

John 17:11-26
Exodus 32
Psalm 133

“That They May Be One”

October 11, 2020

Exodus 32 recounts Israel’s rebellion at Mt. Sinai.

Moses is still up on the mountain.

The LORD has given Moses the pattern for the tabernacle –
the pattern that will allow Israel to draw near to him!

But the people get impatient –

and they convince Aaron to make golden calves for them to worship.

They do not wait upon the LORD

And the result is death and destruction.

Aaron’s role in all this is troubling.

When Moses comes back down, Aaron gives a flimsy response:

“I threw the gold into the fire, and out came this calf”!

Right.

Because you formed it and molded it into a calf!!

Just 40 days earlier, the people of God had heard the Ten Commandments –

and had agreed that they would not make any graven image to worship.

Now – less than six weeks later – they are making a graven image to worship.

And Aaron is leading the way.

It is striking that Aaron will still end up as the first high priest.

How could a man who made such a colossal mistake become high priest?!!

Because he will be consecrated.

He will be sanctified.

Aaron goes from chief idolator to chief priest.

Just like Peter goes from chief denier to chief apostle.

How does one go from one to the other?

By being sanctified – consecrated – set apart by God.

Our Psalm of response reflects on this in Psalm 133.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,

on the beard of Aaron,

running down on the collar of his robes!”

Aaron – the chief idolator – is consecrated and set apart as chief priest.

As the oil of consecration flows down his head,
and runs down his beard,
he is set apart by the Holy Spirit.

We all can identify with Aaron.

He was a sinner – just like us.

But he was called as high priest to represent us sinners before God.

Of course, he could only enter the earthly tabernacle.

But as the oil ran down on his robes –

we would see the breastplate that he wore when he entered the presence of God!

The breastplate with the twelve stones – representing the twelve tribes.

When Aaron entered the Holy of Holies –

he bore us on his breast!

All Israel entered the presence of God through Aaron.

All of God's people are *one* in Aaron – in the high priest.

Sing Psalm 133A

John 17

We stopped last time in verse 12,

right in the middle of Jesus' prayer for the eleven.

We have seen how Jesus' prayer draws on the themes of the sermon

that he has just preached in chapters 13-16.

He told his disciples that "whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

And now he is giving them an example of the sorts of things to ask.

Jesus prays first for himself–(verses 1-5)

"glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you
before the world existed."

This should be the center of all prayer–that God would be glorified in his Son.

But then Jesus prays for the eleven (verses 6-19).

Jesus' mission depended entirely on these eleven men.

If they failed, then the gospel of Christ would never be known.

If they didn't "get it," then no one would get it.

And we should continue to pray for the spread of the apostolic teaching.

As we see so powerfully throughout the history of the church,

if those who preach the Word get it wrong, the church suffers horribly.

When pastors are led astray by their own folly,
then the blind follow the blind, and both end up in a pit.
And finally Jesus prays for all “who will believe in me through their word.” (Verses 20-26)
In other words, he prays for the whole church throughout all ages.
He prays for you and for me.

1. The Glory of the Son with the Father (v1-5)

- a. Perichoresis – the Mutual Indwelling – of the Father and the Son**
- b. Incarnation – the Word Who Became Flesh**

We have noticed before John’s usage of the word “world”–or “kosmos”
John uses *kosmos* “world” 76 times in his gospel--18 times in these 26 verses.

But watch how the world changes over time in this prayer.
It starts at the end of chapter 16.

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
That statement sets up the discussion of the *kosmos* in Jesus’ prayer.
In verse 5, Jesus speaks of the glory that he had with the Father before the world existed.
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

This reminds us of the *perichoresis* – the mutual indwelling –
of the Father and the Son.
Jesus is one with the Father.
But also – the Word became flesh.
He who was one with the Father has joined himself to humanity.

Why?

Because God loved the world.
The problem is that the world is hostile to God!

2. The Glory of the Son in the Eleven (v6-19)

- a. The Eleven Belong to the Father and He Gave Them to the Son “Out of the World” (v6-8)**

So in verse 6, Jesus says that he has revealed God’s name
to “the people whom you gave me out of the world.”
The eleven are those who have been called out of the world.
The world is under the power of the Evil One,
and Jesus has come to cast out the ruler of this world. (12:31)
In this respect, the world is corrupt and wicked,
and the people of God must be called out of the world.

- b. Not Praying for the World, but for Those Who Belong to the Father and the**

Son (v9-12)

And so Jesus prays:

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

In verse 9, Jesus says explicitly that he is not praying for the world,
“but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.”
There is an explicit contrast between the “world” and the people of God.

In verse 11, Jesus even says that he is no longer “in the world.”
He is returning to the Father. He will no longer speak to the world,
but the eleven will.

