

Called for the World's Belief

John 17:14-24

SS Lesson for 01/24/2021

Devotional Scripture: Acts 2:36-41

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Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In August 2018, the Pew Research Center published results of a survey on religious behaviors. The study had polled more than 1,300 individuals who identified their religious preference as “nothing in particular.” Fifty-one percent of respondents explained their preference by saying, “I question a lot of religious teachings.” In two separate questions, 47 percent said they were not involved because “I don’t like the positions churches take on social/political issues,” and 34 percent said, “I don’t like religious organizations.” The survey results suggest that individuals who choose not to affiliate with any religious group do not view such gatherings as safe and welcoming places to explore personal religious beliefs and lifestyle choices. While the results of this survey may not be surprising, they are nevertheless tragic. The church is the body of Christ and the vehicle through which God is working to reach a lost world. It can be discouraging to realize that many choose to avoid the church because they view it as irrelevant, or even as hostile, to their well-being. Yet this is not what Christ intended the church to be. Today’s lesson explains why.

Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-40; and Luke 22:39-46 give brief accounts of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Their focus is on his agonized petition that he might be spared the crucifixion. John’s Gospel, by contrast, doesn’t include that prayer. Instead, it features Jesus’ lengthy and detailed prayer for his disciples. That prayer comes at the end of a lengthy section known as the Farewell Address (John 13-17), the longest recorded speech by Jesus. After washing the disciples’ feet and dismissing Judas into the night (13:1-30), Jesus told his confused followers that he would not be with them much longer (13:33). He gave them a “new command” to be followed after his departure from the world: “As I have loved you, . . . love one another” (13:34). The remainder of Jesus’ goodbye speech builds on this theme by explaining how God would express his love for the disciples (examples: John 14:8-21; 15:26-27; 16:5-15), why “the world” would hate them (example: 15:18-25), what it means for Christians to love one another, and why it was essential to do so (17:20-24). In the opening section of the prayer (John 17:1-13), Jesus reflected on his pending death and reminded the Father that the Son’s mission would continue through the disciples. Therefore Jesus asked his heavenly Father to equip the disciples in certain ways so they could continue his work. The form and content of that equipping is the subject of today’s text.

Key Verse: John 17:20

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word"

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jesus prayed for His disciples before He chose them (Luke 6:12), during His ministry (John 6:15), at the end of His ministry (Luke 22:32), here (John 17:6-19), and later in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). This prayer of intercession reveals Jesus’ concern and love for His apostles.

17:6-8. The little flock of disciples was given by the Father to the Son (cf. vv. 2, 9, 24). They had been separated **out of the world** (“world” occurs 18 times in this chap.: vv. 5-6, 9, 11 [twice], 13, 14 [thrice], 15, 16 [twice in the Gr.], 18 [twice], 21, 23-25). This separation was by the electing work of the Father, in which the apostles had been given as a gift to Jesus Christ (cf. 6:37). With the words, **They have obeyed Your Word**, Jesus praised His disciples for responding to the message of God in Jesus Christ. The disciples were not perfect, but they had the right commitment. Their faith in Jesus was a trust in His union with the Father (17:8). This faith in Jesus was manifested in their obedience to His words because **they believed** in His divine mission (cf. 16:27).

17:9-10. Christ’s prayer (in vv. 6-19) was particularly for the Eleven, though it applies to all believers (cf. v. 20). At this point He was **not praying for the world** in its hostility and unbelief. This prayer is for two things: (a) the disciples’ preservation (“protect them,” v. 11) and (b) their sanctification (“sanctify them,” v. 17). The world is not to be preserved in its rebellion or sanctified in its unbelief. Jesus prayed this request because of God’s ownership of them by creation and election (**they are Yours**). Jesus’ words, **All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine**, reveal His claim to unity, intimacy, and equality with the Father. In the old economy, God dwelt among people and showed His glory. In Jesus, God’s glory was displayed (cf. 1:14). Then Christ’s disciples glorified Him: **Glory has come to Me through them**. And now in the Church Age the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son (16:14) and believers are also to glorify the Son (Eph. 1:12).

