

Theme: Christians should pray and work to walk in visible unity, both with the local and the universal church.

I. Intro – Two Baptists On A Bridge

- A. Depressed man about to jump off of a bridge
- B. Other man tells him not to - a lot to live for
- C. Believe in God? Me too! Christian? Me too!
- D. Catholic or Protestant? Me too! Baptist? Me too!
- E. 1644 1st London Confession or 1689 2nd London Confession?
- F. Die heretic! - and pushed him off the bridge....
- G. Sadly, the Church can appear to be anything but unified
- H. What is our unity? How do we walk in it?

II. Jesus' Prayer For the Church To Be Unified

- A. A Church Unified - a major theme in Jesus' prayer
 - 1. First prayed in v11 - context of struggle with world
I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — **so that they may be one as we are one**. John 17:11
 - a. In the context of struggle with the world
 - b. Satan will be trying to destroy unity of the Church
 - 2. The key theme of vv20-23

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. **May they be brought to complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23

- a. In this section Jesus is specifically praying for us
- b. He prays for us to walk in unity 3 times in 3 verses
- c. This is His main request for believers after the apostles

B. Unity is central to the heart and plan of Jesus

- 1. He requests it four times in the prayer
- 2. It is the theme of His prayer for believers today
- 3. Unity has to be a concern in our prayers and actions

III. Understanding Unity

- A. Church unity is based on the unity in the Trinity
I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — **so that they may be one as we are one**....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**: John 17:11, 20–22

1. Once again, the Trinity is the foundation of our faith
2. The Trinity is the model for Christian living
3. Pleas for unity often built on the Trinity
 Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and **one Spirit** — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — ⁵ **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:3–6

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same **Spirit**. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same **Lord**. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same **God** works all of them in all men. ¹ Corinthians 12:4–6

B. Church unity is not organizational but organic and relational

1. This is implied by the analogy with the Trinity
2. Note the relational language used
 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.** May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23
3. This is not about creating new org charts of who is in control - it is about relationships of love and honor

C. Unity includes both the universal and local church

1. The universal church - all believers, all times and places - is clearly in view
 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. May they be brought to complete unity to let the **world** know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23
 - a. All who believe through time - universal church
 - b. All be brought to unity - all believers - universal church
 - c. So the whole world may know - universal in scope
 - d. This means we need the universal church
 - e. It is not about BRCC - love, pray for and speak well of others
2. But unity is first walked out in local church
 - a. Relationships (like the Trinity) only possible locally
 - b. We can't relate to believers from other times or places
 - c. Most NT church commands can only be fulfilled in the local church (serve one another, prefer one another, submit to one another, follow leaders, etc.)
3. We are called to unity in a local church and then with the universal church
 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

² To **the church of God in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, **together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** — their Lord and ours: 1 Corinthians 1:1–2

D. This unity is given to us in Jesus - but we must strive to maintain it

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. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23

1. Christians are united with God - and one another
2. Jesus gave us glory - so we are one
3. Paul makes the same point
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. — Ephesians 4:3
4. There is a basic unity - but we must not let Satan destroy it

IV. The Blessings of Unity

A. Unity makes us strong in our struggle against the world
I will remain in the world no longer, but **they are still in the world**, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **protect them by the power of your name** — the name you gave me — **so that they may be one as we are one.** John 17:11

1. Review of last week - in the world but not of it
2. Walking in unity with the church is essential to be effective in this struggle
3. The analogy of geese flying in formation
 - a. They can fly 71% farther in formation than alone
 - b. When tired others take the lead
 - c. They protect hurt or weary geese by staying with them

B. Unity with the church is tied with closeness to Jesus

1. It is impossible to be close to Jesus and not His people
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. May they be brought to complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23
 - a. Note the mixture of us and God together
 - b. No way to drop unity with the church from this!
2. Special presence of Jesus reserved for united believers
Again I say to you, if two of you **agree** on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ **For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.** Matthew 18:19–20

C. Unity will be used by God to reach the world - next weeks teaching!

V. Applying the Word

A. Am I walking unity with the Church?

1. God calls for us to walk in unity with the Church
2. Jesus prayed for us to walk in unity with the Church
3. The Bible knows nothing of “lone ranger Christians”
4. Do I rejoice when other churches prosper - or envy them?
5. Do I speak well of other churches - or tear them down?
6. Am I a committed member of a local church?
7. Do I attend each Sunday - or only if convenient?
8. Do I come early and stay late for worship?
9. Am I part of a small group? A ministry team?
10. Remember the geese - we need one another!

B. Communion - Receiving From Jesus Together

1. If you have been walking in unity - come give thanks
2. If not - come ask forgiveness, receive strength
3. Ephesians 2:14-18 - peace with God and one another through the death of Jesus!

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:14–18

Praying For the Church To Be Unified

John 17:20-23
July 7, 2013
Communion
Romans 15:5-6

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5–6

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. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20–23