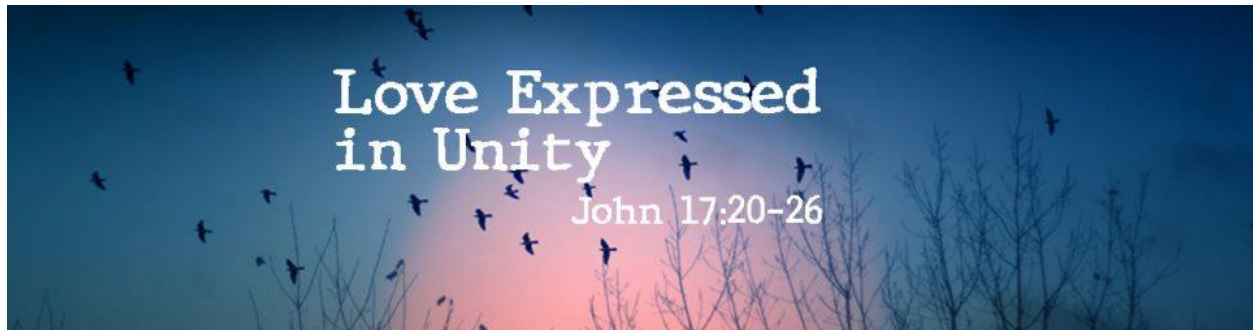


"Love Expressed in Unity"



Video Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fLdzpRproI>

[John 17:20-26](#)

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ 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. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 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. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ 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.”

Sermon Transcript:

Dr. Stewart

We've been studying the promises of God. Today we're gonna look at John 17:20-26, titled Unity Expressed in Love. I remember this commercial when I was a kid. There was a person that started singing, a young person. And then there were all these people who were gathering, all singing on a hill. You might have seen this. It was 1971. "But I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to hold it in my arms and keep it company. I'd like to see the world for once, all standing hand in hand, and hear them echo through the hills for peace throughout the land. That's the song I hear, singing along. Let the world sing today." And then there's a little line added, "It's the real thing." Did you see that commercial? And you know what they were selling? Coke. Yeah, exactly. "It's the real thing." The song was not saying the world is perfect, utopia. But it was saying, I'd like to see it that way.

Unfortunately, the world seems to have problems, difficult problems, like Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East and a war on terror and radical Islam and Black Lives Matter-white supremacists, Democrats and Republicans. Difficult multi layered issues. A soft drink just doesn't cut it, right. Webster's definition of unity is this, Unity is the quality or state of being not being multiple. I like that. The quality or state of not being multiple. Or more easily, it's oneness. It's oneness. Sports teams wear uniforms with distinctive colors to show unity. Another examples is at weddings, there's a candle that's lit by two other candles. You know what that's called? A unity candle. That's right. As I was googling this, I learned that unity is a cross platform game engine developed by Unity Technologies. I didn't know that. And in fact, if you just Google unity, you get more of that than you do anything else.

The Bible has many examples. David said, Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity. Our passage speaks of unity, but not just unity for unity sake, but unity with a purpose. God's purpose. These are Jesus last words before he is taken by the soldiers, tried, convicted and crucified in John 17, Jesus high priestly prayer. If you pray with people, do you think you get a unique insight into their character, by what they say as they pray? I think you do. In the Old Testament, the high priest came once a year to bring a sacrifice for the people and for his own sins. Jesus prays before his sacrifice, his crucifixion on the cross. He doesn't need any kind of atonement for his sins. But he does this for us, for believers, all believers.

Read with me John 17:20-26 please. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they all may 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. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you've 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."