17:11. Jesus would soon depart to the Father and leave His disciples **in the world**. **They** had to stay in the world to carry out God’s plan in spreading the good news of redemption and in planting the church. With the formation of the church, the history of the world has become, in a sense, “a tale of two cities”: the city

of God and the city of man. Since the disciples would be **in the world**, Jesus prayed for their protection. The hostility against God which fell on Jesus would now fall on the tiny band of apostles, and subsequently on many of Jesus' followers. Jesus, in calling on His **Holy Father**, pointed up God's distinction from sinful creatures. This holiness is the basis for believers' separation from the world. He would **protect them** from the sin and enmity of the world **by the power of His name** (cf. Prov. 18:10). In Bible times a person's name stood for the person. (In John 17:6, 26 the NIV translates the Gr. "Your name" by the word "You.") Why did Jesus pray for their preservation? It was to promote the unity of the believers, patterned after the unity of the Father and the Son: **so that they may be one as We are One** (cf. vv. 21-22). The unity here seems to be that of will and purpose. By being protected from the world they would be unified in their desires to serve and glorify the Son.

17:12. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus took care of the flock entrusted to Him by the Father. But Judas was an exception. He is here called **the one doomed to destruction** (lit., "the son of perdition"). Judas was never a sheep and his true character was finally manifested (cf. 13:11; 1 John 2:19). He was a "dead branch" (cf. John 15:2, 6). Judas did what he wanted (he sold Jesus). Yet he was an unwitting tool of Satan (13:2, 27). Even people's volitionally free acts fit into God's sovereign plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28). Thus Judas' betrayal of Jesus **fulfilled** (i.e., filled up in a larger sense) the words in Psalm 41:9 about David's betrayal by his friend.

17:13. The words of comfort spoken by Jesus (**I say these things**) to His disciples were of great benefit to them. Following His Passion, **they** would recall His words and experience **the full measure of His joy**. Joy came to them because they knew from His words that He had conquered the evil one and brought eternal life to them.

17:14. Jesus' intercession for the disciples continued with a reminder of (a) their value and (b) their coming danger. They were valuable because they had received the Word of God: **I have given them Your Word** (cf. "I gave them the words You gave Me," v. 8). They were in danger because the satanic **world** system **hated them**. It hated them because **they are not** a part of it. As believers share Jesus Christ, "Everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does" (1 John 2:16) loses its attractiveness. A believer's commitment shows the world's values to be trash or dung (cf. Phil. 3:8). Therefore **the world** hates the exposure of its sham values (cf. John 3:20).

17:15. God's plan was **not** to remove the disciples from danger and opposition (**take them out of the world**) **but** to preserve them in the midst of conflict. Though Jesus would soon be taken out of the world (v. 11), His followers are to remain in it. Like Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1-2; 4-6) and the saints in Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22), God intends for His followers to be witnesses to truth in the midst of satanic falsehood. Satan, **the evil one** (cf. Matt. 5:37; 1 John 5:19), as head of the world system, seeks to do everything possible to destroy believers (cf. Rev. 2:10; 12:10) but God's plan will prevail. Christians must not take themselves out of the world but remain in meaningful contact with it, trusting in God's protection while they witness for Jesus.

17:16-17. Just as Jesus did not belong to the satanic world system (**I am not of it**; cf. v. 14), so believers do not. They belong to the heavenly kingdom (Col. 1:13) because of their new births (cf. John 3:3). Jesus had prayed for protection for His disciples (17:11). Now His second petition for them was for their sanctification. **Sanctify** means "set apart for special use." A believer is to be distinct from the world's sin, its values, and its goals. The means of this sanctifying work is God's **truth**. **The truth** is communicated in the **Word**, which is both personal and propositional. As the message about Jesus was heard, believed, and understood, the disciples' hearts and minds were captured. This change in their thinking resulted in changes in their living. The same is true of believers today. As they appropriate God's Word to their lives, they are sanctified—set apart for God and changed in their living in order to honor God (cf. 15:3). God's message set the apostles apart from **the world** so that they would do His will, not Satan's.

