

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part II

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John 17:20-26

September 27, 2015

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, John 17. We'll be reading Verses 20-26 of the 17th chapter. The title of the message is 'What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part II'. We have been in this passage for a number of weeks, looking at this High Priestly Prayer of Jesus Christ, the prayer that He prayed the night before He was crucified, the prayer that He prayed before He made the offering for our sins the next day. So it is often called the 'High Priestly Prayer' because the high priest in the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement, offered prayers to God, and offered a sacrifice. So Jesus offers prayers to His Father before He offers the sacrifice on the cross. So it is called the 'High Priestly Prayer' for that reason.

We began looking at, a few weeks back, what Jesus prays for, and we noted that last week, we see that the main thing He prays for is our unity. This is the thing He repeats three times explicitly, actually a fourth time when you understand that the word 'unity' is the same word for 'one'. He says, essentially, four different times, 'that they may be one'. "The people that You have given Me Father, that they may be one." He wants the followers of Jesus Christ to be unified, and so we began looking at this concept, what He prays for, our unity, last time. We're going to continue today. Let's read the Scripture Verses 20-26, where we see this particular request of Jesus highlighted and underscored.

John 17:20-26 ~ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me.

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Let's pray together.

Father, as we come to Your word this morning, we are reminded of our inadequacy to handle it, to understand these deep things of God. So we come asking for Your grace, that You might grant us the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a fuller way. That the one who inspired these words to be written might now illuminate them in our minds and hearts. That we might truly understand, that we might truly be changed by the power of Your glorious word. That we might truly come to experience more of the treasures that You have for us, the treasure of the unity that You have called us to in Jesus Christ. And we pray this in His name, Amen.

‘What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity’, we’ve said that four times in the passage He prays for this particular thing, ‘that they may be one’, or ‘that they may be perfected in unity’. He wants us to be one. We talked about last time our first couple of points on this outline, ‘What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity’. We noted that He prays for our unity, we need to understand that first by understanding *The Essence of our Unity*. And we see that *The Essence of our Unity*, or we saw that it is spiritual. It is not outward and formal, organizational, or institutional. He is not praying for an organization, institutional unity, He is praying that a spiritual unity may be realized. That is, that the same kind of unity that the Father and Son have would be manifested among His followers, those who have received the teaching about Christ, and who have believed in the teaching of Christ. So the idea of *The Essence of the Unity* is spiritual.

Then we talked about *The Elements of Unity*, the things that God uses to move us into deeper unity. We saw that we move away from certain things to other things. There is a movement away from error and into truth. He prays that we would be protected from error so that we might be one. So there is a movement away from wrong thinking about God to right thinking about God. That is, biblical, theological accuracy and handling of the truth. So He prays for unity to happen that way, a movement away from error to truth. Then He says also, movement away from sin to holiness. That is, the more that we put off sin in our lives, by His grace,

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

we're all sinners redeemed by His blood, but we are to grow in holiness. And the more we grow in holiness, the more we will grow in unity.

Then finally, as we move from worldliness to heavenly-mindedness, we become more one. So we looked at the essence and the elements, and today we come to the third 'E', and we're going to spend our whole time on this one point. We'll have some sub-points, so don't fret. We're going to talk about *The Experience of Our Unity* and we're going to consider that, because that is really so pivotal to us, manifesting this is for it to become real. It is not a theoretical concept, it is a reality to be lived out. Jesus wants us to experience this unity, and so to experience it, I think we're going to need to see that there are some things that He unfolds for us, to help us to experience this unity. We're going to have, the outline is basically going to be three points.

The first is we need to understand that experiencing unity is a process. Three Ps. The first is *The Process of Our Unity*. Secondly, we're going to look at *The Pattern of Our Unity*. And thirdly, *The Power of Our Unity*. So process, pattern, and power. We are coming to, as we look at the pattern and the power of our unity, we come to one of the deepest mysteries in all of Holy Scripture. And indeed, in this High Priestly Prayer, and in fact, in this section of John's Gospel, John 13-17, those five chapters, we've noted are Jesus' 'Farewell Discourse'. That these five chapters comprise the things that Jesus shared with His disciples the night before He was crucified, and then we have that culminated with this High Priestly Prayer. But a quarter of John's Gospel comes from just a few hours of Jesus' ministry, the last few hours of time with His disciples. When He pours out His heart to his disciples in Chapters 13-16, and when He pours out his heart to the Father in Chapter 17 in prayer, He unfolds for us. He really lifts the view for us upon one of the most glorious in all of Scripture, that is the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The fact that God is one God eternally existing in three persons. It's something that the mind cannot fully grapple with. We'll never fully comprehend that in the sense that we comprehend and completely understand it. It is a mystery, but it is a reality that we can truly apprehend by His grace.