Therefore he says in verse 11, “they *are* in the world.”
They must continue to preach the kingdom of God in the midst of the world
that was corrupted by its evil ruler.

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² 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.

Verse 13 then includes an interesting twist.

c. As Jesus Comes to the Father, the Eleven Are No Longer ‘of’ the World (v13-16)

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

One of the main themes of chapters 13-16 was that Jesus is returning to the Father
How is that a *good* thing for the disciples?
It is a good thing if Jesus goes away, because only then can he send the Spirit.
Only then can the power of the resurrected Christ be with his people always.
Only then can his joy be fulfilled in them,
as they speak his word in the world.

But verse 14 makes it clear that the world will hate them.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ^[a] ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

While the ruler of this world is cast out in the death of Christ,
that does not mean that the world is instantly converted to Christ.
The world still loves its deposed ruler.
The world still hates the new king.

The world hates the eleven, because “they are not of the world,
just as I am not of the world.”
They are in the world, but they are not of the world.
They are heralds and ambassadors of a heavenly kingdom.

But Jesus does not ask the Father to take them out of the world (verse 15),
but rather pleads that “you keep them from the evil one.”
The ruler of this world is cast out in the death of Christ,
but he is not destroyed.
He is like an exiled ruler that still plots and schemes from a distance.
He doesn’t have the power to regain his throne—
no longer can he hold the nations under his sway—
but he can still do mischief in a small, mean way.

In verse 16 Jesus repeats what he said in verse 14.
“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”
Jesus rarely repeats himself verbatim.
He often says similar sorts of things,
in order to communicate the same idea in different words.
But he rarely repeats himself.

Jesus thinks that this is important enough to repeat verbatim.
“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”
It is something they will need to remember.
Because all too often they will forget.
The world is what we see everyday.
We live our lives *in* the world.

But Jesus reminds the Father that the eleven are no more of the world than he is.
After all, Jesus is speaking to the Father.
And Jesus reminds the Father that the eleven are not of the world.
There is nothing wrong with reminding God of what he already knows.
He knows everything.
You are never going to inform him of something he didn’t know!

In our OT lesson, Moses reminded God of his covenant.
Remember how you took this people out of Egypt.
If you destroy them, what will happen to your great name?
Moses is concerned for the name of Yahweh.
Remember what you have promised, O Lord!
Jesus has asked his Father to keep them in your name,
and he reminds his Father that they are not of the world.
They are of the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

d. Sanctify Them in Truth as I Send Them into the World (v17-19)

¹⁷ Sanctify them^[b] in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself,^[c] that they also may be sanctified^[d] in truth.

And so he asks the Father to “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

In verses 17-19, Jesus uses the verb “to sanctify” three times.

Twice to refer to his disciples, and once to refer to himself.

This, too, is bound up with Jesus’ understanding of the world

In fact, if we translate it “consecrate” here, it might make better sense.

Think back to Aaron – the high priest – who was consecrated
in order to set him apart so that he might bear Israel into the presence of God.

Here at the end of the prayer, I’m okay with calling it the high priestly prayer!

Prayer is generally the work of the prophet –

but here Jesus highlights his own priestly work!

And Jesus’ work in the world will be continued by the Eleven.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

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 consecrated in truth.

Jesus consecrated himself for service, speaking the truth to them,

So that they might be consecrated for God’s service as well,

speaking the truth to others.

Jesus’ work in the world is the proclamation of the truth.

This is what he has said in v4, when he declared that his work is finished.

He has “accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

His work was to speak the Word of God to the eleven.

Now they will be consecrated–sanctified–

set apart for the service of the preaching of the Word.

As consecrated preachers of truth, they are now sent into the world.

That is why he said that they will accomplish greater works than Jesus.

He brought eleven men into the kingdom.

He trained eleven men as ministers of the gospel.

They will do much more.

Through their preaching, the world–that hostile realm ruled by the devil–
will be saved.

At the beginning of chapter 17, the world was hostile – opposed to God.

But in the final section of John 17, Jesus prays that *the world* may believe!
And if Jesus prays for it – then you better believe that it will happen!

- 3. The Glory of the Son in Those Who Believe Through the Apostles' Word (v20-26)**
 - a. So That the World May Believe (v20-21)**
 - b. Union with Christ – and with the Father – and with One Another (v22-23)**
 - c. So That We May Be with Jesus (v24-26)**

²⁰ *“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.*

Because immediately after saying that he will send the eleven into the world,
he begins to pray for “those who will believe in me through their word.”
Indeed, he prays 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.”

Wait—the world may believe?

Didn't Jesus just pray, “I am not praying for the world,
but for those whom you have given me?”

And yet now Jesus is praying that the world may believe!

Jesus prayed first for himself, for the kingdom of God is rooted in his glory.

