

*“United In Spirit”**Pastor Randy Orndorff**“That the Disciples Be One”**Oct 14, 2018*

Key Texts: John 17:6-19

I. Introduction: Who do I bring Glory To?

There is no question that within Jesus’ prayer he is acknowledging that this world we live in is a battleground. In the first part of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 he spends time asking God to glorify him so he, Jesus, could glorify the Father. Jesus was about to complete the work the Father sent him to do, to be a living sacrifice for the whole world, giving his life on the cross at Calvary from where he would speak the words, “It is finished”. Jesus’ work in giving his life for the sins of the world was complete.

Then he turns his prayer to God for help for the ones he chose to follow him, his disciples. He acknowledges they obeyed God’s word, they knew with certainty Jesus came from God. Verse 10 is powerful, “All I have is Yours, all You have is mine.” Jesus’ intent was to bring glory to God. As we live our lives daily what is our intent? Do we do what we do, say what we say, the ways we treat others or speak to others in any way bringing glory to God?

And then Jesus offers this up, “May they be One as We are one.” (vs 11) The union between God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to be the model for us, the church. Jesus is praying for our unity.

And yet Jesus knows there are many things that will come against the disciples to pull them apart, separate and divide them, and ultimately attempt to divert them from their mission.

II. Can’t we All Just Get Along?

To clarify, what is their mission? To be sent into the world to make more disciples. Jesus says, “I send them just as you sent me”, and they are going to face hardships, difficulties, challenges, and get this, they will be hated. Jesus says, “As the world hated me, the world will hate them. But I ask not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one”. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer we still pray “deliver us from evil” and some versions say, “the evil one”.

How do you think we as the church are doing at being One? Paul talks about being “united in spirit, intent on one purpose”. Do you think maybe the enemy has caused us to lose focus? To be diverted from the mission? Maybe too many having their own ministries, their own personal agendas?

In the movie “Mars Attacks”, a B type of movie, the President, played by Jack Nicholson, when everything has fallen into chaos because of an alien invasion, offers up a line we all tend to agree with. After being attacked in the White House, he offers a heart-felt, inspirational message to the attackers, “Why can’t we work together, just because we are different? Think about the things we could do together. Why destroy? Let’s create, we can have it all, or smash it all. Why can’t we work out our differences? Why can’t we work it out? Why can’t we all just get along?”

After a thoughtful moment, a shed tear, and a firm handshake, the little guy from Mars proceeds to slay the President. It seems, so really, we can’t all just get along.

III. Cultural Influence on our Unity

I wake up in the morning and often turn on the news. I do some flipping to catch the local news and then turn to both CNN and Fox to see what the two are debating and arguing about on any given day. To be clear, I do not do this every day. But many people do. At the end of the day, we want our sermon series to be about hope. Wild, undaunted, life-giving hope. In fact, I believe this is the only place real hope can be found,

in God and God's people. Honestly, I do not find much hope in watching news networks. What I typically find is the "conservative" may say that CNN has an errant world view and the "liberal" might argue it's because Fox has a wrong perspective. The point here isn't to parse or identify the impartiality or accuracy of a given media outlet, Real News vs. Fake News. It is to see this unsettling truth! We can't even agree on what the problems are and if we do come to any common ground, we just tend to talk it to death instead of coming up with or being part of the solution. Now if you are only living for the rapture, this might not even matter to you. Remember that old commercial "Calgon, take me away?" It was a bath product that was popular in the 1970's and if you ever hear that term it means, "Someone has too much on their plate and has to escape, relax and do nothing, but enjoy a peace and calmness provide by the scent of a bath gel, bubbles, salts, and beads." "Calgon, take me away!"

IV. Jesus Prays, "Protect Them"

Notice Jesus' prayer in verse 15? "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one." So, don't get mad at me when I say stop waiting around for the rapture. Do something, make a difference. After all, all the disciples who choose to carry their cross laid down their lives for what they believed in, except one who died as a prisoner on Patmos Island.

Let's say that Jesus really wasn't calling us to be part of a political party. Am I glad to be part of a democratic society? For sure. It's great being part of "the land of the free and home of the brave". The Body of Christ is being called to an even higher level.

And why this concerns me is because we are facing monumental challenges in the world today. To often the church wants to deal with this by "holing up", "protecting our stuff", "making excuses about why things are declining in mainline churches". We face economic and social issues, violence, terrorism, international discord. Profound technology issues and hacking need addressing. Technology can be great. It can cause nightmares.

And what I find is that newsfeeds suggest instead of coming together to address the true needs of our real world, we find ourselves being separated by increasing division and worst of all, an ever-growing anger at those who disagree with our perspectives. In the midst of the distance and emotion, we have lost the shared skill of having crucial, complex conversations. If we could talk to one another, maybe we could address our problems. If we could listen, it might be even better. We can't. Or at least, we don't. Some say our biggest crisis is a crisis of civility. And, unfortunately, our current state of civility has become toxic to our minds and souls.

V. More Judgement Than Grace

Jesus wants his disciples back then and today to engage in healthy dialogue and to engage in a broader world. Read the book of Acts and see how they did this.

My concern is so much of culture has slipped into the church that many of our conversations and decisions are more flavored with judgmentalism instead of grace. Trust me, I have heard many people have gone off from here to other places, or worst no other places, because of strong opinions from both the CNN side and Fox side. My question is, "What does Jesus think of this?" Some may be thinking, this has become a political sermon.