We're going to talk about the co-inherence of the persons. We've talked about this some already, and I mentioned to Patti, as I was preparing the message this week, my wife and daughter are out today, both of them are not feeling well. But I was sharing with her what I was preaching on, asking her to pray for me, and I said, "I'm talking about the Doctrine of the Trinity and the co-inherence of the persons," and she said, "Haven't you already talked about that?" I love when you get such

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

support from your wife, you know? I said, “Yeah, Honey, but it keeps coming up in John’s Gospel. Jesus keeps talking about the Trinity.” And so, to be faithful as an expositor of Scripture, we want to preach what Scripture says. So if He thinks we need to talk about it again, then I think He knows better than I do, and Patti does. Did somebody have an amen or something out there? I’m glad she’s not here for all of that. Keep that between us. No.

But we’re going to talk about some deep doctrine, and I was so encouraged about something I read this week in reading some more on the Doctrine of the Trinity, and that was the idea that actually came from T.F. Torrance, a brilliant, English theologian, or British theologian, from the middle of the 20th century. He was talking about the complexities of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and yet encouraging his students, and those who were reading what he had written, to with confidence, unfold the truths of the Trinity. And he said the reason is because if a person has truly come to know the Lord, they already know this doctrine tacitly. They already have an experience of the reality of the Trinity and so that they know more than they can say. They know more than they can tell.

He uses the illustration, you know when you are a little kid and you are learning grammar? You go to first grade, or whenever you start learning subject/verb agreement, and now you are having to, “It is he is, I am, we are,” right? “Not I are.” Well, kids that have grown up, I mean, you think about it, from the time the child has been in the womb, they were hearing relatively good grammar, I guess, from their parents, right? And they’ve been learning the whole time they’ve been growing and beginning to talk. We’ve been teaching them how to speak, and they’ve been learning it, and so they know more than they can say. They don’t say, “We is,” the six-year-old, or he is learning not to. He is progressively getting better. Now he can’t tell you that, “Hey, I’m just making sure that my subject and my verb agree in number,” but he knows more than he can say. Even more, Torrance points out, he said that the little brain of a child, in learning the way of the world, the physical realities of how the world works, he is contemplating, in a tacit, unspoken way. He is understanding physical realities that a scientist, an advanced, you know, way up there, finally puts a handle on and spells out, but the child has actually already known it.

I mean, you know, gravity. Newton, in a sense, discovered that in an extraordinary way, and yet in reality, every child learns what gravity is, they just fall a couple of times. So we know more than we can say. We know more than we can tell, and the little child born into that, there are certain things that God has created in the mind,

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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there is an apprehension, and an ability to grapple with these things, even though it is not fully able to be expressed, it is known. Torrance is saying that for the true child of God, that is true of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Because if you have been born again, I mean testimonies that we heard earlier, and the testimonies that we saw of new life today, what has happened when someone becomes a Christian?

The truth is heard, the message of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and understood, that we are sinners, that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that we are headed for a life of rebellion against God. We don't even fully understand that, but it comes with the package. You don't have to teach a child to disobey, it is natural. The sin of rebellion is natural, and when finally the eyes are opened, and someone sees, "Yeah, I've been doing what was right in my own eyes, living for my own purposes, and I'm miserable, and I see that what I need is God. And I understand that Jesus Christ came into the world, and died on the cross to pay for the burden of my sin. That He has taken the wrath of God, God's righteous anger and indignation against my sin, and He in Himself took it. By His stripes we are healed and I understand that, and I understand that He rose again from the dead to show that He is a righteous Savior, and is able to give us a perfect righteousness in exchange for our sins." When you come to understand that, how do you come to understand that? What happens?

First of all you call upon the name Lord Jesus Christ, and He is your Lord and master. That is salvation. You come to have to have a relationship with the second person of the Trinity. "I didn't know Him, but now He is the one my soul loves." So, Christ. What happens when you become a child of God? You become a child of God, you become a follower of Jesus Christ, you become a son or daughter of the heavenly Father. Instantaneously, you are adopted into God's family. Remember what He says after His crucifixion and resurrection, in John 20 He is going to say to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, my brother, and tell them I go to My God, and your God, My Father, and your Father, because of what I've done. Now you are the children of God." So we come to have a relationship with the first person of the Trinity, the Father. We now know Him as Abba Father. How do we know Him?

