

The Glorious End of the Matter – *John 17:20-26*

Introduction – Jesus ends His prayer with great confidence, looking beyond this small band of disciples, beyond the crowds that will call for His crucifixion, beyond the cross and the grave, to those who will be blessed by all that will occur before the watching world and then declared to the world to come. Here we sit, like an infant just home from the hospital, a wobbling but growing answer to that prayer. There is both a promised oneness or unity that we already have, and a mature unity that we still are growing into.

Gospel Confidence (v20) – Jesus had declared that there were other sheep still to come (10:15) and here He prays for them (for us). “*Their word*” refers to the Word of God that the apostles would produce over the next decades that then would be the foundation for preaching and teaching for generations this Good News. One day later, you would have thought that this was the end of the ministry of Jesus. And today, many are tempted to think that we are at the end of the ministry of Jesus upon this earth. But Jesus knew what had been promised to Abraham (Gen 12:3) and the apostles would declare the same (Acts 3:25, Gal 3:8) and John would be given a vision of what the fulfillment would look like (Rev 7:9-10). We would do well to grow in His confidence (John 12:27-32).

Oneness in God (v21) – This is the verse of cults, if taken out of context and the rest of Scripture. “*You will be like God*” was the temptation in the garden (Gen 3:5), so this is not a oneness of deity. This is not a metaphysical oneness, but a covenantal oneness. It is also a oneness of ownership, not essence. All who are Christ’s will have been purchased by Christ and brought to the Father. These will believe “*through the word*” so it is a unity created by a loyalty to an apostolic testimony. They all will confess Jesus as Lord (Rom 20:9-10) and there will be no difference of entry (Gal 3:26-29). This unity of testimony will be an evangelistic tool for the church over the ages, “*that the world may believe that You sent Me,*” as the gospel message continues to save many out of the world.

Unity in the Glory of God (v22) – Jesus spoke of the unity of the Father and Son in the mutual sharing of glory in the work of the cross and the gift of eternal life (13:31-32, 17:1-2). This unity, brought forth through the Word and mediated by the Spirit is something the church has and is to be preserved – it is the gift of God (Eph 4:1-6). We are to endeavor to keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The Word is full of illustrations to this end: we are in one vine with many branches, one temple with many stones, one body with many members. And so, as the Apostles Creed states, we believe in “*the holy catholic church*” or in the Nicene, “*One holy catholic and apostolic church.*” Catholic bothers us protestants, but this term is not Rome’s. The word comes from two Greek words combined, “kat’ holos” which you find in Acts 9:31, “*Then the church throughout all Judea, Samaria, and Galilee had peace and were edified...*” It was the churches throughout all, or the church universal including... The catholic church is the universal church. It is a single church in many places. It is the one church based on the one confession of faith in Jesus Christ. This kind of unity means that the churches are one church not because we all agree, but because we all have the same Lord. And so Jesus continues to pray...

Oneness of Sanctifying Unity and Love (v23) – Brought into this covenantal union with the Son and the Father, we find that it is a covenant of love. And this is a love that sanctifies – it is a covenant that “*they may be made perfect in one...*” That word, “*perfect*” is “*telos*” and refers to the mature, fully grown up, man, or to the end towards which we are going. And this means that we have more unity to grow up into, which means that it is a design feature and not a flaw that we are not in perfect unity as the church yet. Paul would also write about this unity that we are to grow up into a fulness, from the teachings of the apostles, that is, from the Word of God (Eph 4:11-16). Love and truth, to be evangelical love and truth, must go together. Think of the truth as being the skeleton and love being the flesh. If you only have raw cold truth, you have structure but no life. If you only have *uuuuuuu*, you are warm and soft, like a limp rag or a bowl full of oatmeal, and you will not be able to stand against the demands to conform to the unbelieving world. Truth and love go together in the Christian faith.

The Unity and Glorious End of the Matter (vv24-26) – The Son wants the church to be with Him where He is (v24) in order that they might see His glory, the product of the Father’s love (v24). The prayer then ends with the request that this love of the Father for the Son would indwell the church and the Son would as well (v26). Among other things, this is more veiled wedding language. At the first miracle, Jesus was shown to be the greater Bridegroom while the former was out of wine. In chapter 3, John the Baptist considered himself only the friend of the Bridegroom, escorting the bride to his Friend. When speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus was a type of the perfect husband who would provide living water overflowing. Later we will see the New Adam and Eve in the garden.

The first Adam was given Eve and she is the mother of all the living. The last Adam receives a wife, a bride made perfect, and the church is the mother of us all (Gal 4:26). Paul tells us that he is jealous to present this bride to Jesus (2 Cor 11:2). Jesus prays that we “*may behold My glory which You have given Me*” (John 17:24), and the glory of the husband is his wife (1 Cor 11:7). In John’s apocalyptic vision, he is shown the Lamb’s wife and she reveals “*the glory of God*” (Rev 21:9-11, also 21:1-50).

Marriage is the Picture – When Paul teaches on marriage, on the roles of the husband and wife, he knows this is all about Christ and the church (Eph 5:32). And it is in marriage and in the family that this objective unity is already ours (you are one flesh, husband and wife, and you are one family with the father as the responsible head), and you must endeavor to keep that unity. You are not to endeavor to keep your pride, or you point, or you dignity. You are to endeavor to keep the unity.

And it is here that we grow up in the unity of the faith together as well in the constant, sanctifying work of loving our wives and obeying our husbands. The discipline of our children is not an act of punishment, but of loving instruction to build up the glorious unity of the family covenant and the promises of God. All of that both mirrors what the Son is doing with His betrothed bride and what the world is to see and, from that, believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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