



Sunday, October 18, 2020

Pastor Keith Sovo

Intro to John 17:20-23

One could argue that we are living in the most divided time in America in half a century or more. People are divided on all kinds of issues ranging from how to handle the coronavirus to racism to historical monuments. What's more, these points of division don't merely exist out in the culture, they're in the church as well. It is certainly not a good thing for society to be divided, and we pray that society may be stabilized for the advance of the gospel (1 Tim. 2:2). But how much worse is it when these same divisions divide people for whom Christ died?

One of the Apostle Paul's main concerns in the course of his ministry was for the unity of the churches he planted. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is concerned that the church is dividing over all kinds of issues (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-11). In Galatians, he is concerned that Jews and Gentiles who are divided against each other are failing to live out the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14). In Ephesians, he expresses great concern for unity throughout the letter, both in terms of what Christ has accomplished and how the people are to live it out. In Philippians, he is concerned that Euodia and Syntyche agree in the Lord. In Philemon, he is concerned that Philemon receive Onesimus as a brother. Those are just the letters in which unity is a primary concern. There are hints of it in other letters as well.

Context

Jesus is about to go to the cross. He has come into the world to save the world through His own death—to atone for our sins, to reconcile us to God and to one another. Though He is leaving them, He is confident of the success of the disciples' mission. He prays not only for them as they go out, but for those who would (certainly) believe in Jesus through their word. What a great comfort to know that our God prays for us!

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read John 17:20-23

“Unity Is Essential to the Mission of the Church”

I. Two Things Needed

- Prayer (v. 20)

- Glory (v. 22)

II. The Nature of Our Unity

- Believing the Word (v. 20)

- Participating in the Life of God (v. 21)

- Perfecting Unity (v. 23)

III. Unity Is Essential to the Mission

That the world may know...

- Jesus’s Identity (v. 21, 23)

- God’s Love for His People (v. 23)

Discuss

- 1) What do you think are the biggest threats to unity in the church today?
- 2) How does the relationship of God the Father and God the Son shape how we think about unity in the church?
- 3) When you hear that unity is essential to accomplish the mission God has given the church, what comes to mind?
- 4) How does the love between fellow Christians reveal the love of God to the world?
- 5) How can we grow together in unity as a group?