

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 8, 2016

**Prayer of the Day:** Almighty God, your Son our Savior was taken up in glory and intercedes for us at your right hand. Through your living and abiding Word, give us hearts to know him and faith to follow where he has gone; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia! (John 14:18)

**Sermon Text:** John 17:20-26

Did you find the gospel reading a little difficult to follow? Many words are repeated. Some phrases sound almost identical to each other. Three times Jesus expresses his desire for people to “be one.” The phrase: “in me” or “in them” appears eight times. Then, throughout the reading, you hear intertwined requests that oneness exists between the Father and Jesus, you and God, you and your fellow believers, and you and the world.

There is much going on! As tangled as these words first appear, take a step back and see why they are spoken at all.

John records this long prayer of Jesus in [John 17](#). (I encourage you to set aside some time to read this entire prayer.) When you read it, you will hear him make three major requests. [1] Jesus prays for himself. His death is just hours away, but he asks his Father to accept his life as the payment for sin and then to raise him into heaven’s glory ([17:1-5](#)). [2] Then Jesus prays for his disciples—the eleven men who believe that he is the Son of God. Jesus would leave this world; they would remain. The world which hated Jesus would turn their hatred against the disciples. So, Jesus asks his heavenly Father to protect them ([17:6-19](#)). [3] Finally Jesus looks into the future and sees people in different eras living all around the world. And he prays: **“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...”**

**John 17:20-26**

<sup>20</sup>“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

<sup>24</sup>“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.

<sup>25</sup>“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have made you 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.”

*Those who will believe in me...* That talks about you! Already 2,000 years ago, Jesus had you in mind! And he still has you in mind today! That is why he still prays for you. He knows how the devil, a rebellious world, and your own sinful desires want nothing more than to sever the unity God has with you. So, **JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU!** *to remain one in him, to be one with believers, to lead others to be one with him.*

In his prayer, Jesus zeroes in right on you. How can he not? *He has called you by name. You are his!* ([Isaiah 43:1](#)) At one time, someone shared Jesus' life-saving message with you. As you listened, God worked through it. He opened your eyes to grasp the perfection he gives you. His forgiveness has healed a heart once broken away from its Maker. The Holy Spirit created the trust to accept these words as the very Word of God ([1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)). So, you look to Jesus who held perfect thoughts, words, and actions in your place. You now stand before God because Jesus has removed every imperfection from you and has made you perfect in God's sight! This is who you are now— a child of God! You are one in him!

Even though Jesus reigns over all things in heaven and on earth, he looks down and he picks you out from the billions who live here. Out of all the needs you have, the most important need he satisfies is 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, **JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU** *to remain one in him* because your faith resting in him leads to life eternal with him!

Yet, you know the challenges to constantly, continually remain one with him. The devil dares you to consider time with your family or personal interests as more important than God. Not just that, but to allow these things to steal away any time that you get with God—and then to justify all of this by simply claiming that there is not enough time in the day to worship (or even read your devotions)!

The world pressures you to follow your own teachings. That you are free to tell God what you consider right and wrong, just and fair. That you can define marriage by society's standards instead of God's plans for marriage. That you can end life on your terms, instead of remembering that your times rest in God's hands ([Psalm 31:15](#)). That you can order God as to when he will fit into your life.

Even our own sinful desires wage war against our holy God! How easy it is to sing: *“Jesus loves me this I know and that is all I want to know.”* To believe we know everything there is to know about sin, death, and heaven, that we never have to crack open a Bible again! To grow lazy, stop worshipping our God simply because we do not want to. Some of these words or actions appear so innocent and harmless. Yet, left unchecked, they can forever destroy the unity you have with God!

So, **JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU** *to remain one in him!* That oneness starts with him. His death on the cross has made God at-one with you. His perfect life cancels out the terrible debt you owed God. For the many times we might have considered God inconvenient in life, Jesus hears the awful punishment we were to hear. Still, he rises from the dead to proclaim to you the life you now have with God.

God dwells in you. His obedient life is now your obedient life. His desires are now your desires. Every day he points you to the forgiveness which he won for you on the cross. So, wake up every morning, knowing that you are a forgiven child of God. That is what **JESUS PRAYS FOR**—for *you remain one in him*.

Not just that, but **JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU** *to be one with believers*. You look around this house of worship and you see and hear those who confess the same thing about Jesus Christ—that he is their Savior from sin. They are one with Jesus. Because they are one with him and because you are one with him, it means that you are one with each other.

