

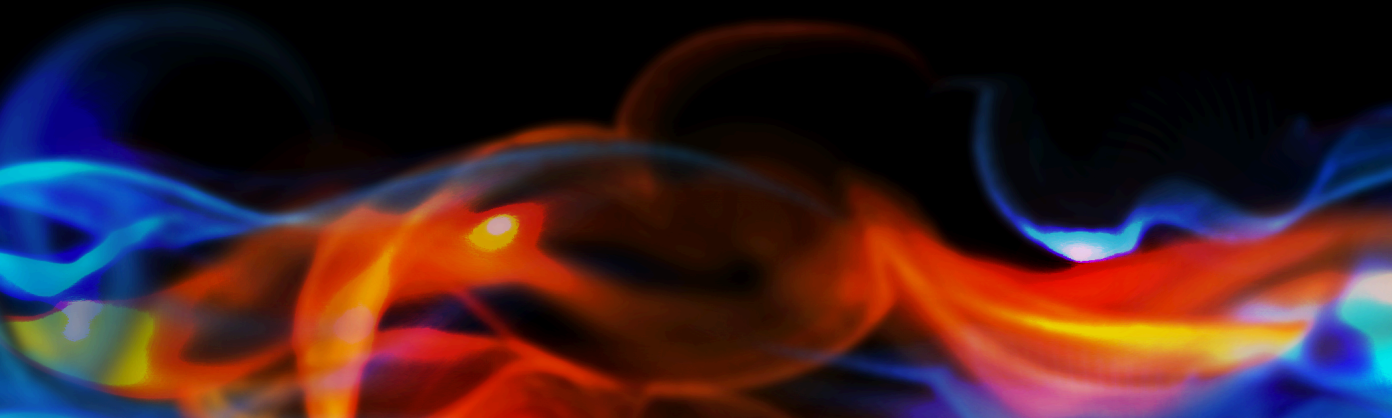


Week of Prayer

Praying Like Jesus
John 17

*Pray
without ceasing*

1 Thessalonians 5:17



Monday

Focus: Church

Pray for unity in all aspects of our church.

Scripture: John 17:20-23

"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 become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

Devotion

By Jasper Kent, Worship Pastor

Perhaps you've heard the principle, "what gets celebrated gets replicated." Jesus regularly celebrated unity. He celebrated the unity he had with the Father by only doing what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19). He celebrated that he only spoke with authority because he spoke the words of his Father (John 12:49).

When Jesus prays for us he doesn't pray for signs and wonders. He doesn't pray for eloquent or charismatic messages. He doesn't even pray even for the most strategic ministry plans, buildings, property, or an established local gathering. Jesus prays for unity. Why? Why would Jesus pray for unity above all else?

In Matthew 18:19-20 Jesus said, "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Have you ever heard this passage quoted before? I hear it often when there are a couple of people present and we're doing a church activity. It's prayed out with confidence, believing God is present because we are gathered as believers.

Here's what's fascinating to me about this passage, God promises His presence in the context of agreement.

When believers are gathered in agreement, we are unified.

So once again, why would Jesus pray for unity above all else?

By definition unity cannot contradict. Unity cannot come against. Unity cannot be in opposition.

Unity looks, acts, and sounds beautiful. It's notes on a piano ringing in agreement together. It's words woven together telling a cohesive message. It's colors on a pallet that with every brush stroke create an image of wonder.

Unity is taking two or more individual things and creating ONENESS.

Psalm 133 says this about unity, How wonderful, how beautiful when brothers and sisters live together in unity! It's like costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, flowing down Aaron's beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes. It's like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion. Yes, that's where GOD commands the blessing, ordains eternal life. Psalm 133 (MSG)

God is unity. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is one with Himself.

God always blesses who He is. When He sees His people representing His likeness, He blesses. Jesus prayed for unity because it reveals himself to the world. Our prayer should be like the prayer of Jesus, "that we will all be one, just as He and the Father are one".

One in mission. One in strategy. One in relationships. One in righteousness.

Tuesday

Focus: Care

Pray for protection from the enemy from destroying people's lives and Jesus' joy being completed in them.

Scripture: John 17:9-13

"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 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. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

Devotion

By Lance Sumner, Thomas Crossroads Campus Pastor & Small Groups

We take the time and effort to prepare for many events. In the past, we may have learned the hard way about the consequences of being unprepared. If we are not careful, we can fail to give much thought to our spiritual preparedness. However, we can take heart when preparing for spiritual battle because Jesus prayed for us in his time on earth and continues to intercede for us today.

