

Order of Worship for March 10th, title, “The Lord’s Prayer: United”, text, John 17:20-24

Opening Song
Welcome

Invocation: Psalm 24

Message Theme: The essence or heart of our unity is relational – or love for God and others – and moral – our love for goodness and truth – for these are God’s glory in us

Worship Theme: Worshiping God for the glory of His goodness

Sunday Evening in the Word
Tonight we begin a study of 1 and 2 Peter with 1 Peter 1:1-25
All are encouraged to come.
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm in the Church Library

Opening Song:

“Everlasting God”

Overhead

Welcome

Invocation:

Psalm 24

Ministry Moment:

Purity Ball

Special Music: “I Lift My Hands” by Tara Wixom

Preparing the Heart in Song:

“Our God”

Overhead

“Majesty”

Song # 10

“Before the Throne of God Above”

Overhead

Offering and Offertory

Message:

“The Lord’s Prayer: United”
John 17:20-24 Pastor John Bronson

Closing Song:

“Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” Song # 107

Parting Word of Grace and Invitation to Prayer

Sunday Evening in the Word:

5:30-7 pm in the Church Library, 1 Peter 1:1-25

“The Prayer Closet”

March 10, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

National and District Evangelical Free Church Offices: the Lord will give them wisdom as they provide services and counsel to local churches during these days of financial leanness and governmental and social hostility; our Lord will bring the right man as a new Superintendent of our District

President Obama: the Spirit would shield his mind from deception and stimulate a great hunger for truth and righteousness; the Lord would give him wisdom in the care of his family; the Father will over-rule all errors and bless the nation justice and opportunity and the security of our freedoms

Children’s Ministries and Vacation Bible School: that the teachers for all ages will be encouraged in the Spirit with a love for their students and for the Word of God; that Jennifer and Mia Gonzales will enjoy good health and abounding energy and creative imagination in preparing for this year’s VBS in June; the Lord will call up lots of volunteers!

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Jonathan Sweetman, Army Reserves (son of Catherine): That he is able to maintain doing well in his studies and that God would bless him in his part-time job so as to meet his living expenses. For safety in the crazy weather in Colorado Springs and that the Lord's presence and comfort is strong in his heart.

Young Adult of the Week: Alexis Ewing the Lord’s direction for her life and her finances

Please pray for the health and recovery of our church family: Carol Bernerd, Bob Boettcher, Ellen McNabb, Randy Bowen, Volker Ladendorf, LaVerne Lee, Dick & Jane Miller, Phil Peterson, Sam Farris

(please call the office to request updates)

Today as we continue in our study of this remarkable prayer – this is the conclusion of the Upper Room discourses, although already [Jesus and the disciples] have left the Upper Room [and are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane]. We are down now to the third section of this great prayer which is recorded for us in John 17. This portion of the prayer focuses on one of the most troubling aspects of the faith. The section is John 17:20-26. The topic, as is indicated in the title, is unity: “United”. Is the church of Jesus Christ one? Who of us has not been troubled by the fractured body of Christ? If we are a family and we all have one father, and if we are a family and we all have one elder brother, what has happened to us? That question arises again and again and there are all kinds of explanations in an attempt to come to grips with what has gone on, with why this condition has overcome us. The difficulty is that no matter how you approach the question of what is going to pull us together, what is going to erase the divisions and the factions, how we are going to established once again the rue unity of the body of Christ: no matter what way you attempt to get at that, every standard you name suffers from some sort of failure. Human beings are capable of taking anything and misusing and abusing it, and that is what we do. We either move towards worshipping the letter and then denying the Spirit, or we get lost in the Spirit because we cease to heed the letter. Either way we sense that what ought to be the expression of the divine life in the heart of saved sinners ends up being little more than the waywardness of humanity taking over the things of God for all too human purposes. So what do we do about this?