How do we come to understand that we need a Savior in the first place? Because the Spirit has come and worked in our hearts. Like Jesus says in John 3, "You must be born from above. You have been born physically, Nicodemus. You know the things of the law, you know all about a lot of the Scriptures," remember Nicodemus was a Pharisee? He was well-studied, well-versed in all the theology of

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

the Jews, but he had missed one important thing, Jesus says, “Unless you are born from above, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You must be born by the Spirit.” So when a person gives evidence of that, proclaiming their faith in Christ, coming to call upon God as their Father, what has happened? The Holy Spirit has been at work in them, so they have come to be, and we talked about baptism is a baptism outwardly that testifies to an inward baptism spiritually. So they come to be immersed in the Spirit and immersed in Christ, and come to know God as their Father. So there is this tacit knowledge of this mysterious doctrine. We don’t come into the faith knowing how to articulate it. In fact, as you grow in Christ you come to doctrines and you say, “This doesn’t make sense to me.”

I remember reading the testimony of the guy that *The Cross and the Switchblade* was written about, David Wilkerson, Nicky Cruz I think was the man who came to Christ through David Wilkerson’s ministry. He was a gang leader, and one of the things he said early on in his Christian life, or he actually later wrote a book about his salvation, and he wrote a book about his growth in God. His book was about the wonder of the Trinity. Now think about that, a gang leader from New York wrote a book about the glory of the Trinity. He didn’t know God at all. In fact, he confesses in that book that when he first learned of the Doctrine of the Trinity he was already saved, when he first learned the Doctrine of the Trinity, now think he understands it tacitly, but it doesn’t make sense to his brain because our human brains can’t measure it. And then we have sin that has messed up the way we think, our minds were darkened. He said, “When I first heard the Doctrine of the Trinity, I thought, ‘Why can’t God be easier? Why does He have to make everything so hard?’” That is what Nicky Cruz said, but in that book he goes on to say, “But then I understand the wonder of all that it brought out to see that God has existed forever as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a communion of love before the world was.” It has expanded. What happened?

He knew it tacitly, first had trouble with it, but as he stayed in it, the Spirit in him confirmed the truth, and he began to rejoice in it. Well that is what we need to do, and what we’re going to see is we have to talk about this doctrine again because God wants us to, because He has put it here again. And if we are going to experience unity, if we are going to experience supernatural unity, we’re going to experience it to the level that we understand, and begin to experience the unity of the triune God. Because what Jesus is saying in essence in this passage is, “Father, I pray that they may be one as we are one.” He is saying, “In saving them, we have caught them up into the life of the Trinity, and the oneness of the Trinity.” We are distinct persons. We are never going to be God, and yet 2 Peter 1 says we’ve been

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

made partakers of the divine nature. We now have tasted of the wonder of who God is, and we know His love. What we are going to see as we unfold this, that we now are in Him, and He is in us, and the more that we understand that, the more we become one with each other.

So with that said, let's look at these three points today. 'What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity', we're going to look at the process, the pattern, and the power. The process, the pattern, and the power.

1) The Process of Our Unity:

Now the process is seen real clearly in Verse 23, when Jesus says, well look at Verse 22.

John 17:22-23 ~ The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me,...

So that they may be perfected, that verb translated 'may be perfected' is a word which means and implies 'movement toward an end'. The perfecting process, it pictures a goal, but it doesn't say that we are perfect, but we may be perfected. It pictures an ongoing process of growing in this kind of unity that would manifest the glory of God. So it is a process, it is something that we have to work at. We noted last time that in its truest sense, the unity is already there. You don't create it. Remember we talked about Ephesians 4:3, where the apostle Paul says to the Christians there, "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace." He doesn't say, "Be diligent to create," but to preserve. But it is still a process and it requires effort, it requires prayer, it requires diligence. It is a process.

2) The Pattern of Our Unity:

Now, let's talk about the pattern. The pattern and the power are where we are going to spend most of our time. The pattern for our unity, what is our unity to look like? I mean, it is one thing to say, "Can't we all get along? We need to love one another," but what does it look like? He says in this passage three different times, beginning at Verse 11 when He says:

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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John 17:11 ~ Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are...

That ‘*even as*’ can be translated ‘*just as*’. It means ‘*in the same way as*’. “May they be one just as, or in the same way that we are one.” Look at Verse 21:

John 17:21 ~ ... that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,...

So He is saying essentially the same thing, “That they may all be one just as, or in the same way, as Father, You are in Me, and I am in You. May they be one just as we are one.” Verse 22:

John 17:22 ~ The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

So three different times He said, “The oneness is patterned after the Trinity. The oneness is to be just like the Father’s oneness with the Son.” Now that is mind-blowing stuff. So we are to have relationships, though we are distinct persons, we are to have a oneness that is like the oneness of Jesus and the Father, and if we can achieve that, then the world will take notice. That is what we are going to talk about next time, the effect of this kind of unity. When this happens, everybody sees it, the difference, but the pattern really is this idea of oneness.