17:18. Jesus is the model for every believer. He was in the world but He was not of the world (vv. 14b, 16b). He was **sent... into the world** on a mission by His Father. So believers are **sent... into the world** on a mission by the Son, to make the Father known (cf. 20:21). Inasmuch as Jesus' prayer for the disciples was not limited to the immediate apostles (cf. 17:20), this passage is similar to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Each Christian should view himself as a missionary whose task is to communicate God's truth to others.

17:19. For the benefit of the disciples, Jesus sanctified Himself. In what sense did Jesus need to **sanctify** Himself? Was He not already set apart to God and distinct from the world? Yes, but *this* sanctification refers to His being separated and dedicated to His *death*. And the purpose of His death was **that they too**

may be truly sanctified. The words “truly sanctified” are literally “sanctified in truth.” This probably means that God’s truth is the means of sanctification (cf. v. 17). The purpose of the death of Christ is to dedicate or separate believers to God and His program.

17:20. The final portion of Jesus’ **prayer** (vv. 20-26) was for future believers who would come to Him **through** the **message** of the apostles. In the Church Age all Christians have come to Christ directly or indirectly through the apostles’ witness. Jesus knew His mission would succeed. He would die and be raised, He would send forth the Spirit, the apostles would preach, people would be converted, and the church would be formed. As each high priest of Israel bore the names of the tribes before the presence of God in the tabernacle and the temple (cf. Ex. 28:9-12, 21-29), so now Jesus, the great High Priest, carried future believers into the holy presence of His heavenly Father (cf. Heb. 4:14-5:12; 7:24-8:2).

17:21. Jesus requested unity for future believers (cf. vv. 11, 22). This verse is a favorite of promoters of the present ecumenical movement. Admittedly the divided church is in many ways a scandal. The cure, however, is not institutional union. Jesus was not praying for the unity of a single, worldwide, ecumenical church in which doctrinal heresy would be maintained along with orthodoxy. Instead, He was praying for a unity of love, a unity of obedience to God and His Word, and a united commitment to His will. There are great differences between uniformity, union, and unity. All believers belong to the **one** body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and their spiritual unity is to be manifest in the way they live. The unity Christ desires for His church is the same kind of unity the Son has with the Father: **just as You are in Me and I am in You** (cf. John 10:38; 17:11, 23). The Father did His works through the Son and the Son always did what pleased the Father (5:30; 8:29). This spiritual unity is to be patterned in the church. Without union with Jesus and the Father (**they... in Us**), Christians can do nothing (15:5). The goal of their lives is to do the Father’s will. The disciples’ union with Jesus as His body will result in people in **the world** believing in the Father: **that You have sent Me** (cf. 17:23).

17:22-23. The **glory** which Christ **gave** the church may refer to the glory of the Cross (cf. vv. 1-5). As the church received and pondered the significance of Jesus’ atoning work, it would be united in God’s purposes and redemptive plan. Again the union of Christians (**that they may be one**) is likened to the unity the Son has with the Father (**as We are One**; cf. vv. 11, 21). This union is further linked by Christ’s indwelling of believers (**I in them**). The goal of the **unity** of believers with each other and with God is twofold: (a) that the world will believe in the Son’s divine mission (**know that You sent Me**), and (b) that the world will sense that God’s love for believers is deep, intimate, and lasting as is His love for His unique Son (cf. v. 26).

17:24. The communion and fellowship which disciples have with Jesus in this life will increase in eternity. The goal of a believer’s salvation is future glorification which includes being with Jesus (cf. 14:3; Col. 3:4; 1 Thes. 4:17). Jesus’ last testament and will (**I want, *thelō***) is that His disciples enter into (**see**) His **glory** (Heb. 2:10). This **glory** was what Jesus had from the **Father** and would again have (John 17:5). His testament was sealed by His death and resurrection. Since His will is identical to the Father’s (4:34; 5:30; 6:38), it will certainly come to pass.

