciples will be left in a hostile environment, and the world hates them because they are not of this world--“in the world but not of the world”
- b. Their security now rests in the Father's Name--the power and authority of Who He is, the same Name given to Jesus (John 10:30)
- c. Only one was lost, but Judas rejected all of Jesus’ attempts to change his mind, and his choice fulfilled scripture (Psalm 41:9)
- d. Jesus prayed this prayer in their hearing so that they might experience His joy that would come from
 - 1) Their confidence in the Father's plan
 - 2) Their obedience in response to His love
 - 3) The assurance of Christ’s and their ultimate victory in Christ

2. The disciples would remain in the world, so Jesus prays that they would be “kept from the evil one”

Questions for Reflection:

1. What dangers threaten believers today more than physical persecution?
2. What does it mean, in practical terms, to be “in the world but not of it?”

3. Where do you most need God's protection?

B. Jesus prays that the Father would “sanctify them in the truth” (17-19)

1. Truth would be the all-encompassing and preserving environment in which they would be sanctified--set apart and progressively transformed into the image of Jesus
2. God's Word
 - a. Exposes sin
 - b. Renews the mind
 - c. Transforms the heart
 - d. Equips believers for ministry
 - e. The Bible is not merely informative--it's transformative

Questions for Reflection

1. How does Scripture shape your daily decisions?
2. What habits help you grow in holiness?
3. Is there an area of your life that has not yet been surrendered to Christ?

3. The disciples were to imitate the example of Jesus Who set Himself apart exclusively to the work of redemption that the Father had entrusted to Him

II. Jesus Prays “for those who will believe in Me through their word” that they may be united (20-23)

- A. Their unity would reflect the vital bond of love exemplified by the oneness between the Father and the Son and illustrated in the metaphor of the vine and the branches (15:1-7)
 - 1. That unity flowed naturally from
 - a. The Son's love for the Father
 - b. The Father's love for the Son
 - c. The Son's love for the disciples
 - d. The disciples' love for the Son
 - e. The disciples' love for the Father
 - f. The Father's love for the disciples
 - 2. This unity is not organizational uniformity but relational unanimity
- B. Our unity is to bear witness in such a way "that the world may know"
 - 1. The Father sent the Son (and the purpose for which He sent Him)
 - 2. The Father loves those who have placed their faith in Christ (that we can truly find peace with God)
- C. The church's unity authenticates its message. When Christians genuinely love one another
 - 1. The gospel becomes visible
 - 2. Christ becomes believable
 - 3. God's love becomes undeniable

Practical Applications of the Lord's Prayer

- 1. Your security rests not in your strength but in His faithful protection.
- 2. Guard your spiritual life: Abide in Christ in His Word, in prayer, and in obedience

3. Pursue holiness intentionally. Ask yourself, “Does this decision make me more like Christ?” Holiness is not isolation. It is Christlikeness.
4. Always live as Christ's representative. You represent Jesus to a lost and dying world.
5. Preserve the unity of believers. Unity requires humility, forgiveness, patience, and the truth spoken in love.

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Why did Jesus pray for protection instead of removal from the world?
2. What does sanctification look like in everyday life?
3. Why is unity at the center Jesus' prayer?
4. How can disagreements exist without destroying Christian unity?
5. How does our treatment of fellow believers affect our witness to unbelievers?
6. Which request in Jesus' prayer speaks most personally to you?

Key Takeaway: Jesus prayed that believers would be kept by the Father's power, filled with His joy, protected from the evil one, sanctified through God's truth, sent into the world, united in Christ, and faithful witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel

Closing Challenge

1. Am I allowing God's Word to sanctify me?
2. Am I contributing to the unity of Christ's church or creating division?
3. Would those around me see enough of Christ in my life to be drawn toward Him?

This prayer is not simply a record of what Jesus prayed long ago--it reveals what still matters to Him today. The risen Christ continues to intercede for His people, and His prayer calls us to live lives marked by holiness, unity, and faithful witness. As we abide in Him, we become the visible evidence of His transforming power in a world that desperately needs to know that the Father sent the Son.

Sunday School Lesson for August 16, 2026
John 17:11-23

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, in our current study, we've been discovering how John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, reveals the life and ministry of the Lord "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

On this third Sunday in August, as we see that purpose played out in every word on every page of this precious book, John has invited us to join him and the other disciples as they follow Jesus from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane.