You know, Jesus never leaves it for you to define what being “one” means. He tells you exactly how unity looks and how it behaves. **“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”** The oneness you have with others is to be the same as the oneness between the Father and Son; he says that: **that may [they] be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.**

How close is that relationship?! What the Father desires, the Son desires; what the Son desires, the Father desires. Everything the Father wants done, Jesus completely agrees with it. Every desire of Jesus falls in line with the Father’s will. Never once is there disagreement on the Word of God. Never once do they agree to disagree. This unity is perfect.

Jesus takes this perfect unity he has with the Father and prays that you *be one with believers*. That unity has already been established. You have been taught the Bible’s teachings. You know what Scripture teaches about death and life, sin and forgiveness, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This unity of faith you share does not come because you agreed to disagree on certain portions of the Bible. That is certainly not the unity the Son has with the Father. Rather, this unity of faith you share comes only as you hear what God teaches you.

That is “unity” Jesus speaks of. If a congregation does not stand on the Bible’s teachings, dis-unity will rip it apart. If anything, not standing on the Bible’s clear teachings will result in dis-unity between you and God!

So **JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU** *to be one with believers*. This oneness comes from knowing and growing in God’s teachings. That is why, as a parent, God gives you a wonderful opportunity to bring your children to Sunday School. You have this chance to share your faith with them! The point of Sunday School is not to stress good morals to little children. No, the main purpose of Sunday School is to show children Jesus. They see Jesus heal people and how he can heal them. They see why they can trust Jesus. They see Jesus die on the cross in order to give them heaven. As they become more united to God, they become united to each other in the Bible’s teachings.

That is why you enroll children in catechism classes. The point of catechism is to open the Bible, read the specific teachings that Jesus gives, and discover how our congregation puts those teachings into practice.

When your catechism days get well behind you, you can easily forget what you have learned. So, we have Bible classes. It is a chance to ask questions that you have discovered as you grow older. It is a chance to see what God has to say about a subject.

As you grow in God's Word, you remain one with your fellow believers. The unity you have with each other— see what blessing comes from it. **“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you 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.”** He really draws out a clear line of thinking. Jesus knows the only Way to the Father in heaven— and so he shares the message. You have heard the message and believe it. You now know the only Way to the Father in heaven. The world might not know Jesus, but you know Jesus. So, you share this life-saving message.

**So, JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU!** *to lead others to be one with him.* This unity you have with God, and the unity you share with your fellow believers, will stand out in the world.

Just consider the what you have here. You possess the saving knowledge that Jesus has done it all. The Bible is not a rulebook on how to live a more fulfilled life. It does not instruct us to do good things to make God love us; it does not demand that we make a personal choice to believe in Jesus. No, the Bible says that we are forgiven through Jesus. This promise is ours through the work God does in us.

Now your life becomes one of joyful living! You live a life shaped by the Word— not because you must, not out of fear that God will stop loving you. You live a life shaped by the Word because you are so thankful that Jesus has given you eternal life! So, you get out of bed, knowing that God lives in you. You parent in the most patient of ways because God's patience for you equips you to be a patient parent. You work as best as you can because God has blessed you with a job, health, and the ability to be a blessing for your employer. You are a Christian friend— not because you must— but because God's love for you motivates you to love others! When troubles rise up, you stand unshaken on the promises of your powerful God. When fears appear, you rest knowing that God has life under his control. When you feel lost, God gives you guidance in his Word. Your Christ-centered life shines forth as these bright lights in a sin-darkened world.

People may marvel at the level of forgiveness, patience, kindness, comfort, stability, and confidence you have. God-willing, those examples will only lead to greater conversations about your faith in the one true God.

Jesus prays for this. “Being one.” “Being in Jesus” or “The Father being in the Son.” This complete and absolute unity rests dearly on the heart of Jesus. That is why he expresses his desire for people to “be one” three times or uses the phrase: “in me” or “in them” eight times.

This unity is already yours by faith. It remains yours by faith. He prays that it always remains yours. So, he sends his Word for you to read and hear— and grow in. As you grow closer to your God, you will always grow closer with your fellow believers. What then results is your united confession of faith shining brightly for all the world to see.

**So, JESUS PRAYS FOR YOU!** *to remain one in him, to be one with believers, to lead others to be one with him.*