Turn to John 17:20-26 for Jesus addresses this problem specifically at this point in His prayer. Please follow along as I read this prayer:

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 maybe 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 maybe in them, and I in them.”*

We are going to take a little while and look at this. Jesus begins in verse 20 by affirming to the Father that He is praying for all those who come to faith in Him through the witness of His disciples. Right now Jesus is in heaven praying. He intercedes for the saints. He ends, if you go to the bottom of that passage, He ends by affirming that He has made known to them all the name of the Father and not only has He made it known, but He says that He will continue to make it known: see verse 26, *“I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known...”* He does this in order that the Father’s love will be in us, even as it was in Him. The ongoing need [indicated in] verse 26 of chapter 17, the ongoing need we have to be hearing the truth of the Father’s name: we know that Jesus fully embodies or demonstrates or manifests that name. That is what He has been talking about to the disciples all along. What He says is, I have and I will and I will continue. You and I need constant exposure to the truth about Jesus and the truth that has been given by Jesus. We need it constantly. In Hebrews 10:23-25 this is what is written: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* We need constant reminder of something that is alien to our experience, and that is the unfailing truth about God and His love for us through Jesus Christ.

These concluding verses relate directly to us this whole section where He starts off by saying he is referring to those who will come to faith through the disciples’ witness. We are, by God’s grace, those who have come to faith

through their words. We know that this includes both the verbal testimony of the disciples and the documents that were written down through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is why references such as this are so critical to us. The affirmation of God is that He has, through the Holy Spirit, ensured that everything has been written down that you and I need to know for faith and life. The affirmations, and you probably know them exceedingly well, one of them is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, an AWANA verse! *“All scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* But this is not the only reference. Perhaps the most significant of all the statements that we find along this line is actually in 2 Peter 1:17-21. Listen to what he says here: This is Peter writing quoting the Father: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven. . .*” How many have audibly heard the voice of God from heaven? You say to yourself, “I would love to hear that voice!” [Big voice saying “Hello”!] Wouldn’t that be great? The visible, tangible experientially gripping experience of the powerful presence of God: we hunger for that sort of thing. But listen to what Peter says: *“We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven. For we were with him on the holy mountain.”* Do we know what happened to Jesus on the holy mountain? This was the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus is standing in front of His disciples Peter, James and John, and all of a sudden He becomes radiantly white. [The scriptures] say white with the brightness of the sun. They would have had to shield their eyes as that radiance burst out. It was a form of splendor. Peter says, “We were there and we heard God speak.” Peter goes on and he says, *“...and we have something more sure. . .”* Now what is more sure than an experience like that? It is God’s Word.

This is what he is saying: when you pick up [the Bible] and you ask God in the power of His Spirit to illuminate this word so that the word speaks to your heart through the power of the Holy Spirit it is more certain and more powerful in direction and giving a foundation to your life than if you had been on top of the holy mountain and experienced the transfiguration of Jesus Christ and heard the voice of God from heaven. That is worth thinking about. One can scarcely overstate the importance of Peter’s words as regards making clear the importance of the written scriptures for the salvation of our souls. All that is needful has been written down for us, not simply according to the fallible memories of men but according to the infallible action of the Holy Spirit. This probably should help us to understand what Paul says [in Romans 10:17] – we often cite this because it is so critical [for us] – *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God.”* That should be a powerful exhortation for anyone of us to not neglect just coming [to church], but to not neglect coming [to the scriptures] on a daily basis so that we are brought again into a living contact with God. As we seek to rightly understand and apply Jesus’ words it will be important to keep this in mind.

To find the answer for unity, we need to listen very carefully to Jesus’ words recorded here by the Holy Spirit in order that we would know. What Jesus says in verses 22 and 23, listen to this again: *“The glory that you have 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 them and loved them even as you loved me.”* What is it that we have just heard? Jesus has given to us the same glory that the Father gave to Him. That is worth thinking about, isn’t it? *“I have given them the same glory you gave to me. . .”* is what Jesus said. Who is He talking about? [He is speaking about us all!] Do you know what will abide after the end of the age? Us! Just look for one moment at the person next to you. You are looking at an eternal being, an eternal being that has received the same glory as Jesus received from the Father. Notice what He says: He as given to us this glory which the Father gave to Him as the basis, the substance or the means for our unity.

Jesus said the same thing in verses 20 and 21. Go back and look at those two verses: *“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.”* [Do you] notice the repetition? The word of the disciples through which people will be saved into the unity of the Father and the Son is

truth. Jesus has just said this: go back to John 17:17-19, the passage just preceding this. What did Jesus say at there? What He said was this, that He has consecrated Himself so that the disciples will be sanctified in truth. The emphasis on accuracy is profound. The core message is not about us. It is not about our feelings or even about our experience, as interesting and perhaps as helpful as those might be at times. The witness or the testimony is about Jesus, and the testimony of Jesus is about the Father. The whole thing is about making the truth of the Father known in the world.