As we come to chapter seventeen, the Lord has just delivered His last words of encouragement to His disciples in the previous chapter. He's reminded them of the essential imperative of the love relationship that binds them together as a vine and its branches--verse 26--: "In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."

The disciples have gained some clarity about what Jesus has meant by going away and returning to the Father. In verse 30, they said, "Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." And the Lord concludes His last message to them with the words we find in verse 33: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

As chapter seventeen begins, John tells us that "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven," and prayed. For nearly two thousand years, writers have tried to describe the elegance, anguish,

tenderness, and compassion of these words that are built on the triumphant expectation of the cross. Those last words are particularly important. We sometimes read through this prayer as if it were rather gloomy, but it comes on the heels of that victorious declaration: “Take heart; I have overcome the world,” and it starts from that certainty.

Alexander MacLaren asks, “We may well despair of doing justice to the deep thoughts of this prayer, which volumes would not exhaust. Who is worthy to speak or to write about such sacred words?” Another writer suggests that, in this prayer, “We are brought by it to the mercy-seat, into the heaven of heavens, to the very heart of God; and we find there a presentation of the most mysterious and incomprehensible love to the human race, embodied in the Person, enshrined in the words, of the only begotten Son [of God].” The prayer marks the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, but it looks forward with great anticipation and expectation to the work of the disciples and all those throughout history who would come to believe because of their words.

In this prayer, Jesus prays for Himself in the first five verses, for the disciples in verses six through nineteen, and for the Church in verses twenty through 26. Our focus today touches on the second and third of those in verses eleven through 23.

In the first five verses of chapter seventeen, Jesus prays for Himself where He recognizes that His hour had finally come--the time when He would pay the penalty for every sin ever committed by everyone who ever lived. He asks the Father that He--Jesus--would be glorified in what’s about to happen so that He would, in turn, glorify the Father--that the world might see and know of the greatness of God’s unfailing love that He would send His only-begotten Son to bear the sins of the world so that whoever trusted in Him would have eternal life.

In verse five, He prays that the Father would glorify Him with the same glory they shared before creation--and there’s so much we could talk about

there. Then, in verses six through eight, Jesus recounts the success of the work in the lives of His disciples who had been entrusted to Him: they've kept the Father's word. They understand that everything the Father has given the Son / really did come from the Father in heaven. As a result, they now believe that the Father really had sent the Son.

And so He prays for these disciples in verses nine through nineteen, recognizing that He will be leaving the world very soon, but the disciples will remain. He had been guarding them to this point, but, very soon, they will be left without His Presence to guide, encourage, and protect them.

So, in our focal text for today, He prays, beginning in verse eleven, "And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

In His prayer to the Father on behalf of the disciples, He acknowledges that He's completed the work on earth the Father had given Him. He's going to leave, but He'll leave His followers behind "in the world" and therefore vulnerable to all the malicious intents and evil of the world. They'll need the same protection He would have given them if He were with them. Addressing Him as "Holy Father," Jesus seems to appeal to the holiness of God so that His holiness would empower the disciples to maintain holiness in their lives as they are kept from the evil of the world.

His prayer to the Holy Father on the disciples' behalf is "keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." His "Name"--His essential nature as Father that's been revealed in the Son--His Name was "given" or "assigned" to Christ as another way of

expressing the essential unity of the Father and the Son that Jesus spoke of in chapter ten, verse thirty.

To be kept in the Father's Name would be for them to be kept in that vital unity so beautifully illustrated by the vine and the branches and that's the result of their love for Him, His love for them, and the Father's love for them and His Son as we find in verse 27 of the previous chapter: "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." It's that unity of relationship built on love that results in obedience that the Lord Jesus has said so much about in the last three chapters. Jesus asks that that love and obedience that will give them access to the Father and keep them bound in a vital unity would remain active, viable, and unhampered by the world for the purpose that He spells out for us in the closing verse of our study today.

They had enjoyed that unity while the Lord was with them, and He had protected them from the world. His faithfulness held them and He guarded them as the faithful Shepherd of the souls entrusted Him by the Father. Of the twelve He had chosen, only one was lost, but He knew from the beginning-- John, chapter six, verse 70--who it would be, but that very choice was in accordance with God's plan. Jesus doesn't say, "I lost him," but "not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction."

As we saw in the Lord's dealings with Judas at the Last Supper, Jesus gave him several opportunities to change his mind, but Judas deliberately made the choice to betray Him. In those moments, Jesus spoke of the scripture that would be fulfilled. In chapter thirteen, verse eighteen, He said, "I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me'" --from Psalm 41, verse nine.