Now what we see, and this comes to this word, it is the word ‘*Perichoresis*’. It is made up of two Greek words. The first word is ‘*peri*’, p-e-r-i, it means ‘*around*’, like the perimeter. You go around 85. Remember when that baseball player went around 85? Some of you guys are old enough to remember that. Pascual Perez, that’s his name. It was like in the 1980s, anyway, sorry about that, it just came to me out of the blue. Okay, ‘*peri*’ means ‘*around*’, and ‘*choreo*’, ‘*choresis*’, from the Greek word ‘*choreo*’. So it is p-e-r-i-c-h-o-r-e-s-i-s, Perichoresis. ‘*Choreo*’ means ‘*to make room for, to surround, to envelope*’, and so it mean ‘*to envelope around*’.

The word was used by theologians to explain the concept of mutual indwelling that we see in the Scripture. That in the Trinity, what it means that God is three persons in one substance is that the three persons co-inhere in such a way that the Father and the Son are one. They are united in such a way that they mutually contain one another. The Father, now think about that, mutually contained, this is heavy stuff, but it is the reality of what we are going to see in the text. The Father is in the Son,

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and the Son is in the Father. When we read the Scriptures we are confronted with the glorious reality of the fact that God is triune, God exists eternally as three distinct persons in one undivided essence.

Douglas Kelly, a professor in seminary that I had says this, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit inhere in one another, and co-exist eternally, entirely, and perfectly in one another, so that where one is, the others are, and what one is involved in doing, the others are also involved in doing. So each person of the Trinity, while remaining distinct, is always within the other two.” Hilary, a church father from the 4th century wrote this:

They reciprocally contain one another so that one should permanently envelope and also be enveloped by the other whom He yet envelopes.

You can see, we’re talking about the mystery, but it is what the Scripture says. Look at John 14:8-11, listen to this:

John 14:8 ~ Philip *said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.

Remember that? This is what Jesus hears the same night, just hours before the prayer we’re reading. Phillip says, “Lord, show us the Father, it is enough for us.”

John 14:9-10 ~ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

Do you see that? That is Perichoresis. “I’m in the Father and the Father is in Me.”

John 14:10-11 ~ ...I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

And then in John 17:20-21 He comes back to it again.

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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John 17:20-21 ~ “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 the co-inherence of the Son and the Father clearly taught. In fact, Chapter 14, Verse 23, go back here for a minute. In Chapter 14 Jesus says, “The Holy Spirit is going to come and live inside of you.” This is what happens when you are saved. This is why this doctrine, even though it is still mysterious, and even though our minds are still, even as I’m saying these things, I’m feeling the mind-boggling nature of it, but it is still a part of who we are. In Verse 16 of Chapter 14, Jesus had told them:

John 14:16 ~ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

So when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in you, and what does that mean? Look with me at Verse 23. If the Holy Spirit is inside of you, if the Doctrine of Perichoresis is true, if the Holy Spirit is inside of you, who also is inside of you? The Father and the Son. Look what He says in Verse 23.

John 14:23 ~ Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

He is saying that the Father and the Son come to live inside of us. So the triune God comes to live inside of the believer, and the church then is to be a community defined by this same Perichoresis. The church is only the church when it is united in love with the Trinity, sharing in its Perichoresis. C. S. Lewis wrote, “The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us.” Remember that in the weight of glory.

Now let’s try to think about what this really means. What does it mean that we’re in God and God is in us, and that we’re to have a unity that is patterned after the unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit? Let’s take a moment and look at the unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit as we think about this. You have three distinct Persons who are one in essence, and this comes back to the idea that is so important. When you understand this doctrine, it dispels so many errors. There are