In the first 19 verses, Jesus prays. First about his glorification, verses one through five. Then he prays for his disciples, men and women, there with him from the beginning, they were called from the beginning. In verse 20, Jesus expands his prayer. It's no longer just the disciples we've heard about in this book, "I do not ask for these only, but also for all who will believe in me through their word." Are you included in that? Yes, all of us that believe in Jesus Christ were included, you and I, every believer from every corner of the world, Jews and Gentiles, every person who will trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior, people who have not yet been born when Jesus is speaking, the vast majority of them. MacArthur says, "Although the vast majority has not been born, they nevertheless were and had been for eternity on the heart of the savior. He knew them all, since their names had been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life. Do you realize that if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, your name is in a book that is in heaven, the book of life? It's there from the moment you believe, even before you

believed, from the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8, if you want to read about that. Christ's intercession for us which began with this prayer 2000 years ago and continues to this day. Hebrews 7:25 says "he always lives to make intercession" for us. He's praying for you now, he prays for you throughout your life. That's something you can hold on to. There's no better prayer warrior than Jesus. So this is big. Jesus prays a massive prayer. It's a good thing to learn from. Sometimes my prayers are small, shortsided. We've been praying for these 50 most persecuted countries in the world and that's a good thing. We've been praying for them that the door might be opened to the gospel. We want to see the gospel go out, the message to every man and woman, that's a right prayer. You know, we could just pray for everyone, everywhere, for everything they need but that's pretty vague, pretty pointless.

Jesus is more specific here, he's broad in the group that he prays for but he's specific in the things he prays about. Let's see what he prays for, verse 21, "that they may all be one", unity. Is this a surface unity he prays for, do you think? Not superficial, no. That we'd all look the same? No. That we'd talk the same? No. Act the same? Well in some ways, as believers, we're all here to fellowship and pray. And that's some things we have in common. Yet there's very unique ways God has built you, where you would do things that I would not be able to do. He's created all of us uniquely. Unity is not uniformity, he does not want us to be cookie cutter christians. We have to be our own individual and God made it that way.

Let's look at some of the ways God brings us to oneness. How much unity does God want for us? In verse 21, what does he compare it to? He and the Father. That's pretty united! That's complete, that's complete unity, they're one. They operate in different ways though, the Father sent the son to earth, the son willingly goes even though it's hard, especially when he's been accustomed to being with the Father and the Spirit in heaven from eternity. He came down to walk around and become a man, a poor man from an obscure town, to be born to a teenager in a stinking stall. That's a huge contrast from poor humble man, stinking stall, to the king of heaven, on the throne. Yet both agree, the exact purpose they have is to rescue mankind, that's what they're about. This gives us a hint of what we are to have with one another, as fellow believers. In the eternal counsel of God, that's before time began, the trinity had a meeting and decided the goal would be to rescue men and women on planet earth. They all agree, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. They would all play a role in this celestial earth intervention. Because we need an intervention, right. Each member of the trinity has all the divine attributes: omniscience, omnipresence, all might, holiness, etc. Jesus said, I and the Father are one, John 10:30. Do you know what the response of the jews was for that? They took up stones to stone him. But they didn't, it wasn't his time and they tried to arrest him but he slipped away. It's amazing how you can't really nail Jesus down before the time's right.

So let's consider what the bible says about our unity, our oneness with the trinity. Verse 21 says, "that they also may be in us." Our oneness is profound. It is the same oneness found in the trinity, between the Father and the Son. God wants us to be a part of that unity. Jay Adams says, it's a glory for us to be in union with the trinity. Not of course in the sense of becoming a member of it, but in the sense of being aligned with

God, as members of the trinity are to one another, they're aligned. Hendrickson says, to be sure God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in essence. Believers, on the other hand, are one in mind, effort and purpose. What is the common purpose we share with one another and what the Godhead? Look at the last part of verse 21c, "so that the world may believe that you", the Father, "have sent me.", Jesus. We're to be taking the message of the good news of Jesus to the world. That's God's heartthrob, the key to rescuing lost souls. The gospel is our unity. It's not by looking for some fine point of doctrine I have in common with other people of other churches. It's the message, the message that determines eternal destiny. That makes all the difference, that's what we're to be about, it's all important.