In verse thirteen, Jesus concludes the preface to His prayer for His disciples by speaking of the end result He desires for them: "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." He prays, "But now I am coming to you,

and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Through His words that they were hearing as He prayed, they would be reminded of His character, His will, His relation to the Father, His purpose for coming. They would hear in these precious moments every word of the prayer that He was praying for them--a prayer that was a summary of everything He had told them about the Father, about Himself, about the Holy Spirit, and about them. This would confirm to them that “this same Jesus” was infinitely faithful to them still, even though He had died, been raised to life, and returned to the Father. In this way, “His joy would be fulfilled in them.”

That prayer would be answered as Peter would later write in verse eight of the first chapter of his first letter: “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” This joy, of course, was the same joy that filled the Lord’s heart, even in this horribly dark moment, for the writer of the letter to the Hebrews writes in chapter twelve verse two, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” And we can only imagine how great that joy will be when we see Jesus’s face and know the fullness of His love and His joy in heaven.

After the wide scope of unity and protection the Lord first addresses in His prayer for His disciples, He begins to pray for their specific needs as He departs. In verses fourteen through nineteen, we get a glimpse of what their trials and tribulations were to be as the Lord prays through each of them.

They were to live on / in a world that would certainly hate them--verse fourteen--even within range of “the evil one” from whose deceptions and violence they could not protect themselves--verse fifteen; but we also see the means the Lord has provided for their protection as they continue on in the world

through His word and His sanctifying power--verse seventeen--and as they pursue the mission they've been left to fulfill--verses eighteen and nineteen.

In verses fourteen through sixteen, the Lord recognizes the persecution His disciples will face: "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

He doesn't ask the Father to take them out of the world but only asks to "keep them from the evil one." This security would come from the Father's Word that He had given them. By the Word of God, they had been given a new birth, received the adoption of sons, and entered a new, spiritual relationship with the heavenly Father because, as John writes in the first chapter, verse thirteen, they were "born, not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." Now, they would grow in the fullness of that grace to receive one blessing after another," as John said in verse sixteen. All this was the result of the Word the Lord had given to them / as the Word--the entire testimony of God--would be made alive within them by the Holy Spirit.

But this newness of life wouldn't go unrecognized by the world that's dead in trespasses and sin. Their new life had not made them socially repulsive, religiously arrogant, or aggressively hostile towards others of their day; instead, what we hear from the apostles are such things as "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone;" "love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud;" "Show proper respect to everyone; ... honor the king." In spite of that, their blameless and exemplary lives were constantly and inevitably a challenge and a rebuke to the world and its selfish, carnal desires.

As a result, it was only natural that the world hated them. They were a witness for the eternal truth that, if God is to have His rightful place in a

person's life, it can only be the first place. Any other arrangement is sin that leads to eternal separation from God because of the rebellious choice the individual makes not to receive the gift of eternal life. Because the disciples had chosen to admit their sin, recognize the righteousness of Christ, and understand the warning of judgment that's the work of the Holy Spirit that we learned about in our last lesson from chapter sixteen, this put them at odds with the world--those who had chosen to reject the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

This constant contrast between the mind of Christ and the spirit of the world pervades the New Testament. Jesus had exposed the world's hypocrisies, denounced its idols, revealed its sin and depravity, and condemned its prince. His disciples, as they shared His opinions and attitudes, could not avoid the implications and consequences of that counter-cultural worldview. And, as you listen to today's news, nothing has changed other than it seems to be getting a whole lot worse.

So how should the Lord pray for His disciples, knowing that the world will treat them just as He had been and would be treated? He *could* ask the Father to take them out of the world in order to protect them from the inevitable persecution He knew was coming. But that's not what He asks. It was precisely **because** the disciples were **not** of the world that He would **not** ask that they should be taken out of it. They were superbly well-qualified to live in the world because they possessed a new life that originated from outside the world. They were in the world but not of it. In their new birth and with their new nature, eternal perspective, infinite hope, and unchanging love of the Father, they had what the world could neither give nor take away. As a result, only **they** could bless the world with what it did not have nor could ever create of itself.

