

John 17 Sanctified in truth, Loved in Unity

In reference to the Bible, when I think of unity, I think of two verses in particular. The first is John 17 The scripture passage Cindy read for us. It was Jesus praying for the unity of all believers. That is, the ones he had with him at that time and the ones throughout history up to and including us today. How important do you think unity is if Jesus himself prayed for it, the oneness of all his believers? When we listen to the words of Jesus' prayer there are certain words repeated several times and that stick out and bring out a deep meaning within his prayer.

The first word is glory- Jesus is reminding God and those that hear his words that he himself was with God in the beginning and that he alone held glory before becoming incarnate as a human being. That is Christ was one with God in glory before he lowered himself to earth as we are told in Phil 2.

The second word is to know. We are told that to know God and that God sent Jesus Christ "This is eternal life." Wow! Did you read that, to know God is eternal life? The next word is the world. Jesus says that he is not in the world and that his disciples do not belong to the world. For, he says, the world does not know God. The world does not know God- therefore, the world is not eternal. Now I have said before when speaking of the world it means that the world has its own agenda, power, control, or selfish desires, whereas God speaks to unity, to equality, to justice and all creation living in a reciprocal community where the well-being of all supersedes the wants of power, control or selfish desires of individuals or small groups. God's plan for the world is where love is the driving force, not power control or selfish desires.

The last word I want to point out to you is “to be one.” This then is the basis for Jesus’ prayer, that all believers be united as one. Just as God and Christ are one, as Christ is in God, so the believers in Christ and all are one. Completely one.

Now This is Jesus' prayer, But let us look at another passage that I believe is also calling creation to this unity. Eph. 6 12 For our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

These verses remind us that we are not in a battle with flesh and blood. That is, we are not in a struggle with other humans, but rather it is spiritual forces. Spiritual forces are the ideas, the workings of this world which tell people you need to have control or seek power to survive. Have you ever heard someone say “yeah that is a great thought, but the world doesn’t work that way?” Exactly. The world does not know God and God’s plan for how the world should work. Justice, equality, freedom for all. With so many following this world’s schemes for individualism, for selfish gains that go contrary to God’s plan of complete oneness.

Now to bring it all back to Jesus’ prayer. The reason that we must be united, the reason that Christians must show the faith and teach others to know God, to seek God’s plan for creation and not this world’s struggle for power and control is to achieve this unity, this oneness. If we

are “completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them (that is all the people of the world) you have loved them as you love me.” We as believers know that God’s love is what makes the world continue. Through our unity and example of justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and love, the world may know God, and all may be united as one people united in love. It starts at home, it starts at our local congregation, and moves into our communities, into our counties, our states, and our country. Teaching how to be united through our example of loving humanity as God so loved us. All the while struggling against the spiritual forces that lie to us that power, control, and selfishness is the only way this world will exist. Let us go forth and show the world what unity is all about, what God’s love can do for this world.