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many people who teach that God created the world because He was lonely, or that God created the world because He needed people, or He needed something to do in His goodness. In fact, this was a doctrine of Aristotle. I was reading this week about Suzanna Wesley in her devotional. This really should put us all to shame. Suzanna Wesley, the mother of Charles and John Wesley, she wrote in her devotional probably when little Charles was about 7 years old. She'd been reading some of Aristotle. Now, that wasn't part of her devotional, I'm sure, but she'd been reading Aristotle on the side just for fun, and she noted that Aristotle had said that speaking of the divine, of God, that He is truly good, and therefore, He had to make the world for His goodness to be expressed, because you can't be good and want to do good, and not have something to do good to. So Aristotle maintained that matter was as old as God, okay? There's a certain logic to that. It's wrong, but there's a certain logic to it. Suzanna Wesley wrote in her devotional as she was meditating on the glory of the Trinity, "Aristotle was wrong in this point. He did not have the benefit of special revelation to show him the doctrine of the Trinity. He was right in conceiving the goodness must be expressed outwardly, but he was wrong in that he didn't realize that God was already a community, that it could express that goodness within." So she writes in her devotional, and she's probably just disciplined Charles or John or something, and maybe changed diapers for one of the other children, and she's writing in her devotional about the glory of the Godhead. She says, "But when you understand that there was no deficiency in God, He didn't need anything. There's fullness of love and bliss." 1 Timothy 1:11 speaks of the Gospel of the blessed God. It really literally if you translated that more accurately, it could say, "The Gospel of the happy God," that God has been full of happiness and joy from eternity past. He didn't need anything. There's no deficiency in God.

So the Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. The Father loves the Spirit. The Spirit loves the Son. They delight in each other. The very best of our human relationships only give us glimpses of this. You know when you have a moment that is really wonderful. Think about the best moments in your life. You may be able to think back to a moment in your childhood, probably a lot of moments that weren't so great, because we're sinners and we live with sinners, and so we hurt one another. But there are moments that you may be able to remember back to, a particular moment where you felt especially valued. Maybe you had a parent say, "I'm proud of you," or a coach or a teacher said something that really ministered to you. If you were a boy and you said, "I can remember that like it was yesterday." How is that? It's because there was real relational connection and someone affirmed your worth.

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

Or maybe you can think back to the time that as a little girl your daddy said how beautiful you were, or said how precious you were, or praised something about you, and you remember that like it was yesterday, those relational connections, being valued, longing for as individual persons, to love and be loved. God made us for that. He made us for that because He patterned us after Himself. He has always existed in a community of perfect love and oneness. You see this in John's Gospel over and over. What you see as you look carefully at the Bible is that the Father delights in the Son.

There are three things that this pattern consists of, and what we want to do is look at how the Father, and Son, and Spirit relate, and realize this is how we're supposed to do it. There are three points on the second point. We're under the pattern. There are three sub-points under that point, knowledge, delight, and affection. We're to bring these three things. We're to learn to know one another better, delight in one another more, and have deeper affection for one another. That is a tall order, because for us as sinners, what happens? The more you know somebody, the worse it is. Familiarity breeds contempt, doesn't it? Isn't that true? How many people could say at some time in your life, your best friend was your best friend until you roomed together in college? Or when you get married, on the front end, everything is just where we kind of airbrush the other person, and then you go to live with the other person, and they go to live with you, and the airbrushing isn't there. And so that can be a real cause of disunity, our sin. We're sinners.

So how can we get closer together? What we do is we tend to hide things. That's how we airbrushed it. We tried to hide our true self from our potential spouse. It's like the girl who goes out with the guy and eats like a bird, and then she goes home and just ravages. The guy may do the same thing. You're wise if you don't act like you normally do when you're really hungry or whatever. First impressions, right? We all need to just have better manners in general. But we hide these things, but the picture of what God wants us to have is absolute transparency, and yet still have delight and still have deeper affection. That's what the Trinity has. The Father knows the Son perfectly. The Son knows the Father perfectly. The Father knows the Spirit perfectly. The Spirit knows the Son perfectly. It's all reciprocal. There's nothing hidden, no sense of fear of someone seeing something and not loving. You see this throughout the Scripture. In Isaiah 42:1, the Father talking about the Son, He speaks of His servant in whom My soul delights. He's talking about Christ. He's talking about the Son. When He looks at Jesus, He says, "My soul delights in

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

Him.” You see this again and again throughout. Well, here you see it in our passage in John 17. Jesus says in Verse 24:

John 17:24 ~ so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

“You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” Verse 26:

John 17:26 ~ ...and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

“You loved Me and You love Me.” The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He’s doing, He said earlier in this Gospel. The Father knows the Son, delights in the Son, has such deep affection for the Son. We’ve noted how three times in Jesus’ ministry, the Father speaks audibly out of Heaven. Three times—at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when He’s baptized, remember? John says, “I shouldn’t be baptizing You. You should be baptizing me.” And Jesus says, “No, it’s necessary to fulfill all righteousness. Do you see, John? I know this doesn’t make sense. I’m clean. I’m spotless. I’m the Son of God, and yet I must identify with sinful humanity. Therefore, I’m coming to be baptized as an acceptance of the mission that the Father has given Me to be made sin for us.” And so in being baptized, He’s saying yes to the Father’s mission. And what does the Father say? As soon as Jesus comes out of the water, it says, the Father out of Heaven, a loud voice is heard saying, “This is My Son whom I love, with whom I’m well-pleased.” He couldn’t contain Himself.

