

*"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.
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 whole 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 you and I 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 have given 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 have 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."*

John 17:18-26

"The Name, the Truth, the Glory, and the Love"

Pastor Stephen Ridge

This week, we join Jesus, with his men, in prayer as he labors to see through the Garden of Gethsemane, past the Cross, beyond the Grave, into the glory that waits for him and for us if we can learn from him how to be faithful in the adversities of life. Last week, Jesus' prayers were centered on the men around him and he paused, sadly, to remember Judas who would soon be entering the garden from the wrong direction in the wrong company. But for now Jesus' thoughts were on the men right there, who would follow him into the garden and stand by him as he prayed through what would happen as dark turned to dawn on Good Friday.

And Jesus prayed that the Word he learned from his Father and taught to his men would "*sanctify*" them, set them apart for a destiny none of them really understood as they got ready to cross the ravine and share whatever future Jesus faced that night. So Jesus said to his Father, "*As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world... for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*" In the Greek, the verb Jesus used for himself and his men is exactly the same. Jesus would "*consecrate*," set himself apart as a sacrifice, so that his men could be set apart, "*sanctified...in truth*," Jesus said.

The point being that Jesus had lived out a "*truth*" from his Father's heart, a gospel that would set apart the men around him as belonging to God. And not just the men standing next to Jesus in the dark that night! Rather Jesus prayed to his Father for all the people who would believe, those who came before us and those who still haven't heard, Jesus prayed for us all. He said to his Father, "*I don't ask for these men only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.*" In other words, all the Christians through all the centuries who would hear and believe a gospel and then "*consecrate*" themselves so that people like you and me would hear God's truth and pass it on to others still. And it is a consecration, a setting apart that involves more than just talk.

Jesus prayed for his men then and for us now "*...that they all may be one*," he said, "*just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.*" It is strangely intense language that begs for explanation. How was the Father in Jesus even while Jesus prayed to the Father for strength to get through the night? How was Jesus in the Father out there in the dark, so full of anxiety and tears that his disciples spoke of him as sweating "*drops of blood*" as he prayed? But still Jesus prays, "*...you, Father, are in me, and I in you*," and he prays for us all that "*...they may also be in us that the whole world may know that you sent me.*"

In other words, it isn't the eloquence of our messages or the elegance of our gestures that convince people that our Savior came from God. Rather, it is whether we walk close enough to Jesus to that our lives reflect the truth that lives in the Father's heart. Jesus put it this way, he said to the Father, "*The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as you and I are one.*" We think we have to be clever, we think we have to do better, when in fact what God really wants of us is that we stick together and love and help each other in this world. Jesus goes on, "*... 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.*"

This isn't technique language. This isn't about how to build a better mouse trap. Jesus is talking about an organic, spiritual union where the love and forgiveness we each gain from God binds us together, like brick and mortar held together the old temple, like bones and ligaments and tendons hold our bodies together and allow each of us to live and move as a single body even though the limbs and organs couldn't be more different. And the apostles understood what Jesus was getting at. Decades later, Paul will write the congregation in Ephesus, teaching them that each one of them is a human brick in a spiritual temple where the Holy Spirit lived.

The point being that we gain the Spirit's power, we live out the Spirit's love only to the extent we all buy into the gospel blueprint. Paul will teach another congregation in Corinth that the Spirit has made them one body, eyes and ears, arms and legs, and we move with grace, we look like Christ only to the extent we work together as Christ teaches and the Spirit leads.

The love we show each other, the forgiveness we bring to bear in tight spots and rough stretches is what show the people around us that Christ is in the room and the Spirit is in our hearts. The message matters, the gestures count, some amount of zeal for sacred things, some level of excellence in the worship we attempt and the service we offer is a necessary part of loving and serving and waking with Christ. But interwoven into all that is the gospel fact that all this only works if we can do it together.

So Jesus says to his Father about all of us: *"The glory 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."* The point being that, when we give our lives to Christ, we commit ourselves to a process where God the Holy Spirit builds us together as one sanctuary, weaves us together as one body.

Or as Solomon put it in the Proverbs: *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."* Or as Paul taught the Ephesians: *"...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together... grows so that it builds itself up in love."* And it is about love that Jesus prays next. He says to the Father: *"...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."*

Love and truth, truth and love. The two are inseparable in any endeavor in which God plays a part. He will not compromise what his Word says for anyone. All of us will answer to what his Word actually says, individually and together. Individually because each of us is called to know and love the Father for ourselves. Together, because salvation is a team sport. A real walk with Jesus will teach us to love the people who belong to Christ, sins and faults and all. Faithfulness, obedience and unity is what glory looks like in this world. But in the next it will be more visible than that.

Jesus asks his Father one last thing for us before heading to the Garden and then to the Cross that waits him once the sun is up: *"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given to 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."* It follows that we face our crosses, we face the adversity and challenges of the fallen world together, because once we've done that together, we are promised our portion in the glory and love that the Father, Son and Spirit have always possessed, and have always wanted to share with us.