

Jesus Prays for Us

DARRELL DELANEY

Have you ever considered the depth of Jesus' prayer for you? In the final verses of John 17, Jesus prays, not just for his disciples, but for all believers, including us today. He prays for unity, for us to experience the same love the Father has for him, and for the world to know God in our lives. What does it mean to live in the reality of this prayer? How can we reflect the transformative power of God's love to others? Join us as we explore John 17:20-26, and discover how Jesus' prayer invites us to a life of unity, love, and purpose, next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in our third part of our three-part series, concluding our series on Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. Today, we are looking at verses 20-26. In the first one, we talked about how Jesus talked about his glory; how he wanted the Father to glorify him like he did before the world began. In the second episode, we talked about how Jesus prayed for the disciples; and in this episode, we are talking about how he prays for us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He prays for all believers. What is really striking about this concluding part of John 17 is, it is just the depth of love; and for Jesus...for his love's forward-looking nature...Jesus looks beyond the immediate challenges of his arrest and crucifixion. We are in John 17. He is going to get arrested in John 18, the very next chapter; and then the crucifixion follows that. But Jesus is looking beyond that. He is looking ahead to the time of the Church; and it is really, I think, Darrell, humbling to realize that even in Jesus' final hours, he still had us on his mind, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, let's look at it in John 17:20, 21, where Jesus prays. He says: ²⁰“My prayer is not for them (the disciples) alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that 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.”

So, Jesus expands the prayer beyond the disciples to include us; and it is so crazy because for me to believe that Jesus was thinking about me and you and us in that time, it is really a beautiful and encouraging thing to know, that he really has us in mind, not just the people right in front of him in that moment right then.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And how important this is. When you read those lines just a minute ago, the concluding part of verse 21: “May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Well, that is a lot at stake for us to display unity, for us to be one with Jesus...one with the Father through the Holy Spirit...that is how the world is going to believe that the Father actually sent Jesus. So, in other words, there is a lot riding on this. We really need Jesus to pray for us, because the credibility of the gospel is on the line here.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and that unity you are talking about: The Trinity...the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, have this beautiful, perfect unity and diversity that they display to us; and that is actually how we are empowered to live; and it is a high calling, but it makes sense, because unity within the Church is meant to reflect the very nature of God, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; that is our witness to the world that shows the truth of the gospel in action; and it is, as you said, Darrell, it is a high, high calling. We are going to be thinking about that, and all the things that tug at, and that threaten our unity in the Church and with one another; but it has got to be something that Jesus prayed for us, that we would be one with him and with each other. We have to pray about that, and we will think more about that as we keep going. One thing we could point out though is that unity does not mean *uniform*ity, right? It does not mean we are all clones of each other. That we all like the same things; that we all look alike; that we all like the same kind of music. No; we all do different things and we are different people, but we can be united even across those differences. It is sort of like, you think of a symphony orchestra. Lots of different instruments; lots of different musicians with lots of different gifts, but there is one conductor; and in this case, it is Jesus by the Holy Spirit; and that brings all of the instruments and all of their diverse sounds together into one...into a beautiful harmony.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing; I mean, Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 12. He says there is one body with many parts. Not all the parts are the same; not all of them are eyes; not all of them are ears; not all of them are the same, but each one has its own contributing gift; and the ones that are unseen are double honored. He says that in 1 Corinthians 12; and Jesus is praying that the world may know who he is. So, the unity has a purpose to it. It is not just for unity's sake. It is missional, so that the world can know he is who he says he is, and he can do what he says he can do. That happens through the unity.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We don't all just sit around and sing *Kumbaya* for our own sake because it makes us feel good. We are showing that unity so that the world can see Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit in us. And you know, Darrell, you had reminded me of a story a little while back of a small town. There were two congregations; a predominantly Black church and a White church, and they were apart; but eventually, the pastors decided they would merge the congregations, and it wasn't easy. There were different traditions; there were different tastes; but they managed to do it; and they learned to love and appreciate each other; and the rest of the community noticed. People who had written off the church as irrelevant or divided started asking questions like: Well, maybe there is something to this. I mean, if they can get along, maybe this Jesus thing is real; and that is exactly what Jesus is saying is going to happen.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the power of unity is very, very essential to the witness of who God is and what God can do. If he can overcome all the differences that we have, then certainly, he can show us that he can be glorified in the midst of differences, because when we are united in Christ, of course, you said that, the world takes notice, but that is not easy at all. I mean, it requires humility, it requires forgiveness and a willingness to put others before ourselves. It reminds me of Philippians 2:5*, where Paul says your attitude should be like that of Christ Jesus. You shouldn't be looking at your own interests, but also the interests of others; and so, he shows that attitude that Jesus had through the rest of that chapter. Others are having him on.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is what happens in the Trinity; you know, there is this kind of technical word: *perichoresis*, which means that the unity...choreography...comes out of that word: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have it in this eternal-long circle. That is why the Orthodox Christians don't depict the Trinity as a triangle. They have a circle, because it is like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are always chasing each