DA Carson says, the unity for which Christ prayed is not achieved by hunting enthusiastically for the lowest common theological denominator but by common adherence to the apostolate gospel, by love that is joyful, self sacrificing. By undaunted commitment to the shared goals of the mission with which Jesus followers have been charged. By the power of God, believers were united in spiritual life, are also united in purpose, share the same mission, proclaim the same gospel that the world might believe, trust, in Jesus. We should preach with our words and our actions to every person. 1 Peter 3:15, we're to be ready to give an answer or a reason for the hope that is in us. As we preach Christ, we offer united opposition to the world system of evil. We oppose satan as we do this. In your face, satan! I kind of like that. Those of you who like stirring things up, that's a great outlet right there. Martin Luther was like that, he liked to stir things up. And he wrote this in his hymn, "And though this world, the devils filled, should threaten to undo us. We will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him." We've said God's intention, in sharing the gospel, is to see men and women come to him. Matthew Henery says that "the world may believe that you have sent me" is the Father's mind, that he would have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9. Therefore it is his will that all means possible should be used, no stone left unturned, for the conviction and conversion of the world. The good fruit of the church's oneness will be an evidence of the truth of christianity, it will recommend christianity to the world and to the good opinion of those that are outside the church, when they shall see the church raised by the foolishness of preaching, kept up by the miracles of divine providence and grace and how well it is modeled and built up. They will be ready to say, we will go with you for we see that God is with you

What is the glory we have been given? Christ, in you, verse 22. You're indwelt by the Holy Spirit which is also the spirit of Christ. You are made in God's image yet that image has been marred, destroyed, by sin. The spirit of God is restoring God's image. You come to know Jesus and then it continues on every day. You're being sanctified as you're being made a little more like Jesus. That's in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "we all, with unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the spirit." He gives this glory to make us one with him, unified with Christ, verse 23. Christ is unified with the Father, "that they may become perfectly one." The word in the greek is the word *Telios*. It means perfect, but it doesn't mean perfect in the way we would take it. It means

perfect in the way of complete, to be finished. Is our work complete? There's an amazing verse in John 17 verse four, Jesus makes the statement that he completed the work the Father gave him to do. That's an amazing statement! He completed it, in every way, perfectly done. That's the finished work of Christ and that's what we stand on. That's why his sacrifice was satisfying to God, he finished the work. In my job, I can never really feel like work is done, it keeps coming. I came back from vacation and there's like 120 messages, various kinds, on my computer, waiting for me. I'll get it done today but you know what's going to happen, tomorrow there'll be more.

Jesus fulfilled the law, in every point. He was sacrificed for our sins, he paid completely the price, satisfied his Father's righteous requirements in full. He exhausted God's wrath against our sin so, though we were enemies he made us friends, though we were at war with God he made peace through the blood of his cross, though we were dead in our sins he made us live together with Christ. By grace, by God's help, you've been saved. When we're saved, we become members of one body, we have one head or ruler, who is Christ, Ephesians 1:22-23. We're baptized by one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13. We have the same mind, Philippians 2:5. and that mind does nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. But in humility of mind, we're to regard others more important than ourselves. There's one faith centered in Christ. It's impossible to please God without him. MacArthur says, There is one love, agape love. Believers love each other equally. It's not to be an emotional love, but a love of will and of choice. It's expressed when believers are devoted to one another and honor, as it says in Romans 12:10. Love has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. We need God to supply us love, don't we? It's hard to love in so many situations. It's beyond us. But God pours out, within our hearts, love through the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5. It excludes divisive attitudes, such as personal ambition and selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and the countless other manifestations of the evil fruit of self love. There is one hope and the promised eternal inheritance guaranteed to every believer by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13.

There is one God and Father of all who is overall and through all and in all. The one true God who is sovereign ruler of everything, including the church. We come by this oneness, honestly. Our Heavenly Father has set it up this way. In his wise, all knowing purpose, this unity either attracts people out of the world or repels the world. To those who reject, they are without excuses. He's made things plain. He wants them to know two things, first that the Father sent Jesus into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, that's us. We were lost before coming to Christ. And secondly, that the world may know that the Father loved people, your people, who've come out of the world, people who have been radically changed by God's presence in them, verse 23. God inhabited. And we're never the same after that. We were headed down the broad road to destruction, but God stepped in. For God so loved the world, he intentionally chose to love the world, that he gave his only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3:16. So God was intentional. He sent His Son to pull us out of the fire and grant us eternal life. We were rebels and he loves us with the same love. He loves his own son. There is no danger. There is no danger we will ever fall from his love because the foundation is unshakable. We are loved as the Father loves Jesus. That's incomprehensible. There's a song we sometimes sing called How Deep the

Father's Love For Us. "How vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure." That's us, right? The wretch. My daughter has a T shirt says "Wretch" on it. You know, I am that wretch.