17:25-26. Jesus’ prayer for believers ends with a call to the **Righteous Father**. The word translated “righteous” here does not occur often in John’s Gospel (cf. 5:30; 7:24). Its significance here seems to be in Jesus’ praise of the Father for His work of revelation (cf. Matt. 11:25-26). The Father is right (righteous) and the world is in the wrong (**the world does not know You**). Jesus has known, revealed (John 17:6), and glorified (v. 4) the Father, and so should Christians. The essence of God is love (1 John 4:8). Jesus made the Father and His love **known to** the world by His death. And the Father made known His love for the Son by raising Him to glory. Jesus’ purpose in revealing the Father was that Christians would continue to grow in that love (**that the Father’s love for the Son may be in them**) and to enjoy the personal presence of Jesus in their lives (**that I Myself may be in them**). Jesus’ petitions for believers are four: preservation (John 17:11), sanctification (v. 17), unity (vv. 11, 21-22), and participation in Jesus’ glory (v. 24). This prayer is sure to be answered (cf. 11:42; 1 John 5:14).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

World's Belief through the Disciples (John 17:14-19)

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Kept from the world (14-16)

Kept through God's Word (John 17:8)

8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Kept through being chosen (John 15:19)

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

Kept through knowing God and listening to Him (1 John 4:6)

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Kept through being a child of God (1 John 5:19-20)

19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Kept through God's protection (Ps 121:7)

7 The Lord will keep you from all harm — he will watch over your life;

Kept through God's deliverance (Matt 6:13)

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Kept through God's faithfulness (2 Thess 3:3)

3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Sanctified through truth (17-19)

Sanctified through the knowledge of the truth (John 8:32)

32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Sanctified through being cleansed by God's Word (John 15:3)

3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Sanctified through faith (Acts 15:8-9)

8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Sanctified through being transformed (2 Cor 3:18)

18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Sanctified through the washing of God's Word (Eph 5:26)

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

Sanctified through the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:13)

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Sanctified through obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22-23)

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

World's Belief through the Church (John 17:20-24)

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Belief in the Word (20)

Through acceptance of the Word (Acts 2:41)

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Through belief in the testimony of the Word (John 19:35)

35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Through the knowledge and understanding of the Word (1 John 5:20)

20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Through the hearing and believing of the Word (John 5:24)

24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Through the Word of eternal life (John 6:68)

68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Unity through the Church (21-23)

Unity through belonging to one another (Rom 12:5)

5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Unity in mind and thought (1 Cor 1:10)

10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Unity through being one in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28)

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Unity through the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3-6)

3 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.

Unity through being united with Jesus Christ (Phil 2:1-2)

1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Unity through being God's chosen people (Col 3:12-14)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Future with Jesus in heaven (24)

In heaven because of being faithful (Matt 25:21)

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

In heaven because of serving Jesus (John 12:26)

26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

In heaven because Jesus is preparing it for us (John 14:3)

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

In heaven because of being raptured (1 Thess 4:17)

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

In heaven because of overcoming (Rev 3:21)

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

We have already noted that the first five verses of chapter 17 focus on our Lord and His relationship with the Father. He prays for the Father to restore to Him the glory that He had formerly enjoyed in heaven, before His incarnation. Verses 6-19 contain our Lord's prayer for His disciples, whom He is about to leave behind in a hostile world to carry on the ministry He began. His prayer for them is that the Father will keep them from the evil one. Now, in verses 20-26, our Lord turns His attention to those who will become believers down through the ages of church history until He returns. Let us listen to our Lord's prayer for us, like a child who overhears

his parents as they pray for him. Let us keep in mind that this prayer is the expression of our Lord's love and concern for each of us who trusts in Him.

The Circle Expands (17:20-21)

20 "I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me."

Verses 1-5 concern the Father and the Son. Verses 6-19 pertain to the Father, the Son, and the eleven disciples of our Lord. Verses 20-26 widen in focus, to include all those who will subsequently come to faith in Jesus Christ. We are tempted to say that these verses pertain to us, but of course they include a much broader group than that. They encompass the time from the moment Jesus spoke these words to the present—nearly 2,000 years now, and counting.

I believe it is worth noting that our Lord's words are carefully chosen so that they can include a great multitude of believers over a considerable period of time. While His words *allow* for these things, they do not necessarily indicate or suggest them. The disciples were inclined to think that our Lord would commence His reign in their lifetime. Even after our Lord's death and resurrection, they were still thinking in terms of the near future: "So when they had gathered together, they began to ask him, 'Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6).