In John 17:9-13, Jesus specifically prays for his disciples protection from the world, and, as he did for his disciples, Jesus prays to the Father over us interceding for our protection.

Why is spiritual warfare an inevitable part of the Christian life? (John 16:32-33)

How would you face each day differently if you recognized you were always under attack?

Today, many believers act as if they have within themselves the strength they need to resist evil. Some even choose to live like it doesn't exist.

Scripture does not go into a lot of detail about the dynamics of spiritual warfare, but it clearly indicates that spiritual warfare is very real and that believers need to be ready to do battle with the enemy. Spiritual battle begins on our knees in prayer. Just like Jesus!

In what ways does Jesus' prayer in John 17 change your view of prayer? How does it change your hope?

In what ways should our confidence be strengthened knowing that Jesus is praying for us? (Hebrews 4:14-16)

What is most difficult for you in admitting your complete dependency on God?

When you find yourself in a hopeless situation, how does it affect your prayer life?

Are you engaged in the battle today or choosing to live like it doesn't exist?

How does being with God's people encourage you?

Prayer

Spend some time thanking God for Jesus' intercessory prayers on our behalf. Thank him for the hope we have, even when we do not know what to pray. Ask God to align our prayers with those of Jesus. Pray for the protection of your fellow believers and our church that we might be most concerned about His purposes for His kingdom.

Focus: Next Gen

Pray that the next generation will not love the world but be sanctified in truth.

Scripture: John 17:14-19

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. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Devotion

By Lizzie Attaway, Director of Women's Ministries

There is a loud cry among our generation to be different, live your truth, march to the beat of your own drum so long as you're different isn't too different, and your truth aligns with mine, and you are marching in my band. When it comes down to it, living distinctly is unbearable.

We are bent on approval, comfort, and normalcy. From childhood, we are given glimpses of what it looks like to fit into a certain crowd - wear the right brands, play the right sports, have the right friends. It follows us into adulthood - own the right house, watch these movies, go to these places, make the right amount of money. Anything "other" is a deviation from society's expectation and is misunderstood as alien.

Yet, it is the story of every child of God since Adam and Eve were sent out of Eden. We are strangers in a foreign land, citizens of a greater Kingdom, sojourning toward our true home. When Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, he brings into full view the intense and high cost of following him in a world where we don't belong, while simultaneously pointing out the joy and safety in being set apart. He allows us to feel the dissonance of being "other" at the same time experiencing his protection from evil (v. 15). However, he doesn't stop there.

In asking the Father to sanctify us in the truth, Christ is pressing us further into distinction. The word "sanctify" here is used several times throughout the Scriptures, and often is synonymous with "consecrated," "sacred," "set apart," "holy." In other words, "other." For God to be holy is for Him to be completely "other" from everything else. Leviticus 19-20 clearly communicates God's holiness, but directly charges Israel in 20:7, "Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you."

It's hard to imagine that Jesus didn't have these words in mind when petitioning his Father on our behalf. Although, to the people of Israel the Lord's statutes were referred to as the Law, here in John 17, Jesus includes his teachings and his lifestyle. It is a fuller, more complete word/revelation that he says he has given to us and that we are sanctified in. Our otherness doesn't take the form of bizarre dress or the lack of sense of humor, rather a love and commitment to God's Word that leads us to true joy, peace, and comfort.

In a tender letter to one of her children, Jen Wilkin writes, "'Otherness' is a sensation not to be dulled or diminished but to be cherished and cultivated. So though it goes against every mothering instinct, I will not pull the thorn from your flesh, not because I want to withhold comfort, but because there is no true comfort in a lie. This world is not our home...I will not help populate your life with things that lessen your grip on this reality."

We can confidently raise our children, walk through the halls of our schools, live in the tension of Heaven and Earth with the understanding that our "otherness" is not without Another. Jesus didn't just pray for us before he went to the cross, he fought for us. "For their sake I consecrate myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth" (v. 19). He went first by consecrating himself, making the feeling of "otherness" his friend to the point of defeating death and the grave.

And now, he's sending us into a world that we are not of to live distinctly, not to oppress us, but to offer us complete rest, delight, and enjoyment when we finally arrive at our true Home.

Thursday

Focus: Global Missions

Pray for disciple-making partnerships to bring God's glory across the globe.

Scripture: John 17:1-8 (NIV)

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."

Devotion

By Ben Fraser, Young Adults Pastor

In order to answer the question of how we glorify God on this earth, we must first ask ourselves this question of, "Where do we fit in the mission of God?" In answering this question, we come to realize that our faith in Christ charges us with the responsibility to take the good news of salvation to the rest of the world.