The uniting of Christians in love is the beauty of their perfection. It invites others to join them. It's to be a message to the world. Our love is to be a message of the world that draws them to Christ. Let me ask you a question. Can we hinder the gospel by our attitudes and actions? How do we do that? Well, we've seen the selfless love of Jesus. It would be the opposite of that, when we become argumentative, divisive. When we are harsh, not gentle servant of the Lord. We must not strive but be gentle. In those attitudes, they hinder the gospel, they keep God's message from going out in power. God help us not to go there. Matthew Henry says the uniting of Christians in love is the beauty of their profession and invites others to join with them as the love that was among the first century Christians. We read in Acts 2:42-43, instead of causing quarrels, that may have been the way before for them but no longer, they weren't quarreling, They weren't striving, when it cools the fiery, smoothes the rugged, disposes man to be kind and loving, courteous and gracious, to all men. In Acts, they shared possessions and gave to those believers who were in need. "By this all men and women will know and believe that you have sent me." By this it will appear that Christ was sent of God and that his doctrine was divine. God, who makes men's hearts alike, when the worshipers of God are one, he is one and his name is one. The privilege of believers, the Father, himself, loves them with a love resembling his love to his son. For they are loved in him with an everlasting love. It does the world much good to know how dear to God believers are to him and we should treat them like that. We should treat other believers with respect, kindness, love.

In verse 24, this verse kind of blows me away even though I have heard this thought many times. Jesus desires for believers to be with him. Think about that for a minute, he desires for you, believer, to be with him. Do you ever ask why? Why would he want that? Doesn't he know how fallible we can be, how tending towards sin we are? But the son of God's hearts desires for us is that we should be with him. He said this before in John 14:3, "I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am you will be also." When Jesus says "where I am", in John 17:24, he's not referring to his location, where he's speaking from, he's speaking in Jerusalem, that's not where he's talking about. He's looking beyond his present location to the place he would soon be going back to, in heaven with his father. What makes heaven the most special place? Is it the gold on the streets or the gates of pearl? Maybe, but what makes it the most amazing place is the presence of The Lamb! The Lamb of God, Jesus, who was slain to provide us redemption. This is the supreme joy, to be with Jesus, to see his glory.

When Jesus came to earth the first time, he had glory as of the only begotten of the Father, John 1:14. But that glory was veiled, it was blunted, it was turned down, not full force. Pastor showed a picture last week of when he was biking and the bright light radiating from the sun on the road sign how it blinds you. It's so brilliant. And that's the idea here, that full force glory, 1 John 3:2. MacArthur says this, In God's gracious plan, believers will not only see Christ's glory but also share it. For our citizenship is in

heaven. Throughout all eternity, the song of the redeemed as they behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ will be, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!...To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever!", Revelation 5:12-13. But the glory of Christ speaks here in the visible manifestation of the fullness of his glory that believers will one day see in heaven. As we said, the incarnation, that glory was there but it was partially veiled.

But when Jesus returns to heaven, the Father restored that fullness of glory as he had requested. As we read that in here in verse five of chapter 17, he says, "Now Father, glorify me together with yourself with the glory which I had with you before the world was." Believers will enter the fullness of Christ's glorious presence when they die. What a blessing! Jesus pronounced the pure in heart blessed, for they shall see God, Matthew 5:8. So overwhelming will the manifestation of Christ's glory be that the only possible response will be to praise, "and the elders fell down and worshipped.", Revelation 5:14. All the blessings believers will one day experience in heaven flow from the reality that the Father loved the son before the foundation of the world, verse 24. From all eternity, the Father and the son enjoyed perfect fellowship. Throughout his prayer, based on that mutual love, the Father chose a people in love. He gave them to the son and prepared an eternal kingdom for them, Matthew 25:34, where they will behold his glory forever. In John 17:24, the Greek word "to see my glory", has the idea of ongoing, that I will keep on seeing the endless joy of seeing Jesus in His glory, as we're with him eternally.