For application you simply need to stop and say to yourself, “How often do I think about the walk of faith that I am in, my journey of faith, how often do I think about that in terms of the Father? We spend most of our time thinking about us. But the intent of Jesus is so that the truth about the Father would be known, and He is the revelation of the Father. How many are aware of the fact that in the United States today we are having a hard time understanding who fathers are and what they are supposed to do? How many are aware of the fact that we are having an extremely difficult time understand the structure and function of the family and how families are supposed to operate? How many have some dim consciousness that we have lost track of the nature of authority and how authority is to be properly be exercised? Could it possibly be that the church has forgotten that the purpose of Jesus was to reveal the Father so that you and I would understand all of those dimensions [of life]? We have too long been interested almost exclusively in how to get out of here to heaven. But the purpose of Jesus is not just to get us to heaven. It is to transform the world and to make the Father known.

So we need to ask ourselves relative to how we stand with other Christians and witnessing bodies in the world, are we agreed as to what we believe to be true about the Father, the way He governs the world and His purposes in all things and so on? This might ring a bell: did you ever hear this? *“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”* That is the heart of it.

Jesus’ two statements about unity are almost identical. Unity begins with the Word given by the disciples and believed by the convert – v. 21. The word is the basis of the unity amongst the converts and is to be like the unity shared between the Father who is in Jesus, and Jesus who is in the Father. That is Jesus’ statement. Their reception of the word of witness will result in converts being in the Father and in the Son. This, He says, forms the basis for the world believing that the Father sent the Son. That is the dynamic that we wish we could capture and maintain for the well-being of our neighbors. Jesus does not here explicitly say but it is implied that the world comes to know the Father sent the Son to make the Father’s holy and righteous character, love righteousness and truth as well as His compassionate and patient ways known to all. There is a beautiful statement – these are verses that I highly recommend that you memorize. We are supposed to know the Father. That is to be at the heart of the unity of the Body of Christ. In Exodus 34:5-7 this is how the Father describes Himself: *“The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed...”* Now I want you to sit back for a moment and ask, is this how I think of God the Father? *“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”* I am not done. But when you say, “Our Father” does that description of the Father come to mind? Then He continues, and remember this is God’s own statement describing Himself, *“...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”* Who is the Father? He is perfect in mercy and He is perfect in justice.

You and I are to live an openly visible faith in that God. That is [Jesus’] intent, that you and I will know the Father and we will display to the world that we know the Father, so that we are those who worship a God who is perfect in His compassions, perfect in His righteousness, perfect in His truth, perfect in His forgiveness, and perfect in His justice, so that there is no sin that is overlooked, but every iniquity is addressed. If we would begin our morning devotions like that, it might help for straightening out how to get through the day and what it is you want to

display to the world around us. For what Jesus’ word is saying is that they will know who we are because we demonstrate our unity with that God.

The unity described in verse 23 begins in verse 22. That is the verse we need to look at. Verse 22 states once again the glory which the Father has given to Jesus and which He then gave to the disciples was given for the purpose of and as the basis or foundation for their unity. Then Jesus goes on to describe that: I in them, 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. So Jesus has first said that our unity is found in our believing in Jesus based on the witness of the disciples. That is His first statement. His next statement is that our unity is found in or based on the disciples having received the glory from Jesus which Jesus had received from the Father. Clearly these are parallel statements that are intended to be taken as saying the same thing in two different ways. That is the nature of Hebraic repetition. What is the witness of the disciples, that which is passed on and on and on, down through the ages? The witness of the disciples tells us who Jesus was [and is], they tell us what Jesus did and is doing, and they tell what Jesus said. That is the summation of the scriptural testimony. Our unity is found in our consistency in giving the accurate repetition and restatement of what has been given to us as the testimony regarding Jesus and all that He has done.