Jesus does not wish to give them the false impression that His return is immediate, but neither does He intend to convey the fact that it is at least 2,000 years away, and for good reason:

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves their food at the proper time? 46 That slave whom his master finds doing this when he returns will be blessed. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that evil slave says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he begins to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with drunkards, 50 that slave's master will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not foresee. 51 The master will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:45-51).

Our Lord desires us to conduct ourselves as though His return were imminent, even though it may not happen in our lifetime. The language of this text and others is sufficiently broad enough to allow for a long period of time before His return, but not specific enough to require a delay. I believe our Lord wants us to think in terms of "sooner," rather than "later."

Those who believe are described as having come to faith through the testimony (literally "word") of His disciples. Certainly there were those who came to faith apart from the disciples, people like the woman at the well (John 4), for example. What our Lord emphasizes is the fact that in the future, men will come to faith through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 10:6-15). The gospel is declared, defined (e.g., Acts 15), enscripturated, and defended (e.g., Galatians) by the apostles. Because it is through the Word of God that men are saved (see 1 Peter 2:22-25; James 1:21), subsequent believers can be said to have become believers through the word of the apostles.

Jesus does not petition the Father to save these people. Those who will come to faith have already been given to Him as a gift by the Father (see verses 2, 24). Our Lord prays that all those who believe may be one. This is not mere organizational unity; it is an organic and functional unity. It is the same kind of unity that the Father has with the Son. As the Father is "**in**" the Son, and the Son is "**in**" the Father, and thus the two are one, so all believers are "**in**" Christ. Because of their unity with the Son, they are also one with the Father, and one with each other.

This unity is both positional and practical. It is also supernatural. It is for the practical outworking of this supernatural unity that our Lord prays here. The unity of those who are believers in Jesus Christ should be visible to the unsaved world. As the world beholds this unity, they see the presence and the power of the resurrected Christ in His church. Put another way, as believers abide in Christ, Christ abides in them, and the fruit that is produced is a demonstration of our Lord's presence and power. This is a testimony to the world that Jesus really was sent from the Father, and thus that He really is Who He claimed to be—the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Present Glory Promotes Unity (17:22-23)

22 The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me.

Much of verses 22 and 23 is a repetition of verses 20 and 21. In both places, Jesus prays for unity among believers. Again, in both places, this unity is based upon the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. Further, the purpose for demonstrating this unity is so that the world may know that the Father sent the Son. Two new elements are introduced, however, which are very significant. We shall therefore focus our attention on these new elements, which further expand upon the petition of verses 20 and 21.

The *first additional element* is that of the “**glory**” which the Father gave to the Son and the Son has given to believers in Him. What is the nature of this “**glory**”? It cannot be the glory which our Lord had with the Father before the foundation of the world, the glory which the Son set aside at His incarnation. This is the “**glory**” which our Lord has just requested from the Father: “And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created” (verse 5).

This is the glory which our Lord prays that His saints might behold, by coming to be with Him in heaven: “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (verse 24).

How can our Lord speak of a “**glory**” He has already given to His own if He does not yet have it Himself? How can He speak of giving them the “**glory**” on earth which they can only behold in heaven? We must conclude, then, that the “**glory**” of which our Lord is speaking is not His “future glory,” but another “**glory**.”

We may begin by asking this question: If Jesus can say, ‘I have given them the glory that you gave me,’ then what is the nature of the glory which the Father gave the Son? The answer to that question is straightforward: the glory the Father gave the Son was the glory of the humility of the incarnation, culminating both in the glorification of the Son at the crucifixion and in the glory of his resurrected and exalted state. Believers have seen something of this glory, except for the glory Christ now enjoys; and that, too, they shall one day see, since Jesus prays to that end (17:24).

Jesus purposed to glorify the Father through His incarnation, earthly life and ministry, and through His death, resurrection and ascension. The earthly sufferings of our Lord are part of His glory (John 12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1). And it is this glory—the glory of servanthood and of sacrificial service—which our Lord has given to His disciples. As Jesus was glorified by His coming to this earth, being rejected by men and put to death, so His disciples are also given the same glory, the glory of suffering for the sake of Christ:

7 Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:7).