So He prays, not that they would be taken out of the world, but that the Father would "keep them from the evil one." The evil one is, of course, Satan, and Jesus has warned His disciples about him in several places, identifying him

in chapter twelve as the prince of this world, where “world” means not only those who stand against God but also the culture that’s hostile to God and the worldviews that support and define that hostility. As they are “kept” from the evil one, they won’t be spared from his temptations and attacks, but they will be protected from the permanent influence and power of the enemy. The disciples would continue to live in the world, because that would be their mission field, but they would need the special grace of God to keep them from its evil influences, and it’s this that the Lord asks the Father to provide.

As the Lord Jesus prays for His disciples, He prays so that they would hear Him and would be comforted and instructed by His prayer. So, after asking that the Father would keep them from the evil one, He repeats what He had just said in the latter half of verse fourteen: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,” and this serves as the introduction and justification for the next request found in verse seventeen: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

The Lord had said earlier, in chapter fifteen, verse nineteen, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.” But that’s not the case--they don’t belong to the world just as Jesus was not of this world. For that reason, they would need a special work of the Holy Spirit in order to experience the deliverance from the evil one that He had prayed for in verse fifteen. Keeping them from the evil one comes first, and that’s followed by a prayer for their sanctification, for if they’re not protected from the overpowering influence of Satan, they won’t be able to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying them. So, Jesus’ second prayer for His disciples is this: “Sanctify them in the truth.”

Sanctification means “to set apart” or “to make holy.” In one sense, only God is holy--separate, distinct, and completely “other.” No human shares the holiness of God’s essential nature. Still, God calls us to be holy--just as holy as he is holy. Paul explained his own pursuit of holiness in the third chapter of his letter to the believers in Philippi: “Not that I have already obtained all this,

or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Sanctification is God’s beautiful, transforming work in the life of His people. It’s the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit, offered as a gift to anyone who desires it, and Jesus prays that His disciples would be sanctified, and that they would be sanctified “in the truth.”

Truth is to be the encompassing, constraining, and preserving environment in which they would be sanctified. “The truth”--the eternal certainties and realities of God--are to hem them in and keep them safe. The truth is the soil in which their faith would grow and produce fruit. The truth about our sin, the wonder of God’s mercy, the glory of His dear Son, the power of His Spirit, and the hope of His heaven--in these truths and all the truth / they were to live and breathe. This truth that was always before them was to be the means of their sanctification. As they allowed the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, they would be sanctified--they would be conformed into the image of Jesus Who is the Truth Personified.

He follows that by saying, “Your word is truth,” as if to say, “keep them in Your word, because Your word is the compilation of all truth.” “The word” was the message about God in Christ, as the Lord Himself declared that Word; and as the Old Testament prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit, proclaimed that Word. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews begins by saying, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

Once again, voicing His prayer so the disciples would hear and understand, the Lord Jesus says, “As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” In Matthew, chapter ten, Jesus sent the disciples out with some very lengthy and detailed instructions. As He had dedicated Himself to the work of making the Father known to the world, they also must dedicate themselves to the same mission. This was the reason He had called them from their fishing boats or tax collecting booth a little over three years ago, and it was for this reason that He was spending these last few moments with them, preparing them for what lay ahead. Very soon, they would be in the temple, on the streets, before the judgment seats of priests and governors, and, soon enough, gone out to the uttermost ends of the earth. They were sent into the world to tell the world about Him, so that the world might not only hear of Him from them but might in a very real sense / **see** Him in them, just as John told us in the eighteenth verse of the opening chapter that Jesus has made God known. That’s how Jesus had been sent into the world, and that’s how they were being sent into the world as well. It’s how we as believers are sent into the world as well.

Jesus fulfilled His mission--not only by the words of truth He spoke and the wonderful works He had done--but most of all in His appearance as the visible manifestation of the Father--the presentation to the world, in Himself, of the full character and plan of God. In the same way, the disciples weren’t just to be speakers, writers, or organizers; they were to be the representation of a new creation as they showed Jesus to the world. They were to live in such a way that they could say, as Paul did in First Corinthians, the first verse of chapter eleven, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ,” and in Second Corinthians, chapter three, verse three: “You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

One commentator writes, “In each genuinely Christian man and woman the world is to have, in some sort, a messenger from the Lord, but not a messenger only; we are to be messages also, as being personalities transformed and occupied by Him. And, of all the needs of the troubled world today, none is more pressing than the need of a multitude of such personalities, manifestly altered by the Lord Jesus Christ, and so, in some humble sense, manifestations of Him. The worst enemy of a good cause is he who badly represents it. The best advocate is he who is the genuine and complete result of its principles and power.” “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

So, in order to set the appropriate pattern that His disciples would emulate as He sends them into the world, He explains in verse nineteen; “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” In this case, the word “sanctify” doesn’t refer to Jesus’ personal sanctification because He had no sin. It speaks of His setting Himself apart exclusively to the work of redemption that the Father had entrusted to Him. In this way, they would have the proper example of service and ministry in God’s Kingdom work.