Our unity in Christ is also the purpose aimed at in Jesus giving us, He says, the same glory. That may seem an unnecessarily statement: the same glory as the Father gave to Him. Why not just say that we have received Jesus’ glory? Well, because there is more than one aspect to the glory of Jesus and this becomes essential for us to understand. If you look at John 17:24, notice what Jesus says. Jesus tells the Father that He desires that all those who believe in Him would be where He is. Where is He? He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, standing in the Temple. What does He look like? Who has read Revelations I recently? He is glorious. Jesus tells the Father He desires that all those who believe in Him to be where He is to see [His] glory that you have given me from before the foundation of the world. When did He receive this glory? [It was] from the foundations of the world, before the foundations of the world! He is glorious beyond any possible compare. We hear an echo here, do we not, of what Jesus said to His disciples in John 14. In John 14, that magnificent passage where He says, “Do not be troubled.” Don’t be troubled. I am going to come and I am going to bring to you to be where I am. *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also.”* Jesus desires that the disciples will see His divine glory, the glory He has from the Father as the Son from before the foundations of the world.

But there is another glory. You see that is only one of the glories. There is another glory. It is a different glory; it has a different excellence and a different inner perfection. That was the glory of splendor. That was the glory of magnificence. That was the glory that makes you just stand in awe, trembling and wondering. But there is also a glory of humility. This is the glory of sacrificial love. This is the glory of perfect faithfulness even at greatest cost. This is the glory of truthfulness in the midst of lies and deception. This is the glory of kindness, compassion and forgiveness, such that you even love your enemies. This is the glory that we see in a life laid down as a perfect sacrificial commitment to justice, righteousness and truth. Beloved, how can God be perfect in grace and perfect in judgment? Where does that happen? It happens at the cross; that is the only place that it can possibly happen. At the cross of Jesus Christ every sin is paid for, perfect justice is accomplished, and therefore out of that bloody cross comes the free, glorious and compassionate forgiveness of God, and everything has been perfectly balance and the rule of our just and heavenly Father is substantiated and built upon foundation of absolutely perfect righteousness in all things! That is why we want the world to know the Father, and every father should desire to embody that perfect balance of qualities. That is the glory that the Father gives to Jesus because He is the lamb who dies for the sins of the world. We see this most remarkably if you turn to Revelations 5:5-6. I have read this many times and never pondered sufficiently to understand what an incredible statement is being made to us by John recording the words of Jesus the Lamb Himself. *“One of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more [John is weeping because there is no one to take a scroll from the Father on the throne, he is weeping because there is no one who qualifies for taking*

that scroll.] “...*the elder says to him, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of Judah...’* A lion ate somebody recently in a zoo. I love the statement in the Narnia series that C.S. Lewis writes about Aslan, the lion who symbolizes God or Jesus, “He is not a tame lion.” How many of you have been in the proximity of a lion when it roared? There is a place down in San Diego where you can go. It is like a wild animal park. The animals run around as if in the wilderness and you are on a tram, safely encased in steel and glass. We were riding along and all of a sudden we heard a lion roar, and inside the safety of steel and glass your hair [rises on the back of your neck]. Terrifying! Are you terrified of God? One of the things that my wife would say to me when I would try to be a father, I would come home and she would say, “I love it when you come home; I wish I had your voice.” I would come home and if things were not ok I would speak and the boys would all [cower]. I know about that because when I came home as a boy and my dad came home...my brothers had reasons to shrink! On the one hand, you see, the justice of God. We should tremble. But then notice the rest of the picture. Notice what John says, “...*the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.*” Now John is looking: where is the Lion? But what does he see come? It is a lamb as if slain, a lamb as if slain! Why was He slain? For John’s sins.

Perfect justice, perfect compassion: Jesus wants us to know. There is nobody that Jesus loves more than the Father. He wants us to know.

