

May 9, 2021

“Listening to Jesus Pray - Part Three”
John 17:20-26

FCF: Unawareness of what awaits

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Listening to Jesus pray
(magnet) broadens our view of His plans.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

It’s hard not knowing what the future holds. And our uncertainty can breed a good deal of anxiety. But not to fear. Just head down to the local toy store and get yourself a Magic 8-Ball. Invented in 1950, it looks like an oversized 8-ball with a little window through which you can read the answer to any question you pose - one of twenty on a little die floating in its blue goo.

You should be relieved to know that that’s not all we have for facing the future. In fact, Jesus has given assurance to His followers as to what awaits His church. It’s worth knowing.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 17:20-26](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Imagine an explorer, standing upon a summit, looking out across a vast mountain range. Think of Mt. Everest. Between 1920 and 1952, seven major expeditions tried and failed to reach the top. In 1924, the famous mountaineer George Leigh-Mallory perished in the attempt. In 1952, a team of Swiss climbers had been forced to turn back after reaching the South Peak, only 1,000 feet from the summit. But 1953 brought an expedition sponsored by the Joint Himalayan Committee of the Alpine Club of Great Britain and the Royal Geographic Society. They reached the South Peak in May, but all but two of the climbers were forced to turn back by exhaustion at the high altitude. Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, a native Nepalese climber who had participated in five previous Everest trips, were the only members of the party able to make the final assault on the summit. And on May 29, 1953, Hillary and Norgay reached the summit, 29,028 feet above sea level, the highest spot on Earth. Can you imagine the view they took in?

I ask this because of what Jesus is praying here in John 17. It’s like a mountaineer gazing out from a summit upon an expanding vista, taking in range upon range over the horizon. Last week, we looked at a prayer especially but not exclusively for the eleven. Now we come to a portion of this prayer that is particularly for those who would come after those men, who would believe through them. Jesus is praying for us. Listen to Him pray. This is for us. Listening to Jesus pray helps us to pray. But it also broadens our view of His plans. And they are expansive.

How so? This expansive plan comes out in three significant ways in our text. First, in the work between us. Second, in the change within us. And then, third, in the path before us.

I. THE WORK BETWEEN US

First, the work between us. By repetition, we see the burden of this prayer is unity.

A) The Fact of This Unity

Let’s start with the fact of this unity, some simple essential details that are plainly here.

1. A growing body

Jesus envisions a growing church. This message will spread. Many will respond. So He prays for unity amidst all our differences. Regardless of our denominational distinctions, educational background, political affiliation, economic status, language, nationality, or race, we are one.

2. A present reality

And this is a present reality. It is something already accomplished which we are but to live out.

B) The Nature of This Unity

And on what basis is this unity? The unity of the Trinity ([READ John 17:20-23a](#)).

1. Deep

So this is deep. It means a common mind and purpose, a mutual love, a gladly shared mission.

2. Diverse

It is deep. And diverse. There are three persons in the Trinity. So we do not become part of God nor lose our identity in each other. This unity means being truly one with flourishing differences.

C) The Effect of This Unity

What is the effect or result of this unity? The world will know ([READ John 17:21, 23](#)).

1. Supernatural

This is a supernatural oneness grounded in the reality of God Himself, continually enriched by the gospel. It is clearly supernatural. And it stands out as it is lived out in the everyday ordinary.

2. Observable

This is not simply formal labels. This is personal and observable. It is winsome and compelling.

This is Jesus' expansive plan. And it very much involves His work between us.

Illustration:

Think of the seller's market in Clarksville right now. People standing in line, paying far over asking prices, willing to skip home inspections. But such is the draw. Such is the draw.

Application:

Francis Schaeffer said love is the final apologetic. Our post-truth society cares very little about faith declarations and needs to see faith demonstrations - especially in how Christians engage with, relate to, and do life with one another. Which is a real challenge to a people daily inhaling the fumes of individualism. We don't care much about unity. But that's Jesus' heart.

Listening to Jesus pray broadens our view of His plans, including His work between us.

II. THE CHANGE WITHIN US

Which brings us to our second point, the change within us. How does this "being one" come about? Clearly, it is something that Jesus has to create and then sustain within each of us.

A) A Mutual Abiding

He prays for what we might call a mutual abiding ([READ John 17:21, 23a, 26](#)).