The greatest aspect of that example would be the Lord’s sacrificial death that was the central purpose of His coming. He had set Himself apart to do what God had sent Him to do / to the point that He laid down His life for them and for us so that, as they and we place our complete trust in Him, they and we would be made pure and fit for the Kingdom of God. Following His example of self-sacrifice and devotion to God would require them to devote themselves to God to the same extent that Jesus did--even to the point of giving their lives in His service to fulfill His mission.

Jesus had prayed for the disciples’ deliverance from the evil one in verse fifteen and for their consecration in verse seventeen. These are the two purposes of the atonement as Paul told his friend, Titus, in chapter two, verse fourteen of his letter to him about “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ who

gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” So Jesus’ consecration of Himself was not only so that His disciples might be guarded and consecrated, but that the same consecration might be experienced by all future disciples as He will pray later. It’s only through His consecration that His disciples then and now can be consecrated, as we read in Hebrews, chapter ten verse ten: “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

At this point in His prayer, Jesus turns His thoughts to those who would be influenced by the disciples who were sent into the world just as Jesus had been sent into the world--in other words, Jesus now prays for us and all those who have come to Christ after these first eleven.

In verses 20 through 23, we read, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

In His prayer for you and for me and for all those who have placed their trust in Christ, Jesus “asks,” “prays,” or “requests,” according to whatever translation you may be using. The word is not the humble petition of a subordinate to a superior as our prayers would be, but the “desire” of an equal. The word gives us a glimpse of the closeness between the Father and the Son and the character of their relationship.

As the disciples are kept and consecrated as Jesus had prayed earlier, and, as they are sent just as Jesus had been sent, there will be those who would believe in Jesus because of their word. Notice that Jesus doesn’t pray for “the Church” or some other term that would describe an organization. Instead, He

prays for those who believe--the **individuals** that make up the great, spiritual community that's bound by a common love shared by all believers and the Lord / and faith in the One about Whom the disciples preached. It's the genuine activity of authentic belief that identifies true believers more than affiliation with any organization.

He begins His prayer with a request for unity among believers. Jesus has already prayed for unity among His disciples back in verse eleven, and, in chapter seventeen, He has told His disciples, "Abide in Me," for "apart from Me you can do nothing." The unity He desires in those who believe in Him is not a strict uniformity or compliance with an external set of standards. It's a deep, abiding, vital unity that accurately reflects the unity between the Father and the Son. As a result, all believers should know that they belong to the same family and that, one day, we will all sit together before the throne of glory as the family of God. "So in Christ," Paul tells the believers in Rome in chapter twelve, verse five, "we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

The unity our Lord desires for us is, above all things, a oneness of the Spirit, that Paul writes about in Ephesians, chapter four, beginning in verse three when he says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called--one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." This oneness is the result of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

Alexander MacLaren writes, "It is the Christ-given Christ-likeness in each which knits believers into one. It is Christ in us and we in Christ that fuses us into one, and thereby makes each perfect. And such flashing back of the light of Jesus from a million separate crystals, all glowing with one light and made one in the light, would flash on darkest eyes the lustre of the conviction that God sent Christ, and that God's love enfolded those Christlike souls even as it enfolded Him."

Because of this unity, Jesus commanded His disciples and us to love one another, and New Testament writers encourage us to bear one another's burdens, study the things that make for peace, and pursue those things that allow us to edify one another. And there's so much we could add here by way of practical application.

The second desire in our Lord's high priestly prayer for us is that we might reflect the unity of the Father and the Son: "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you." He's not speaking of the essential unity of the Father and Son but the practical unity of plan, of purpose, of the desire to accomplish the same goals. Here again, we're reminded of what Jesus said about Himself as the vine and us as the branches--apart from Him we can do nothing.

The practical outcome of the unity we show as we reflect the unity of the Father and the Son is, as Jesus says, "that the world may believe that you have sent me." The consequence of the spiritual unity of believers, so clearly displayed by their love for one other, is that the world will at last be convinced that Jesus' mission came from God, and that He **is** the Savior of the world as He frees us from our self-centeredness to focus on the needs of others. Only God could cause selfish, egotistical, self-righteous people to forsake their own self-interests to love others.