Jesus, of course, knew the mess we would be in. It was entirely predictable. Being saved by faith does not instantly bring understanding of the truth in all its parts and applications. How are we to know? Here we are back [to the present], this is us today. How are we to know who is real and who is false. Who is to be trusted and followed and who is not, which group we are to identify with and which not. The first thing we are to remember is that it is always a judgment call based on a variety of factors. It is essential that we always remember that unity cannot conflict with or deny integrity. One of the criteria for trustworthiness is found in the fruit of the witness that any person or group of people bears. This is what Jesus has told us: do those in this group and influenced by this group have a deepening awareness of the certainty that Jesus is the one sent by the Father for the salvation of the world, and at the same do they have a deepening awareness that God loves them just as or in the same way as He loved Jesus? Remember; this is so difficult to do: [we might say], “Oh, I am sure that God loves me.” Well, I am glad you’re sure of that, but I want you to understand, I want you to know that God loves you the way He loved Jesus. What did He do to Jesus? He let Jesus die for others. Are you prepared? “Oh no, I don’t want to be loved like that!” But that is the only way He loves. That is how the Father loves. The Father loves by eliminating sin. That is how He loves. So if you are not interested in the pursuit of holiness, if you are not interested in the elimination of sin from your life, if you are not interested in the attributes of God coming to perfection so you can be a servant to others and stop being just preoccupied about you, you, you all the time, then go do something else, because God is not going to be interested in you.

Further criteria have to do with whether or not this body of witnesses knows and loves the truth as revealed through Jesus, that truth being about God is the Father who sent Jesus the Son. Preachers and teachers and churches and conferences or whatever which seem to know and possibly even to care little for the character, will and purposes of the Father should awaken caution in the believer. I may step on toes, but you know it has never bothered me to step on toes: churches that emphasize the Holy Spirit constantly – are they talking about the Father? People who continually talk about all the wonderful things that God does for us: our health, our wealth, our improvement, are they talking about the Father? Even if they seem to have an accurate statement of doctrine and an awareness of what the word says about the Father does not mean they are to be numbered among those who are to be trusted and followed blindly. There are many who profess such things, but they do not love what they profess, and there seems to be little awareness let alone conviction that God loves them the way He loves Jesus.

It is essential, beloved, to remember that no organization is to be trusted and followed blindly. It is also to be remembered that all churches are human organizations. Nothing would grieve me more than to learn that someone in this church simply believed everything I said because I said it. That would be a certain ticket to a visit with the Father in a woodshed seeking to beat it out of you, for it is foolishness.

Here is the conclusion. We find it in I John 2:18-19. This is what John said: *“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”* Here is my conviction: there are hundreds of thousands of sincere believers in liberal, apostate churches all across the land and even around the world. In those churches their pastors have gone out from them, leaving them behind, abandoning the Word as the infallible and inerrant and inspired Word of God, and abandoning faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the sacrifice for their sin. The faithful stand fast; they do not abandon the truth they know. Unity can never be pursued at the price of integrity. We should pray that they will find their way to fresh springs of truth and shepherds that will feed them on the Word and confirm that the Father Who loves them rules the world and is bringing all things to their proper end. Beloved, there will not be unity in the visible body before the return of Jesus Christ. There is a very easy reason why: it is us.

Let us pray: Our heavenly Father, it is, of course, desirable, and I am sure it is pleasing in Your sight that we desire that the body of Christ on the earth would be healed right now, every question laid to rest, every division mended, every uncertainty solidified into deepest conviction, but it is not so, and we know, our Father, that we must with humility and brokenness of heart confess that the problem of the disunity of the body of Christ is not isolated to those who are “over there”, but is also with us who are here. Help us, our Father, to have our hearts fixed upon You, and to take up those disciplines that You have given to us to be constant in Your Word, constant in prayer, constant in encouraging one another in the faith, and seeking, our Father, to know Who You are by ourselves loving justice and being full of grace and compassion. We ask this, giving thanks, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Does the multiplicity of Christian denominations trouble you? What is your explanation for this? How would you solve this situation?
2. What seems to be the need for people to keep going to church year after year?
3. If you could “see” a miracle, what miracle would you choose to see? Why are such miracles less helpful or valuable for us than the “prophetic word”?
4. What is the “core message” of the Christian? What was Jesus seeking to get us to know?
5. What is the basis for people in the world believing that Jesus was sent from or by the Father?
6. According to what Jesus says, what is the basis for the unity of all Christians?
7. Why does Jesus want us in heaven with Him?
8. How do the divine glory and the glory of the incarnate Lord differ and why is this important?
9. Why must unity in the faith not conflict with or deny integrity of faith?
10. What are the criteria for determining who is to be trusted and followed in the faith and who is not?
11. Why is it important to remember that all churches are human organizations?