



John 17:20–23

20 ‘My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – 23 I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity.

Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Reflection

Some of you will know that I drove a taxi way back when. I once drove a woman from Sydney Airport to the doors of Kirribilli House where the gates promptly opened for my car. I turned around and said to the woman ‘Don’t you have to know the Prime Minister to come in here?’ She replied, ‘I do. He’s my dad.’

To save embarrassment all around, I won’t tell you which Prime Minister, since all but one have had daughters for 50 years or so.

But it is interesting to see how a child-parent relationship is different to all others. She got out of the car and embraced her dad. They were chatting. I think they had been apart for a while. I could see how they were affectionate by their laughter. And for a few fun moments, I was caught up into this relationship as I waited to get paid.

John 17 is Jesus praying to his father in heaven. This is the Eternal Son speaking with his Eternal Father, and sharing his glory with those who have been invited in.

22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – 23 I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity.

This is amazing.

Jesus is praying that his glory might spill over, like it did in the creation of the world. But this time, people are affected. People are brought into relationship with the divine first (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and then by their relationship to God, they are brought into relationship with each other. Jesus in us; the Father in the Son. We are being invited into the Godhead. We are being brought into the heart and soul of God.

And Jesus prays it. This is his desire. Prayers are desire, expressed to God. So what Jesus prays is his desire for this world.

Two questions to think about: Who is this prayer for? And what is Jesus' hope?

Who is this prayer for? You! It's Jesus' prayer for you! Jesus here is praying THEN, for me NOW. Jesus has been praying for the people in the room (his disciples). But Jesus here prays for all those people – in the future – who will enter the room of the kingdom of God.

20 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...

The 'them' there is the disciples. This prayer is not just for the disciples, but also for those who will trust Jesus because of the witness of those disciples.

Guess who he is praying for? You! You heard the Gospel. God went to work on your soul. And you believed in Jesus! This prayer is for you.

And what is his hope? Unity for the cause of mission. See that? I think a lot of people today want unity in order to avoid conflict. They think conflict is somehow rude, and who wants to be rude, so we pray for unity. But Jesus prays this prayer of unity for the sake of mission.

20 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you

have sent me.

May Christians be unified in God (Father, Son and Spirit) so that, what? ‘So that the world may believe that you have sent me.’ And later: ‘Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.’

Unity for the sake of Mission. That’s what Jesus prayed for you, and for us, long before you were alive.

Pray

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote something that will fuel your prayers. He wrote a book called ‘Life together’. In it he wrote:

‘Because God has already laid the

only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients. We thank God for giving us brethren who live by his call, by his forgiveness, and his promise. We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what he does give us daily.'

We were bound together 'long before we entered common life'. That means that you are unified with believers that you have not met. And so: 'We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what he does give us daily.'

So thank God for brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who are therefore your brothers and sisters. Be a thankful recipient of community. And do so that you can show a hurting world the glory of Jesus Christ.

‘We thank God for giving us brethren who live by his call, by his forgiveness, and his promise.’

Pray for a greater love of the brothers and sisters. Ask God to help you to forgive and live by his grace. Pray for our church (or your church if you are listening in). Pray for the worldwide church. Pray for unity around the gospel of Jesus. Not just unity for unity’s sake. Not just unity to avoid conflict. Not a bland and flat unity. But a full unity that is caught up in Christ’s grace and truth; one that is caught up in the char-

acter as well as the plans and purposes of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

That day in the taxi? How did I get it? I was invited in! By the Father's invitation of his child.

Thank God that you have been invited to know him and to live with and in him.