At the end of Jesus’ ministry, near the end of Jesus’ ministry, at the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James and John have fallen asleep, and they begin to wake up. Peter sees Jesus transfigured before them, the glory of God shining out of Christ. Suddenly the veil is lifted and the Man Christ Jesus is shown to be fully God and fully Man, and the full deity shining out, resplendent glory. Peter says, “It’s good for us to be here.” He’s scared to death that he’s about to die. “It’s good for us to be here.” Remember they see Jesus standing between Moses and Elijah, the two great Old Testament heroes, prophets of God. And Peter says, “It’s good for us to be here. Let me make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” It seemed like a good idea. I mean, if Moses has come back from the dead, God has sent him back, Elijah’s been sent back, they somehow can recognize who they are visibly, and Jesus is standing there between them, then it seems like a good solution. God answers that. It’s not a good idea. It’s not really

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

surprising that Peter had a bad idea, is it? The Father says, “This is My Son whom I love, with whom I’m well-pleased,” which is exactly what He said before. He says, “Look, there’s Moses and there’s Elijah. This is My Son with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him.” He’s saying, “Listen, they were prophets, yes. I sent them, yes. But this is My own dear Son in whom all My soul’s delight is in. Listen to Him.

Then the last time in John’s Gospel in John 12 a few chapters back, when Jesus is hesitating as He hears about the Greeks have come, and He realizes now that the cross is right before Him, He says, “I don’t know what I should pray. Father, save Me from this hour, but for this hour I came.” And then He surrenders to the cross and says, “Father, glorify Thy Name.” He’s accepting the mission again. A voice comes out of Heaven, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it.” What is He saying? “You’re doing great, Son. You’re right on track. You’re everything I want You to be, and we’re going to finish the work.” The Father delights in the Son. The Son delights in the Father. Every page you read of the Gospels, Jesus is talking about the Father. He says, “Listen, the works that you see Me doing and the words that you hear Me saying are not My own. They are of the Father who is doing the works. Don’t give Me glory. Give the Father glory.” What does the Father say? “Don’t give Me glory. Give the Son glory.” And then just in this past chapter, chapters 14 to 16 of John’s Gospel, Jesus has been talking about the Spirit. He’s been delighting in the Spirit. He said, “It’s good for you that I go away.” They’re all upset that He’s going away. He’s telling them, “I’m leaving you. You’ve spent three and a half years with Me. I’m going to leave you now. Where I’m going, you cannot follow now. You’ll come later. But it’s good for you that I go. For if I don’t go, the Comforter will not come.” What He’s saying is it’s better for you to have the Spirit. Isn’t that amazing? “Listen guys, I know it’s been great for Me to be with you, but you will not believe how wonderful it’s going to be to have the Spirit.” He’s glorifying the Spirit. And when the Spirit comes, what does He do? He glorifies Jesus. They know each other perfectly, they delight in each other completely, and they have the deepest affection for one another. That’s supposed to be what you and I are to be like. Let’s move onto the third point, the power of our oneness.

3) The Power of Our Oneness:

The pattern is the Trinity. The power is not self-determination. The power is God releases His love in us. It’s something that you can’t work up. You just experience and you release, and it comes from realizing that He’s loved you and He’s called

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

you to Himself. This is how we become one. How do we get past the unattractiveness that is in each one of us? I mean, the closer you get to anybody, the more real you see the problems and flaws in their life. Isn't that true? We tend to want to romantically sort of in our minds think, "That's a person that's arrived. I want to be like him one day," and we look to earthly heroes. I'm talking about as Christians, we look to men or women of God that we really look up to, and it's appropriate to want to follow Godly people, but we need to remember what Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Really we're following Jesus, and we're all needing to follow Jesus. We're all a bunch of sheep. Remember He chose that metaphor that's throughout the Scriptures, not as a flattery or happy kind of thing. He's showing us that we're dumb. We all need to be led like sheep need to be led, but God is a loving Shepherd. He understands that.

So as we get to know each other better, we see the flaws. We get sinned against. If you are going to have a relationship with anyone, you're going to experience pain and suffering, because people are not perfect. Even the holiest man or woman of God is going to sin on a daily basis. I like that prayer that Jerry Bridges puts in his book. I can't remember which book it is. I think it's *The Discipline of Grace*. This man prays this prayer. He says, "Lord, I'm so grateful for the fact that today I have not once lost my temper. I have not yet entertained a lustful thought. I've not sinned with my tongue in any way. And in a moment I'm going to roll over and get out of bed." We're sinners, and when you put sinners together, what do you have? You have conflict. You have difficulty. You have pain. Sometimes we have profound pain, acts of sin that can really be devastating.