other, and they are deferring to each other; and they are serving each other and they are helping each other; and that is what we need to do in the Church; act like that; to not be proud, but to be humble, to forgive each other; to want the other person to do better than how you do; that is the goal.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a dance, Scott. I mean, we are invited into the holy dance—the divine dance; and when we abide in Christ, and we are welcomed into that dance, we actually fulfill our calling. I think Jesus makes this even clearer in John 15, where he says: ⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and in remain in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

So, when we abide in Christ and his love flows through us, and the power of the Trinity...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit's love comes through us...it empowers us to walk in unity and also be the witness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that John 15 passage on the vine and the branches, that is part of his Farewell Discourses...that is part of the same section of John that we are now wrapping up in John 17; and I think we will have more takeaways before we conclude this final episode of this three-part series, but what it tells me, Darrell, is we have to pray for unity. That ought to be something we pray for all the time, and not just some grand, global unity. Start local, right? Start local. Pray for your own congregation; pray for your role in that congregation, that you will be somebody who will overcome division, that God will use you to bring his peace and his love to that community. Yes, we want the whole Church to be unified, but you know, we can start small within our own congregations.

In just a minute, we are going to explore more and more of Jesus' prayer and what it means for us experience his glory and his love. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are continuing our journey through John 17, exploring Jesus' prayer for future believers in verses 20-26; and Darrell, again, we are going to keep focusing on what we already talked about, because Jesus keeps talking about it...the unity of believers.

John 17:21; Jesus praying here:

“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.”

So, there it is again; all this in-ness language: in me, in you, in them, in us. There is just a lot of, I don't know, in-ity, if that is a word. It is a profound request, asking the Father to give us that unity that mirrors the unity of the Trinity itself.

DARRELL DELANEY

It mirrors the unity of the Trinity. The Trinity is not just agreement or shared goals, even though it is; it is an interdependent and loving relationship. I love what you said earlier, they are constantly deferring to one another; and Jesus is saying: Remember the Father; the Holy Spirit is saying: Remember Jesus. Everybody is actually deferring to one another in the purpose of salvation of the world, salvation of the people; and so, that unity is the kind of unity we are called to live by. So, that means we can get over our differences; we can forgive one another; and we can work together.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It kind of reminds me of a while back I was at a four-way stop, and there were four of us who got there simultaneously; and so, I waved the one person on and that person was already waving the other...and eventually, all four of us were waving for the other...and we started to laugh because it was just funny. We

were all deferring to each other. Somebody is going to have to go first here; but that is sort of the picture that you want in the Church, too; because what this prayer tells us, Darrell, is that unity is not optional. This is foundational for the Church. This is not just sort of an elective course you can take in the unity of the Church, this is a core course...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is pretty, pretty, pretty important; and we mentioned in this series already, the Church in Acts: (2:44) All the believers were together. They had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple courts. They broke bread together in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you said that unity is foundational to who we are. It is foundational to our identity, but it is also a sacrificial unity. So, if my brother or sister is in need, and I have plenty, then I can share what I have with them, and vice versa. It may be words of encouragement; it may be quality time. It doesn't always have to be physical, tangible things, but the idea is that it is going to cost me to be in a relationship with a believer and the believers...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it cost the Father to be in a relationship with us; and he is gladly doing that because he loves us, and that is what we model in the world that we live in.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but it is not easy...it is not easy; and you know, one of the things that convinces me of how important unity is, is the fact that it is the one thing the devil attacks the most, right? Where is the devil going to spend his time? On stuff that is the most important; and what does the devil try to do most in the Church? Bring disunity...bring disharmony...make us look just like the rest of the world that is clawing and scraping each other's eyes out. You know, if the devil can make the Church look like that, it makes it easy for people to say: See? See? Those Christians are no different; hypocrites...hypocrites! They act like they are so special, but they are just like the rest of society; and honestly, Darrell, it has been that way from the beginning, hasn't it?