I'd say it is a Kingdom sermon because Jesus really did not come to set up any kingdom but God's Kingdom and that is why people hated Jesus and crucified him and why people would hate the disciples and Jesus would ask God to protect them. The ones who hated Jesus most? The religious and those in power.

If you are a disciple of Jesus today, may God protect you from the evil one who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy.

VI. Overcoming a Sense of Hopelessness

Sometimes I wrestle with a sense of hopelessness for our shared future.

I recall when our daughter, your church member and friend, Kelsey, was killed I felt such a deep sense of hopelessness. A huge part of our future was gone in a heartbeat. No graduation, no college, no watching your kid do what she loved—mission. No walking her down the aisle. It took some time to come up out of that hopelessness.

Have you ever experienced a sense of hopelessness like that? Many people have a sense of hopelessness about the church today. I pray through that, work through that each week myself. And then God shows up. I see God working in someone's life. I see a disciple going out and making a difference. I see the spark of the Holy Spirit teaching someone something new. I watch a youth flipping through a Bible, or we get to baptize a baby. There are God sightings around us each day. God is still working in the world.

Look folks, Jesus did not embody incarnation, Jesus did not come from heaven to earth and take on human form so people would disengage and have no hope. Neither did God redeem us to be racked with fear, discouragement or contentiousness.

Christ did not conquer the grave so that we might find our hope eroded.

VII. What Does Being Sanctified Look Like?

In the process of being sent into the world Jesus asks God to do something to, or maybe you could say for, the disciples. Besides making them one as He and the Father are One. Jesus prays, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." So he prays for protection, he prays they (we) may be one, he prays they may have joy in the process, he prays they may have victory over Satan, he prays they may be truly sanctified.

To be sanctified means we are to be growing in our relationship with God and growing in our faith. It means to be set apart for a sacred purpose. To be "set apart" to be used by God. To be sanctified means God has been at work in your life. It means God's Word has an impact on our lives. We read God's Word, then put into practice what it says. We become sanctified because we accept God's grace and forgiveness and consciously make a profession of faith and choose to live for Jesus. And, once saved, the Holy Spirit begins an amazing work in our lives to transform us into the image of Jesus. You've heard the phrase, "God loves you right where you are. God also loves you too much to leave you there". You become part of God's team. You move as we teach our confirmands from being a fan of Jesus to a follower of Jesus. From a pew sitter to a participant in God's working in the world. You listen closely to what God says to you in worship and then respond to God accordingly.

That looks like teaching children and youth in Sunday School and in other places. We have one lady who has a small group of Jr. High girls who meets with and mentors them every Friday afternoon here at the church. It looks like being in a small group, it also means you growing to lead a small group. It means getting to know your neighbors, inviting people to know Jesus, and it means being united in spirit, intent on one purpose—know that purpose? To be about the intentional process of making disciples who are then sent to make more disciples. Could Jesus' prayer be any more focused?

And you'll discover next week this prayer of Jesus was not just for his disciples back then, but for us today as well.

VII. Super Chickens or Just Average Chickens?

A man by the name of William Muir, a biologist from Purdue University studied chickens. He focused on productivity, something that concerns us all, but it's easy with chickens because all you have to count is? Eggs. He wanted to know what would make his chickens more productive, so he came up with this experiment. Chickens live in groups, so he selected an average group and he let it alone for six generations.

Then he created a second group of individually most productive chickens—call them super chickens and he put them together in a super flock and each generation he selected the most productive for breeding. After six generations had passed, what did he find? Well, the first group, the average group, was doing just fine. They were plump and fully feathered and egg production had increased dramatically. What about the second group? Well, all but three were dead. They'd pecked the rest to death. Maybe the strong don't always survive. The research suggests cooperation to be the better model.

Why this story here? At first, I thought, leave it where Jesus would, saying: "He or she who hears, let them hear". I won't do that to you, but I do hope you think and pray about this. Chickens? Super chickens? What's it got to do with anything?

When we look at our society and with increased violence, the overall sense we've lost the ability to listen to each other, and a growing sense of hopelessness, it kinda feels like we are trying to peck each other to death.

IX. How Can We be One and "Be the Change"?

How can we change this? How can we change the pecking and nitpicking, the blaming, the passing the buck? How can we, the church, be the change we want to see in our church and in our world? How can we recognize the problem? Seeing the problem in ourselves, that is hard. Recognizing problems in everyone else is easy. And even when we recognize the problem, we can't stay there. To stay humble, we have to move from recognition to understanding. We become one with each other just as Jesus and the Father are One when we seek to understand and stop pecking each other. We then can move forward as One. But you know what it takes? Humility. It's not always so much about "Why can't we all just get along", as it is how can we find ways to talk, listen, and find some common ground. Being One as God and Jesus are One. Can we ever get there?

X. Closing Prayer

Let us Pray:

God, protect each of Your disciples by the power of Your name.

God, give each of Your disciples Your full measure of joy.

God, send us, Your disciples, into the world.

God, sanctify us, Your disciples, with Your truth.

God, make us One, just as You and Your Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are One.

After all, God, this is really the prayer of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

We offer it, once again in His Name,
The Name of Jesus.

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Amen.