Verse 25, "Oh, Righteous Father." You know, the world confidently defies God's righteousness. Feeling their own righteousness, it's going to be enough. You know, when I get there the scales are gonna come up, and my righteous is gonna be enough that I'll tip scale, I'll be ready for heaven. It doesn't work that way. You see, they don't know God, he's too Holy to even look on evil. He requires perfect righteousness. And it's found nowhere else in the universe except in his Son who lived perfectly, lived an absolutely spotless life, fulfilled the law in every point. He died in our place to cleanse away sin completely and give us his own righteousness. That's how we get there. It's not by our own righteousness, it's by His righteousness alone. It's freely given to anyone who will trust in Jesus sacrifice for them, for their sins. They repent, they turn from their own sin, they turn to Christ, to love him, to follow him. It's not a fire insurance plan. It's a radical renovation of your life. That's the gospel, the good news. Everyone who received Jesus becomes a child of God. If you're here and you haven't received Christ, do it, do it today. Come see us or call us or text us. Do whatever you have to do if you have questions.

Continuing in verse 25, but the world does not know him. He came to his own people, the Jews, and they would not receive Him. The apostles are sent first to the Jews, but then to the end of the earth, to the Gentile nations. Many have received him but most reject the gospel. John 3:17-20 says, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than light

because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light for fear his deeds will be exposed." We know by faith that Jesus was sent by God to earth to bring us into a right relationship with God. And the these last two verses, Jesus speaks with all confidence and assurance that his Righteous Father will hear and answer him. Verse 26, Jesus summarizes his work on earth. There is no element of regret or confession, he accomplished the work he was given. He faithfully made known to man the Father, who he is, what he is like, what he expects of us. There is no greater pursuit than knowing the living God. If you look at verse three in this chapter, it says that in this high priestly prayer, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God." This is eternal life. That's what it's about. What are we going to do in Heaven? Go fishing and hunting and doing all the stuff you'd like to do? No! It's getting to know one true and infinite God, more and more. And we need an eternity to do that. Because we can never know Him completely.

So Jesus is about to be taken, and he speaks these last words, there's almost no time left. And he says, this, which is a curious statement, "I will continue to make it known", verse 26. Why does he say that? I mean, he's about to be taken here. And what's he gonna do anyway? What could he be talking about? There must be another work going on. You know, about 40 days after he's crucified, what happens? Pentecost, The Spirit comes in power, continues to teach his disciples, and it continues to teach his word to know this God every day. As we learn who God is and his ways we become loving because God is love. It's not a watered down form of love, but it's fully concentrated. It's the same love that the Father has for Jesus that we experience. Love is the fruit of the Spirit, which indwells us, and Jesus himself is the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ this speaks of and the Holy Spirit, they're one in the same. Jesus said I in them, that's the greatest promise we have. The Jesus inhabits us. Ironside said if Christ dwells in me, then this great truth is no fairy tale, but it's a plain and absolute truth that the divine Christ can come into and live in this narrow room of our poor hearts. And if he does this, then he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. That does not destroy my individuality. I am more not less because Christ lives in me. We may, each of us, if we will have Jesus Christ in our hearts, God must love me because Jesus lives in me. It's certain as long as God loves Christ, he cannot cease loving me. Whatsoever gifts He bestows upon Jesus pass and part over to me, immortality, heavenly glory, all blessedness in heaven and earth, these are the fruit of the oneness with Christ, which is possible for us. If you've trusted him, the benefits of this prayer, the benefits of this prayer, are for you. With the best promise, Jesus in you forever. Ephesians 2:5-7 says this, "even when we were dead in our sins", "...we were seated, us with him, "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus". Let's pray.

Lord, we're thankful that you care for us. We're thankful for your gospel, as we are lost sinners, destined for hell on our own. We're thankful that Jesus came, provided a sacrifice for us. We're so thankful that he completed the work, that we can have a relationship with you. We're thankful that your gospel goes out. We pray that you'd help us not to be a hindrance to the gospel, help us to strive to be loving, towards other people to strive, to not be argumentative, to be gentle, help us God, to do these things that your word would go out with power to men and women all around. We thank you

that Jesus prays for us, even now, in heaven. He ever lives to make intercession for us.
Thank you for him. Thank you for your love for us in Jesus name. Amen.