DARRELL DELANEY

It has; and the temptations are out there. It is real; because, I mean, are we going to step on each other to get up the corporate ladder? Are we going to cheat on our taxes? Are we going to argue with each other based on having different political beliefs? Are we going to allow our denominations to divide us? We have these challenges before us, but we also have our example from Christ on how to do that well. So, if we are going to be able to do that, we actually need his power; and this prayer empowers us to do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but again, it is not easy. Look what Paul had to write in 1 Corinthians 1:10: I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. And Darrell, that is only the tenth verse of that letter to the Corinthians; and we know why. Corinth was a mess! I mean, the early Church was not some idyllic, golden era of unity. From the very beginning, churches struggled with this; and Corinth was a clear example. I mean, 1 Corinthians is Paul's reply to a letter they had sent him, in which they list about twenty things that were problems in the church. People who were divided

on who they followed. Is it Paul, Apollos, Jesus? People who were, you know, not celebrating the Lord's Supper the right way. People who were filing lawsuits against one another, for heaven's sake. It was a real mess! And that is the earliest days of the Church; and again, the devil attacks what is important, and unity is important; and so, he attacks it.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know, what I love about scripture is that they don't omit that out of the scripture. They show us that there is dysfunction and brokenness and issues in the Church, so that we can see God working in the midst of it. So, I believe that unity isn't the destination, per se; it is a process of allowing and surrendering daily to what it means to live for Christ, and the example that he has given us; and receiving the strength that comes from his prayer for us that gets us to this place of unity. Now, that is going to be something that we will need to work through each and every day; and that is something that is not easy to do. It only can be done if Christ helps us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly: ²³“I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

That is John 17:23. It is Jesus in us that gives us even a remote chance to get to that unity that Jesus wants us to have. It is not our power; it is not something we are going to be able to generate on our own. All we will generate is disharmony, but with Jesus' help...with him living in us...with our having union with Christ...to dwell in Christ, Paul's favorite prepositional phrase, that is where the unity can come from; and the world is watching for exactly that.

DARRELL DELANEY

They are definitely watching. You think about the early Church and how they had Jews, they had Gentiles, they had male, they had female; they had slaves, they had free; and Paul is saying that there is unity in Christ no matter what state you find yourself in, and no matter what circumstance, social, economic background or race or any of that, the unity is still able to be done because of the Spirit of Christ is powerful; and even Tertullian, the early Church father who famously quoted the pagans when he said: See how they love one another? That kind of unity is definitely compelling to people who are outside of the faith; and they are attracted to it. So then we get to share the gospel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and the only way to live that out today is with Christlike humility. You mentioned it earlier, but here it is again: Philippians 2:3, 4: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. You know, the letter to the Philippians is probably the friendliest, warmest letter of all of Paul's thirteen New Testament letters, but when you read between the lines of Philippians...I just did a Bible study on this recently...a four-week Bible study...when you read between the lines, Philippi had issues with pride. There was pride in the congregation; and so, Paul has to keep pushing them, pushing them, pushing them to be humble, as Jesus was humble, because only that will lead to unity.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the prayer that Jesus is praying reminds us that unity is not just some nice idea, but it is essential to our identity as believers in our mission to the world. It reminds us that Jesus, as he prayed for the disciples, is still interceding for us today. In our final segment, we will explore what it means to be united in love, and how Jesus' prayer can shape our relationships with one another. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and you are now listening to the final segment of the final episode of our three-part series on Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17; and this program, Darrell, is focusing on the very last part of that prayer, where Jesus, having just

prayed for his disciples, now prays for all believers in the future.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, let's pick it up in verses 24 to 26 of John 17, where Jesus says: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. ²⁵Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