12 Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, who is *the Spirit of God, rests* upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or thief or criminal or as a troublemaker. 16 But if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but glorify God that you bear such a name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin, starting with the house of God. And if it starts with us, what will be the fate of those who are disobedient to the gospel of God? 18 ***And if the righteous are barely saved, what will become of the ungodly and sinners?*** 19 So then let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator as they do good (1 Peter 4:12-19).

Our Lord’s earthly glory through His sufferings was consummated in His death on the cross. No wonder He instructs His disciples to take up their cross: Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24; see also Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). It was His glory to suffer and to die, and it is our privilege and glory as well, to “take up our cross,” whatever that may mean for us personally. This is the way that the Apostle Paul saw it:

20 My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me; yet I don’t know what I prefer: 23 I feel torn between the two, because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, 24 but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body. 25 And since I am sure of this, I know that I will

remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that because of me you may swell with pride in Christ Jesus, when I come back to you (Philippians 1:20-26).

This puts our suffering for Christ in a whole new light. It is for His glory. It is also for our good. But the words of our Lord's prayer indicate that it is also our glory. No wonder Paul writes these words:

10 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

The *second new element* in our text has to do with the intended impact of the believers' unity upon unbelievers. Jesus prays, "**I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me**" (verse 23, emphasis mine). The first half of the intended result of Christian unity is repeated from our Lord's earlier words in verse 21. Christian unity will show the world that God the Father sent the Son. But here Jesus goes on to say that Christian unity is also intended as an expression of the Father's love for those who trust in Jesus. This love which the Father has for Christians is the same love which He has for His Son. The Father loves the Son, and because Christians are "in the Son" by faith, the Father loves us just as He loves the Son.

The *unity* of the believers reflects the Father's *love*. Let's consider the relationship between unity and love for a moment. In Ephesians 5, Paul is instructing husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (5:25). Having described how the Lord Jesus loved the church (5:26-27), Paul now instructs husbands to love their wives as their own bodies:

28 In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife; and the two will become one flesh.**" 32 This mystery is great—but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:28-33).

Remember as well the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18, 34; Matthew 19:19; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). The assumption underlying all of this is that we do love ourselves. We love our own bodies. As members of the body of Christ, we are joined not only to our Lord, but to the Father, and to one another. Our unity should express itself in love toward one another. And since this is a divine love, it reveals God's love to the world. Men should see God's love in action, as Christians love one another, because they are one with one another, and with God.

This is a marvelous thought, but also an awesome responsibility. The standard for our love is incredibly high. It is not a merely human love, a love like that expressed by unbelievers. It is not just a romantic love, like we see portrayed on movie and television screens. It is the love of God for our Lord and for us, a love which will prompt one to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

Prayer for the Presence of His Own (17:24)

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

When Jesus told His disciples He was going away to a place where they could not follow Him, they may have wrongly concluded that He did not want them to be with Him any longer. This conclusion would be completely wrong. Jesus very much wants them to be with Him, and that is precisely what He prays for in verse 24. The reason that they cannot be with Him is because He is going to the Father in heaven, and they have work yet to do on earth. They will thereby experience the glory of identifying with Him as the suffering Savior. They will not behold His heavenly glory until they are in heaven with Him. This is what Jesus asks the Father to do—to bring His disciples to be with Him in heaven, so that they can behold His heavenly glory.

Peter, James, and John—the inner three—were given a glimpse of this glory at the transfiguration of our Lord. Before too long, the Apostle John will have a vision in which he will behold even more of our Lord's heavenly glory, which he describes for us in the Book of Revelation (see, for example, Revelation 1:9ff.). Paul also seems to have been given a glimpse of this future glory (2 Corinthians 12:1ff.). But for all of our Lord's disciples and us, the full display of His glory will not come until we are taken up into heaven. As the words of the song put it, "Oh, that will be, glory for me." And so it will. This glory that we will see is yet another demonstration of the Father's love for the Son (John 17:24).