How many times I've heard through the years, "It'll never be the same. What this person did to me, it'll never be the same." In one sense, that's absolutely true. It'll never be the same, but the power of the life of God in us, the power of God's transforming love in us, it'll never be the same, but it can be more glorious than ever before, because what happens is when we are sinned against—there is almost always sin on both sides, but even if it's 99% one side and 1% the other, how do you get past that? You get past that by understanding what God has done and what God has forgiven you.

Jesus tells that story in Matthew 18 about the man who was owed a certain amount of money, or owed millions of dollars to his master. The slave owed millions of dollars. He had been given and entrusted with an exorbitant amount of money and had lost it. He comes to the day of accounting and his master says, "Where is the money that I gave you?" "I've lost it." He squandered it. "How did you do that?"

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

So he's ready to let justice take its course and put him in jail, and the man begs for mercy, and the master says, "I forgive you." In joy, the man leaves the place and goes outside, and he runs across a guy that owes him \$50, basically, and he says to him, "I need my money now," and the guy says, "I can't pay it. Just give me until next week," almost exactly what he had said. He basically said, "Just give me time," to his master. There was no way he could have had enough time to repay that debt. But this other guy says, "Just give me time. Give me a week," and he says, "No, I'm not giving you a week," and he throws him into jail. He has him put in debtors' prison. The master hears about it, calls the slave in, and says, "You wicked servant. I forgave you so much and you couldn't forgive your friend that amount?"

What he's saying is this. If we recognize the magnitude of what God has forgiven, if I recognize the magnitude of what God has forgiven me, then any sin done against me is like a \$50 bill compared to millions and millions of dollars. And when I understand the wonder of what Christ has done for me, that God loves me, He sees all that's wrong in me, and He still calls me His precious son now in Christ, if you belong to Jesus, He loves you the way He loves His Son. He now says, "In Christ you are My beloved son with whom I am well-pleased. Because of what Jesus has done, I'm well-pleased with you." How can that be? And if that can be, how can I hold and harbor a grudge over something so small? So no, it won't be the same, but it can be more glorious. When you understand the wonder of what God has done, it creates this incredible unity. It really is unleashed in us.

I saw an example of this in a powerful way about ten or twelve years ago. I was at the Shepherds' Conference. That's a conference for pastors and church leaders in Los Angeles. I was out there, and one of the speakers that they had there as a man named Steve Saint. Many of you may recognize his name or he may sound familiar because there was a book *The End of the Spear* that he wrote. His dad Nate Saint was one of five missionaries killed in Ecuador by a tribe there they were trying to reach. They had flown in, were going to share the Gospel, and they had spent some time trying to cultivate relationships, dropping packages from the airplane, and then they finally landed and they had an initially good attempt at conversation with the people. They knew a related language and were trying to relate to this unreached people group. But before long, things degenerated and they were mercilessly murdered by this tribe. They didn't realize they were going to a tribe that was incredibly violent, where murder happened regularly. People got mad and they just killed each other. So Steve Saint's dad Nate was one of those five killed.

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Well later, Steve, Jim Elliot, Elisabeth Elliot went into that community after losing her husband, her husband was killed, she went down there and preached the Gospel to those same people who killed her husband. And what I saw that day in Los Angeles was Steve Saint, Nate's son, shared a message, and then he called up a man named Mincaye who was one of the men that killed his dad. Mincaye came up to share his testimony of what God had done for him in Christ, how God had forgiven him for living his own life according to his own standards, and doing whatever pleased him. He saw the misery that he had brought, and all the evil that he had caused, and he had found forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. "So he preached the Gospel to us, but he preached it through a translator Steve Saint," Mincaye said, because Steve had spent so much time down there and loved him so much, and you could see just the love that was there. Here's a man that robbed him of a life of knowing and living with his dad, and having his dad be a part of his life. There was never a chance for his children to know their granddad. But all of that was lost in comparison with what God had done for Steve in giving him new life. He saw the power of oneness that comes. That was a beautiful picture of what God does for us. He says, "Listen, that's what you're to give to each other." And though we aren't going to be one exactly the same way as the Father is, because we are not God, but because we're caught up into Him, there is this amazing interdependence about the body of Christ. It's in some ways a mystical union. I use that word again advisedly, because mysticism, often so much bad come of that in so many areas. But when it's rightly understood and rightly applied, it's appropriate. There is a mystical union in the body of Christ. That is, God has made us, and I just said the body of Christ, the term that He uses to speak of His people, the body, that is, you are many, yet you're one. You are distinct persons, and you're a part of one essential reality, the same way that a body is made.