But then he prayed for the eleven—because the kingdom of God
won't go any further without their preaching.

He was praying very specifically for *them*, that they might receive the same consecration
to preach the Word of God.

But now he prays for those who believe through their word.

He prays for the church.

And in praying for the church he prays that the world might believe.

You see, from the standpoint of history—
from the standpoint of where Jesus stood with his disciples,
which is the same place we are today—
we are called out of the world.

We are then consecrated—set apart—for the service of God's kingdom
even while we live in the world.

But from our perspective, the world is hostile to Christ.

But Jesus also speaks in terms of the salvation of the world.

John 3:16—God so loved the world

John 3:17—God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through him

John 12:47—I did not come to judge the world but to save the world

This is, you might say, the eschatological perspective.

In the end the world will be saved.

This does not mean that every individual will be saved.
John makes it quite clear that the one who does not believe in Jesus
is condemned already (John 3:18).
But through the preaching of the apostolic message,
the world will be saved.
Adam's fallen race will be redeemed.
Humanity will be brought back into favor with God.
Indeed, the whole world—the whole *kosmos*—all of creation,
will be regenerated.
The new creation, with the new humanity at its head,
will one day be revealed in the glory of the Son of God.

That is why Jesus prays “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us.”

The Father revealed his glory in the Son.

And the glory that the Father gave the Son, he has now given to his church.
The glory of the new creation is revealed in us.
The world can see a glimpse of heaven in the church—
a foretaste of the kingdom of God.

“The glory that you have given me, I have given to them,
that they may be one even as we are one.”

The unity of the church not only *reflects* the unity of the Father and the Son –
the unity of the church *participates* in the unity of the Father and the Son!

Notice how strongly Jesus puts this:

“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.”

Through the glory of the church (which is simply the glory of Jesus!),
the world will come to know that the Father sent the Son.
The unity of the church is a demonstration of the glory of the Son.

Is it any wonder that the world is not responding well to the gospel?

It is not just the multiplication of denominations.
That's bad enough, but it's not really the denominations that are the problem.
It's not our relationships with people we *don't* see.
It's our relationship with those we *do see*.

It's the way in which we relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ—
whether those in this congregation,
or those around us – in our neighborhoods.

The glory of the Triune God—the glory of the exalted Christ—
is to propel us toward unity with one another.

This is why we encourage you to spend time with each other.

This is why we often worship with neighboring churches.

Right now we are restricted somewhat by the pandemic.

Loving your neighbor sometimes means forgoing something good *now*
so that you can do it more and better *later!*

These are small ways in which we show forth our unity in Christ.

But we cannot stop here.

If all we ever do is fellowship with other Reformed churches,
then we are only showing *some* unity.

We need to demonstrate our unity with orthodox

Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist and Wesleyan churches.

Now it would be easy to use this passage to point out all of the defects of the modern church—
even of ourselves!

But I would be remiss if I left you there.

Because that is not where Jesus leaves you.

Jesus is not talking about something that “might” happen.

Jesus is not talking about something that we can mess up!

He is talking about the glory that the Father has given him.

THAT glory—the glory of the only begotten Son of God—
is what he has given to us.

NOT that he will give to us *if* we do our job right.

No.

Jesus has given his glory to his church:

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.

We are consecrated/sanctified in the truth so that we might be sent into the world
to proclaim that truth.

We *are* one.

This is why we confess “one holy catholic and apostolic church.”

Even when we fail to act as one,

we are one.

Just because the church is messing up doesn’t mean that Jesus has failed.

The unity of the church is very much like our individual salvation.

You are saved.

Do you always act as a saved person should?

No, sadly.

The church is one.

Does the church always act as one?

No, sadly.

And there is no more excuse for church disunity as there is for individual sin.

Jesus concludes his prayer with yet one more comment about the world.

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.

Before the foundation of the world...

Remember that the world was created by God!

And that before God created the world,

the Father loved the Son.

Before the foundation of the world, the Son shared the Father's glory.

And now the Son desires that *they whom you have give me may be with me where I am.*

This is the point that we keep seeing about perichoresis –

the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son.

The eternal Son of God joined himself to our humanity,

in order that he might join humanity to himself!

Aaron, the first high priest, could only bring Israel figuratively into an earthly holy place.

Jesus – the Word who became flesh and tabernacled among us –

brings us *where he is* – to the right hand of the Father.

(read:)

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.”

The world does not know the Father–nor the Son.

But Jesus has made known to us the name of the Father,

and by his Spirit – through the apostolic witness –

he continues to make it known to us.

Why is it so important to know the name of the Father?

Because it is through dwelling in that name–

it is through being a part of that family–

that we are loved with the love of the Father and the Son.

His love dwells in you because his Son dwells in you.