1. A spiritual union

Jesus prays about a spiritual union. This is quite profound. We find our life in Him. This is very much harkening back to Jesus' words to the disciples in John 15 about the Vine and Branches.

2. A personal unity

He prays about a spiritual union and then also a personal unity. We are made one with God and so are able to be one with each other. You might say that the solution here has to go that deep.

B) A Giving of Glory

So our "being one" comes by mutual abiding. And a giving of glory (**READ John 17:22**).

1. Explanation of "glory"

We talked about this idea of "glory" a couple of weeks ago. It means the unique magnificence, a particular honor, a special splendor of a person or thing. It's what sets them apart from all others.

2. The glory of Jesus

What then is the glory of Jesus? In John's Gospel, it is displayed especially in His humiliation - in His incarnation, in His earthly sufferings, His trial and crucifixion. What do we see in all this? A heart of self-sacrificing love. That is the glory of Jesus. And He has made that known to us.

This is part of Jesus' expansive plan. It comes though a change He works within us.

Illustration:

The gratitude of a man whose debts have been written off should be in proportion to the amount involved. His gratitude and humility will be dependent upon what that sacrifice cost the other party. If it's a few dollars, then not much. If it's the national debt, that's quite different.

Application:

My point? Jesus has given us His glory. No higher price could be paid. Which means we should not only be dependent upon Him but humbled, our hearts gripped by the reality of where we were and His amazing grace and mercy. What does this have to do with unity? Jesus has given us His glory. And that humbles us. Our boasting is done. Our pride is crushed. And humble people get along. Which raises a question. How well do we get along with each other?

Listening to Jesus pray broadens our view of His plans, including the change within us.

III. THE PATH BEFORE US

Which brings us to the third point, the path before us (**READ John 17:24-26**). There is much here of which we can get a foretaste even now. But the ultimate fulfillment still awaits.

A) To Be with Jesus

1. The Immanuel promise

Jesus prays that we would be with Him. This is an echo of the great Immanuel promise.

2. The language of love

It is the language of love, the longing of a man waiting to hold his bride (**READ John 17:24**).

B) To See His Glory

1. Another manifestation of His glory

He prays that we would see His glory. This is a different sense than before - not His humiliation but His exaltation, no longer veiled and hidden but fully displayed as at His Transfiguration.

2. At His return

This will be at His second coming, when all will be made right and we will see Him as He is.

C) To Learn from Him

Jesus prays that we will be with Him, see His glory, and then also to learn from Him.

1. What has already been revealed

(**READ John 17:26**) He has revealed much of the Father to us, His glorious character and ways.

2. What will continue to be made known

That will continue in an eternal unveiling, not just of propositional truth but relational growth as He unceasingly reveals His love to us - like the brightest sun shining upon our little solar strips.

This is the expansive plan of Jesus. And it includes this never ending path before us.

Application:

That's quite a destination. But is that where your GPS is set? The misguided messaging all around us is that we can put our hope in this life and live for things we can see. We fall into this trap. Think about what we pray for and insist upon - long life, good health, a steady career, creature comforts, relational ease, financial security, political stability. Where are we promised such things? Where does Jesus repeatedly tell us we need to place our hope and lock our sights?

Listening to Jesus pray broadens our view of His plans, including the path before us.

CONCLUSION:

This is a lot to take in. But this is what Jesus is praying for and acting upon. Even now. But the strange thing is that we often wonder - because things aren't always going how we would like - we wonder if He's engaged or doing anything at all. We say we can't see any evidence of that so we assume that there must not be any. Which is not a very good assumption to make.

Here are some scenarios to ponder. Imagine an audience waiting during the intermission of a play. "Are they really changing the set behind the curtain or did the cast just go home?" Or let's say you are a traveller settling into your seat on an airplane. "My ticket says I'm going to 'X' but what if it's 'Y'? How do I know? I can't see what's going on in the cockpit." Or picture a child in the hall outside their parents' bedroom door. "I know they said they would talk about that thing I brought up. But will they? And will they get this right and actually do what I want?"

This prayer is a lot to take in. It soars so high, reaches so deep, and spreads out so far and wide. It's so much and so hard to get our heads around. We really are like the audience, the traveller, and the child. So much is going on here and we can't really see or grasp it all. But Jesus is indeed praying for this work between us, this change within us, and this path before us.

Listening to Jesus pray broadens our view of His plans. They are expansive. And good.

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