**May All Believers Be One**

John 17

Introduction:

1. Reading of John 17:1-5.

2. John chapters 14, 15 and 16 is one of the longest discourses of Jesus recorded in Scripture.

3. Anticipating His death, He works to comfort the disciples for His coming departure.

4. One of the mechanisms He has used to comfort them is a reminder of His unity with the Father. In 14:9 He said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” In verse 11 He added, “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.”

5. In chapter 17 He prays for Himself, for the disciples and for those who would believe in the word of those disciples.

6. It is a prayer for unity that all might be united together—Father, Son and all believers.

7. There are three major imperatives in this prayer. I would like to try to explain what they mean and then call on you to answer His prayer by actually being united as one.

Discussion:

I. The first imperative: Glorify Your Son (1-5).

A. In this first imperative Jesus prays for Himself.

B. But what does it mean for the Father to glorify the Son?

1. Perhaps it is best defined in light of what is said in verse 4. “I glorified You on the

earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

2. For the Father to validate what the Son has done would indeed glorify the Son.

The Father had indeed validated the work of His Son with miracles and wonders and

signs performed through Him (cf. Acts 2:22).

3. But there was more glorification to be done, thus the request. What more would the

Father do? Perhaps Acts 2 gives us more answers.

a. You nailed Him to a cross, but God raised Him up (23-24).

b. God exalted Him to His own right hand (33).

c. God made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified (36).

4. Jesus said, “Glorify Me with the glory which I had with you before the world was”

(17:5).

a. John had introduced His gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God.” He identified Him as bringing things into

being and being the source of life.

b. Paul speaks of Jesus emptying Himself and becoming man (Phil. 2:6). Whatever

glory He emptied Himself of, He is praying that it be restored. Even though He

humiliated Himself to the point of death on a cross. God highly exalted Him,

and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name

of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-10).

C. This glory includes the giving of eternal life to all those who believe in Him. In Him

we have come to know God, as gracious and compassionate and forgiving, a God

who draws us to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son.

II. The second imperative: Keep these disciples in Your name. They have kept Your word. Sanctify them in the truth (6-19).

A. It might be objected: “These are three imperatives.” But I see them all as one, for the

one who has kept the word and is sanctified in the truth are kept in His name.

B. Perhaps some understanding can be gained by from the example of the one NOT kept

in His name: “the son of perdition” (v. 12). NASB marginal reference notes that this is a

Hebrew idiom for one destined to perish. Thus, those kept in His name would be those

destined NOT to perish but destined to eternal life.

C. Those kept in His name are those who have kept His word and are sanctified in the

truth.

1. “Sanctification” is a term that brings up being joined together with God, separated

from the world, made holy to Him. It is part of our calling (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 26;

Eph. 4:1-6; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Pet. 2:9).

2. It is the word of God (the message of the cross) that calls us into this special

relationship with the Father and the Son (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

3. Like we have discussed so many times before, it is a marriage in which God is

husband and we are the bride. Illustration: In our culture a wife takes on the name

of her husband. This is representative of the sanctified relationship between them.

“I am yours and you are mine.” To be kept in this name involves faithfulness. In our

society when there is a divorce there are often name changes. Why? There is no

longer an identification with that relationship.

4. To be kept in His name is to NOT be like the “son of perdition,” separated (cf. Jn.

15:6-10) but kept in faithfulness.

III. The third imperative: May all those who believe in Me through their word be one (20-24).

A. This concept of being one harks back to Gen. 2:24 where Moses said, “For this reason

a man shall leave his father and His mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall

become one flesh.” Cf. Eph. 5:31 re. Christ and the church.

1. Frequently interpreted of the sexual relationship, but I think it is more about being

one family. Sex is only one manifestation of this unity and not the most significant, I

might add.

2. Having a family, being part of a clan was more important in ancient culture than

sex.

a. I think this is evident in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

b. Consider God’s promise to Abraham: “In your seed all nations shall be

blessed.”

c. Perpetuating a family heritage was of grave significance.

3. To be ONE in this context involves us in unity with the FATHER and the SON in

the family of God (cf. Eph. 2:19-20; 5:31; 2 Cor. 6:18; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

B. The result of such unity? “That the world may believe that You sent me” (17:21).

1. We have no evangelistic power when we are the world.

2. When we are of our father the devil (Jn. 8:34ff) we do not call people out of the

world.

3. Only in the family of God do we give voice to the call. We are calling people out of

the world and into the family of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-24).

4. Therefore we need to walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1-6).

5. While sin separates and divides Jesus died to bring unity (Eph. 2:11-22). Racism.

Denominationalism. Hatred. Division. People selfishly taking advantage of one

another. This is not God’s plan!!!! It is destructive and demonic (James 3:13-16).

Conclusion:

1. May the love of God be in us (17:25-26).

2. May we be unified together with the Father and the Son.

3. May we be sanctified in the truth.

4. May our unity call the world into the family of God.

5. May we be one as the Father and the Son are one.