The glory which the Father gives the Son is a token of His love for the Son. We should all be able to relate to this. A young man loves a young woman very much, and he asks her to marry him. He buys the most beautiful

ring he can afford, as a visible demonstration of his love. And when the young woman accepts her beloved's proposal of marriage, she puts on that ring. And, without exception, she will find a way to move her hands in such a way as to draw attention to that ring. She wants everyone to see it and to comment about how beautiful it is. Why? Because the ring is a token of her beloved's love for her, and she is proud of it. That is the way it is with our Lord's glory. It is a token of the Father's love for Him. And so He desires for all those He loves to be with Him and to see His glory, which is an indication of the Father's great love for Him as the Son.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/high-priestly-prayer-jesus-part-iii-john-1720-26>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Marketing companies are becoming increasingly interested in a phenomenon known as the Streisand Effect. This term is based on the name of singer/actress Barbra Streisand, and it refers to an episode in which she was involved in 2003. A photographer was contracted to take a series of photographs that would document patterns of coastline erosion throughout the state. When Streisand learned that these included one picture of her seaside Malibu mansion, she sued the photographer to have its posting removed. Before the lawsuit was filed, the photo in question had been downloaded only six times, including two downloads by Streisand's own attorneys; but when the story hit the media, the picture was viewed by 420,000 curious web surfers within 30 days! This incident is now cited as a classic illustration of the principle of "psychological reactance," which means that an attempt to suppress information tends to increase people's desire to access and share it. While the internet is a relatively new phenomenon on the time line of history, the Streisand Effect is not—people have always been curious to learn new information, especially when it seems to be available only to a small number of people. The Christian apologist Tertullian (AD 160—220) realized something of a parallel to this principle in his famous observation that "the blood of the martyrs is [the] seed [of the church]" (Apology 50). Tertullian observed that public persecutions against the church by the Roman government had led even more people to become curious about the faith. Rome actually made the world aware of Christianity and thereby encouraged people to explore this new and emerging religion. Those who looked into the church's beliefs and practices were impressed by the conviction and unity demonstrated by believers. The result was that the church grew during periods of persecution. Against this backdrop, Jesus' prayer raises important questions for the church today: In a world where many people do not participate in church because they think there is nothing of value there, what would happen if they actually "looked under the hood"? Would they discover that, contrary to what they have been told, the church is a place of remarkable unity and love? Would they be forced to abandon their beliefs that Christians are legalistic and thereby be drawn to the spirit of love that exists among us? Or would encounters with Christians reinforce their belief that the church is not a safe place? Our passage for today highlights several key themes that run through John's Gospel, two of which are particularly significant. First, Jesus stresses his own oneness with the Father. Christ demonstrated this unity through absolute obedience to God the Father in his resolve to fulfill the Father's mission of offering salvation. Second, Jesus presented his relationship with the Father as a model for the way his disciples should relate to one another. Christians are to be completely united with both Christ and one another so that Christ's mission can continue through the work of the church. It can't happen any other way.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Jesus spent time in fellowship with His disciples in the upper room before His crucifixion. He also spent time praying for them and future believers. John recorded Jesus' intercession, which centered around the unity of believers and their display of God's love to the world.

Jesus, God's Spokesman - Jesus told all people precisely what the Father wanted to communicate about Himself. Now this task belongs to Christ's followers. Jesus prayed for His disciples not to isolate themselves as they faced difficult challenges. God's children are His lights in society, being used by God to shine His light into utter darkness and chaos. Believers represent His wisdom, truth, and love. Jesus also prayed for their protection from the evil one, Satan. Many temptations lure Christians, and they are in danger of being overcome by them, but Jesus prayed for their strength and for their pattern of behavior to be like His—walk in obedience to the Father, rely upon His authority, and reflect His character. God does not just say to Christians, "Get the job done, however you can." Instead, He lovingly invites His children into the vineyard to work for and with Him, holding up Jesus as an example, and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unity and Love - Jesus prayed for future believers to worship together as one family. The foundation of this unity is in the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person in the Trinity is completely unified with the other. With unity comes love. God sent His Son to die for us, and Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross proclaimed to the world, "God loves you!" (John 3:16).

The Mandate Today - Loving one another and standing together in unity is often difficult for Christians. Students of the Bible, even scholars, interpret specific biblical passages differently. Sometimes, the intensity of the arguments causes church splits and denominational discord. When opposing parties can come together, forgive, and be loving toward one another, in Christ's name and for His sake, this sends a strong message to the world that we are one as God in the Trinity is one.