Clyde Meador says, "We are to be his ambassadors and the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. This is not simply an option for the believer. God commands it, and we must do it."

How do we do this?

John 17:1-5 shows us.

We share his life.

When we see Jesus praying for himself, we also see that He was praying for us. Jesus not only had a burden for us, but he had a burden of bringing glory to God. This would only be realized in his finished work on the cross. Believing in the finished work of Jesus and placing our faith in him is the gift of salvation that leads to eternal life. Because Jesus has been glorified in Heaven, sinners can be saved on earth. Because we share his life, we also share his victory, and we become overcomers.

Sharing his life means...

1. We pray with a burden for people in our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

In praying for them, we allow ourselves to be humbled. Our prayer is transformed from being a check list to a heart that is surrendered to his will and that which has a burden for others around us. This attitude of prayer brings him glory.

2. We reach out.

As we pray for others and are being humbled by God's presence in our lives, we share his life by being ready to be sent where he sends us, as opposed to be going based on our convenience.

3. Pray with a burden of bringing glory to God.

There is nothing more of a priority than to bring glory to God. He sent His only son for us to pay the price we couldn't pay and grant us a gift that allows us to spend eternity in the presence of our God. As we pray with a burden of people in our church, community and our world, and reach out in obedience to what God has commanded us to do, we bring glory to God.

How do we glorify God on this earth?

By accomplishing the work which He has given us to do. (The Great Commission)

Matthew 28:19-20

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of The Father, The Son, and of The Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey the things I have taught you. And know that I will be with you till the end of the age."

The Great Commission isn't a suggestion. It is a command for every believer that fulfills the mission of God and that which brings glory to His name. We cannot afford to not be a disciple-making church, to not make a difference in our community, and expect God to bring and build disciple-making partnerships around the globe. We as Christ-followers cannot afford to be disobedient in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Often, the things we are burdened for reveal the things we prioritize. And quite honestly, Jesus' last command on this earth, ought to become our first priority in our Christian lives.

Reflection Questions

1. What does disciple-making look like in my household and my local church?
2. Where is God calling me and where do I need to be obedient in reaching out?
3. What/Who do I have a burden for?
4. How can I cultivate a burden of glorifying God?

Prayer

1. Pray for our missionaries across the globe.
2. Pray for our global partners that are impacting the world by being hands and feet of Jesus. Pray also for their protection, provision, and health.
3. Pray for our teams that go on mission trips across the world.
4. Pray to be a part of a global mission team by giving and/or going.

Focus: Community

Pray that our community efforts will make His love known.

Scripture: John 17:24-26

"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. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Devotion

By: Josiah Jacques, Recreation Director

Have you ever closed your eyes and thought about how long forever is? Thought out an endless amount of time where days run for eternity? It can be mind blowing, and that's because we are not able to fully comprehend eternity

Now, can you remember a time when you saw someone hurting? How did your heart feel? I'm sure you felt compassion towards this person because you have a God-given burden to love the people around you. He placed that desire in your heart just like He placed that in Jesus' heart.

In John, the day before Jesus was to go to the cross, we see first that his focus was his love for the world. Specifically we see his heart for people to see the glory of God in Heaven forever! He can't wait for the day when His followers are united with him in Glory.

In verse 25, Jesus continues this prayer with his heart breaking for the broken. "For the world who does not know you." I can remember a time when my wife and I were walk-ing through downtown Savannah, and we felt compelled to talk to a lady we saw on the corner of the street. She was in need of food, so we took her to her favorite taco restaurant. Through this we were able to hear her story and have a gospel conversation with her. We prayed with her and then went on our way. We still don't know where this lady is today, but we know God compelled us to love this lady who was in need, and through that, we saw her walls come down.

Through Jesus' prayer to God, we see that the key to making God known to the world is by loving people. Through that people will see Jesus. He is made known. And when He is made known, the Lord rejoices in Heaven because He knows that another soul will be united with Him in His glory forever.

Love the community around you. Not just because it's good, but because it magnifies God.

Questions:

- What are some of your greatest desires? Compare them with those of Jesus. Pray that we would have a greater heart to reach out and help others.
- In what ways could you practically make some changes in order to show love to the people in your community?
- Jesus sent his disciples out even as the Father had sent him out. This mobilization stirred by God's love makes each believer a sent one. This week try to consciously do one extra loving deed to bring glory to God the Father.



*“Every
great movement
of God can be
traced to a
kneeling figure.”*

-D.L. Moody



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