That's why Jesus gave them a "new" commandment, and, as they obeyed this new commandment, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" as He said in chapter thirteen, verse 35. Our love for other believers--is to be like His love for them and us,-- a love that is ready and willing to pour itself out in sacrifice even as Jesus was about to demonstrate on the cross, and it would be this dramatic, counter-cultural demonstration of the life-changing power of the gospel that would lead others to place their faith in Christ.

The third desire in this prayer is that all believers would be with Him to experience His glory, and that the Father's love might be in them--verse 22: "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 become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." Once again, the Lord desires unity, and this unity comes from the glory the Father had given the Son and the Son had given to His disciples so that they and we would be one. This glory is the full fellowship we enjoy with Christ, as Paul explains to the believers in Rome in chapter eight, verse seventeen of his letter to them: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." In some way, as our Lord's prayer is answered, we get to share in the dignity, the splendor, the holiness and the majesty of God, and, as we share in His glory, as Peter says in Second Peter, chapter one, verse four, we become partakers in the divine nature, and we also become united in our efforts to reflect and celebrate God's glory as well as being united in His love.

Once again, the unity we experience in the glory that the Lord Jesus has given us is intended to bring us into the same kind of unity as that experienced between the Father and the Son / so that--first, we would become "perfectly one," and, second, "so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." This perfection would be seen when the fellowship between believers is free of controversy, contentions, jealousies, and all those things that disrupt unity because of self-centeredness. The world the disciples were **not** taken out of and **we** are not taken out of is full of wickedness that comes from a selfish worldview and belief system. All that's needed to convince the world that God sent the Lord Jesus is for believers to demonstrate unity among all those for whom Jesus prayed.

Max Lucado writes, "Of all the lessons that we can draw from this verse, don't miss the most important one--that unity matters to God. Unity is a value

in heaven. Unity is a priority to our Lord. Unity pleases God; disunity disturbs God. Why? ‘Because all people will know that you are My followers,’ Jesus said in John 13:35, ‘if you love each other.’ Not if you agree with each other; not if you solve every controversy; not if you’re unanimous on every vote; not if you never make a doctrinal error, but if we love each other. Unity, Jesus said, creates belief; disunity fosters disbelief. ... If unity is a priority in heaven,” he asks, “then shouldn’t it be a priority on earth?”

As the world sees unity among authentic followers of Christ, Jesus says “the world will know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” People will come to know--to recognize--that the faith He spoke of in verse 21 becomes sight as belief in Jesus is confirmed by the unmistakable, life-changing effect the gospel has on those who trust the Lord. Not only that, but those of the world who never knew genuine love, who’ve been estranged from God, and who can only expect the wrath of God will **know** that God loves them with an unending, unchanging, unshakeable love, far beyond their wildest imagination. And there’s so much we could add here.

The prayer continues in verse 24, but that will be the focus of our study on Wednesday night. Thus far, He’s told them that He’s going away, and yet He abides with them, and His presence through the Holy Spirit remains forever--not seen with the physical eye, but felt as life and strength and peace within. These words express the most profound reverence for God and the most tender love for us--simple, earnest, gentle, inspiring, and full of comfort. It’s the model for our prayers, and we should come before God with the same reverence, faith, and love. In every way, it is a prayer that is worthy of our constant meditation and reflection.

This prayer for the church still waits to be answered / when fears are stilled, when strivings cease--as the song says--and, as one commentator writes, “when he who loves the church and the world cannot but cast his eyes onward to that time when all believers shall be one; when contentions, bigotry, strife, and anger shall cease; and when, in perpetual union and love, Christians shall

show forth the power and purity of that holy gospel with which the Saviour came to bless mankind. Soon may that happy day arise!”

Thank you for being a part of our brief overview of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him.

Next week, the hour of Lord’s glorification begins as we arrive in the Garden of Gethsemane. John invites us to watch as Judas betrays the Lord to those who had come to arrest Him, only to fall before Him as He proclaims for the last time, “I am.” After we learn of Peter’s first denial, John leads us through the houses of Annas and Caiaphas to governor’s house where Pilate finds Him innocent of the charges brought against Him in verses nineteen through 37 of chapter eighteen, a verdict which would quickly be reversed in the moments that followed.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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