So, Jesus is praying this prayer for the believers to experience his love to the full, and it is no ordinary love. It is the same love the Father has for the Son. That eternal, unbreakable love—that unconditional and transformative love that Jesus desires that we live in that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he wants us to see his glory; he wants us, even though he has made it clear in these Farewell Discourses...I mean, they are farewell discourses...Jesus is going away; and yet, by the Holy Spirit, we will have union with Christ. So, in that sense, we can still be where Jesus is, and we can see his glory, and then hopefully reflect that same glory to the world. But let's close out, Darrell, with some specifics; and we are going to have three ideas of things we can do, and have the Holy Spirit do in and through us to foster unity in the Church; and the first one we are going to suggest is: Pray; pray for others, and pray for others with specificity.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this specific passage that we have been studying this whole time is Jesus praying. He is showing us how to model what it means to pray for others. He prays for himself, he prays for the disciples, he prays for the believers who will come in after their message. So, if we can follow that example by praying for others regularly... My grandmother used to have a little list she made of things she would pray for and people she would pray for; and every now and then, she would go back and ask that person: How's that thing going? We've been praying for you; how is that going? And she would be surprising people with what she remembered, but she wrote it down...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sure.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, have a prayer journal; you know what I mean? Just have something where you can pray for folks and let them know that you are lifting them up.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, some people...I know some pastors have done this...and I know members of the church do this. Sometimes you can take your church directory and you pray your way through the directory. You maybe choose five members or five families a day; and then, you know, depending on how large your church is, it could take a little while or a long while to get through the whole congregation, but think of these people... If you have a pictorial directory, or even now an online pictorial directory, look at their faces, right? These are your sisters and brothers in your local congregation. Pray for them. Pray for them specifically. Maybe you are aware that they are lonely; maybe you are aware that they are dealing with chronic back pain; maybe you are aware that they are aggrieved that their grandchildren no longer attend church. You might not know something about every member of your church, but a lot of them you probably do. Pray for them; pray for them with specificity; pray for reconciliation where you know there are broken relationships. Pray for your church to grow in love and unity. That is one great thing that we can do to have unity. A second one, Darrell? Practice forgiveness.

DARRELL DELANEY

If you are going to be in unity with anyone, you are going to have to embody what it means to walk in forgiveness. Forgiveness is something we need God's help with. Sometimes, people can be hard to love. People can be hard to get along with, and you have to ask yourself what it would look like to have God's ability to forgive them. If we think about how we were forgiven, like Ephesians 4:32, it says that. It says: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. So, the standard is not what you have done to me, or what you failed to do. The standard is Christ forgave me; God forgave me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the Lord's Prayer: Forgive us our sins as we forgive one another. And as a friend of mine, Neal Plantinga says: That two-letter word...it's a two-letter word in Greek, too: *As*...oooh, that is a powerful word; and you just read it also in Ephesians: Just *as* in Christ Jesus God forgave you. So, in other words, if you like being forgiven, you like it that God has forgiven you your sins, does that make you feel good? Good; do that for other people, because that shows you get it...you get it. God is in the forgiving business, and we have to be, too; and now that we are talking specifically about the unity of the Church, Darrell, the basic Greek word for forgiveness in the New Testament is *aphesis*, and it means to let it go. Let it go; just drop it. As Neal Plantinga says: Forgiveness is forgiving an anger you have a right to feel. You release an anger that you have a right to feel; but if we just keep building up grudges, Darrell, it is not going to take too long at all for church unity to be in shambles.

DARRELL DELANEY

And earlier you said that is what the enemy is going after. He is trying to get us to go at each other, which is why it is important, number three, to build bridges across differences. We live in a world that is constantly divided. We live in a pluralistic society. We live in a world where one of the most powerful witnesses can be unity across those differences; so, how do we look for ways to connect with someone who doesn't think or act or believe exactly the way we do. That would be a challenge that only God could help us with; even if it is a believer from a different denomination, different political stance, or whatever it is, there is a way across that bridge.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is not easy; and even Paul knows that, right? So, when you think of Romans 12:18, where Paul writes: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. I like that line; if it is possible, right? As far as it depends on you, this is work building these bridges. This is work trying to walk in somebody else's shoes; but it is work we are called to do.

As we conclude this series on John 17, Darrell, we again just see the incredible power of prayer. We are seeing here the incredible power of Jesus' prayer for himself, for his disciples, for all believers; and it reminds us that as we participate in God's work in the Church, we have to be a praying people, too, because our prayers can be powerful, even as Jesus' prayer was powerful.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is beautiful, Scott; and when we live this way, we answer Jesus' prayer for unity, and we give the world a small glimpse of his glory and his love. So, if we remember that the love and unity Jesus prayed isn't just something we achieve on our own, it is a gift of grace, we can abide in him and his love can flow through us and transform hearts and relationships; thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you. Tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee.

***Correction:** The audio of this program misstates the reference for this passage as Philippians 2:3. The correct reference is Philippians 2:5.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/jesus-prays-for-us>

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