The finger has an interest in what happens to the foot. It may not be that concerned at first. The foot gets hurt and the finger says to the foot, "Hey, you were really stupid. You got what you deserved. I'm glad you got it. You always act like you're so important anyway." Actually, it seemed like the foot would say this to the finger. The finger probably thinks he's more important than the foot. Anyway, whichever way you want to do it, but the finger needs the foot. If the foot really is injured, the finger's going to be affected by that. The finger can't go do the things that it wants do, because the foot is injured. Think about playing ball. You can't go play ball and make a great catch when you can't run to get the ball. The foot can run, but if the finger can't act, the finger can't catch.

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

He says in 1 Corinthians 12 where he unpacks this beauty of the body of Christ, “The Spirit has placed us and given us gifts and made us interdependent, so that every single person in the body of Christ is essential. And those that we might be tempted to have less honor upon looking at them, are actually more necessary. That’s kind of like the foot, the toe, and the finger. Try to live without your big toe. Well, you need it.

So God has made us to depend upon one another, and He’s saying, “Listen, you’ve got to learn to love each other, and the way you’re going to learn to love each other is you’re going to be caught up into the love of God.” The more that you understand about how the Father, and Son, and Spirit love one another, and the more you understand that they now love you, like Jesus said in John 17, “...that they may know that the love with which You’ve loved Me, You now have loved them,” and when you have that love now, then that’s the fuel and the power for that kind of oneness to be manifested so that we can look past the sin, we can look past the flaws, and we can actually get to where we can come to know someone better, and we can say, “Yeah, there’s that weakness in that person.” But when you let God deal with what is already in you, this is one of the things in marriage.

I’ve been married now for 29 years, and what a joy. My wife, I think she’s just so beautiful. Today I look at pictures of when we got married, and I think, “I can’t believe she married me.” I thought that’s what I thought when she was walking down the aisle. “I cannot believe that woman is marrying me. I hope she says, ‘I do,’ when the time comes.” But when you get married and you find the flaws too, right? Yeah, there are things that she does or that she has that I’m not crazy about, and there are a lot more things that I do that she’s not crazy about. But you know, when you are rooted in Christ and in God, what happens is you begin to understand things that liberate the differences even to now be sweet. Because what I’ve learned through the years is that the things that I have not liked about Patti or the things that Patti has not liked about me, sometimes they were rooted in our sinfulness and our selfishness, and needed to be changed. Say I’ve got some problem that irritates her, and it needs to change, yet the reality of it is, and the mystery is that God is using even this ugliness in my life to bless her, and God is using the ugliness in her life to bless me.

How do you learn patience if you don’t need to be patient? You don’t. So when you’re dealing with circumstances where you need patience, and you’re just frustrated, good news, God is calling on you to learn patience by looking to Him. “Lord, thank You for this opportunity to be patient right now. Thank You that not

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only have You given me the opportunity, but You've given me the power, because Jesus Christ lives in me, and He's perfectly patient." And then I look at a person or she looks at me, and we see God's instrument. That which was unattractive now has become attractive and beautiful even though it still needs to change maybe. I need to change in this area, but still I'm the Lord's blessing to her. Do you see? That's where you go from knowledge, remember? The Trinity, knowledge, delight, and affection. Knowledge, delight, and affection.

That's what is supposed to happen in the body of Christ. We're to go day-to-day and get to know each other better, understand in real terms the strengths and weaknesses of the other person, and when we see the strengths, glory in that. "Man, I need your strengths. Where would I be without you?" and yet when I see your weakness, look over it because of the glory of what God is looking over in my life, and realize that even that is a blessing. And then we begin to love each other, and there begins to be that kind of delight, and what we experience is what begins to be more and more a taste in our relationships of the joy of the blessed God. The joy of the happy God is to be lived out in our lives. That's what God calls us to, and when that happens, the world will see it, and the Gospel will go forth.

Let's pray together...

Father, we thank You for the wonder of what You've done for us in Christ. We thank You for the privilege of being Your children. We pray for those that are here today that need to come to understand that in a personal way, that by Your grace You would open their eyes to see that everything that is necessary has been done, that Jesus is a fully able and glorious Savior, that though our sins are as scarlet, they'll be made as white as snow. And Father, we marvel that You have delighted in us when we were so unattractive, and Your love is making us more and more like Your precious Son. We pray in His wonderful Name, Amen.

"What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part II"

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