

# John 17.6-26 Sermon / COB / 03.22.15

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## Introduction

- † How many of you like playing on sports teams? What was your favorite part of being on a team?
    - I like seeing how the whole team works together. In football, on any given play, every person on the field has an important role to play, and the diversity of their talents is necessary for the success of their shared goal.
    - I played baseball. The starting pitcher takes you into the late innings, when the specialists take over. But none of their efforts pay off without good fielding and hitters supporting them. I loved getting a hit, stealing a base, or making a diving grab, but just as important was being with the other guys, each of us unique in our contribution, but all working together to win.
  
  - † Have any of you enjoyed being in a choir or band? What did you like about making music together?
    - I used to sing in choirs during high school. Think of how each voice or instrument does its own thing, but in a coordinated effort so that something beautiful is created together.
    - Even today, I love to be immersed in music, especially to listen or sing along with one part, and hear or even feel how that part plays into the whole composition. It is not nearly as good when we sing or play alone, as it is when we can be a part of the group, not only blessed by what the others have to offer, but blessed to be a part of what we together have to offer.
  
  - † What is the best thing about participating in Vacation Bible School?
    - I love seeing how everyone gets involved; and I am thankful for this widespread involvement, because we need the person grilling hot dogs and we need the person teaching the lesson.
    - In that week, we cherish our diversity of experiences, personalities, passions, gifts, and abilities, even as we work unified in our identity as somewhat crazy, over-the-top, COBers and unified in our purpose of ministering in Christ's name. We know what we accomplish coordinated together is much greater than if we all worked independently.
  
  - † Let's open our Bibles to John 17.6. You will want your Bible, because there are no slides today.
    - You might want the handout, so you can fill in the blanks to highlight the application steps.
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- † In 17.1-5, Jesus prayed about completing his work for God the Father through his approaching crucifixion and resurrection. Now, in v.6, he turns to praying for his disciples. What would Jesus pray for us? Today we will find out!
    - Before we start, look at v.6. I will be reading from the NET Bible today, and it has a note which says the translation team assumed Jesus was praying for only his eleven apostles, so in v.6 they translated the Greek word ἀνθρώποις to mean "men," instead of "people."
    - But after analyzing this whole prayer carefully, I am confident that Jesus was praying for all his disciples. He starts out praying for all his existing disciples, and then later prays for future disciples, like us. With that in mind, let's see what Jesus prayed...

**John 17.6-8 NET:** [Jesus is praying to God the Father] **“I have revealed your name to the men [the word can mean “people”] you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have obeyed [literally “kept”] your word. Now they understand that everything you have given me comes from you, because I have given them the words you have given me. They accepted them and really understand that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.”**

- † At the beginning of this prayer, Jesus is praying for the existing disciples he has at that time. According to v.6, who chose these people to be disciples? They belonged to God the Father; he chose them out of the world and gave them to Christ. God is sovereign, he gets to choose.
  - There was nothing about these disciples that made them deserve this honor. They were ordinary people in every way; like us, they were wayward sinners who needed a savior.
  - If you have faith in Jesus as your savior, this is not because you earned it or inherently deserve it, this is because God brought you to faith by grace, God gave you salvation as a gift. So here is an application step for you: rejoice every day in receiving this gift! and never let legalism or guilt drift into your thinking.
  
- † According to v.8, what did Jesus teach these disciples? He taught what God the Father told him to teach, and this revealed to the disciples God’s name. In this culture, that would mean Jesus revealed God the Father’s nature, character, identity, maybe even his plans and his will for them.
  - Still in v.8, how did the disciples respond to these teachings? They accepted them in faith, and thus – as v.6 says – they “kept” or “obeyed” God’s word. They came to know God the Father through Jesus, and so they learned to trust in God, depend on God, obey God, and worship God.
  - Part of what they accepted was the identity of Jesus as the divine Son of God, who shares all things – even the divine essence – with God the Father and was sent from Heaven by the Father.
  - Through the New Testament writings of the apostles, Jesus reveals the same truths to us today. Here is another application point: We too need to accept these teachings in faith, such that we trust, depend on, obey, and worship the true God based on his true revelation.

**John 17.9-12:** [Jesus praying] **“I am praying on behalf of them [the disciples]. I am not praying on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those you have given me, because they belong to you. Everything I have belongs to you, and everything you have belongs to me, and I have been glorified by them. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them safe in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. When I was with them I kept them safe and watched over them in your name that you have given me. Not one of them was lost except the one destined for destruction, so that the scripture could be fulfilled.”**

- † Because the disciples had come to faith and were willing to follow Jesus, they brought glory to Jesus. What an exciting thought! We bring glory to Jesus by living on the top-line in faith and obedience!
  
- † While with them, Jesus protected the disciples from the evil attacks of Satan and demons.
  - We recently discussed types of demonic attack: temptation; distraction [even by good things]; deception; negative thoughts about each other, ourselves, or God, which we call accusation; and even direct harm. Jesus had prevented some of these attacks, and when they happened, he had been there to talk his disciples through the attacks so they remained faithful and obedient.

- The one exception was Judas Iscariot; but this was part of God’s eternal plan. The Father and the Son allowed Judas to be an apostle as part of their plan that someone close to Jesus would betray him to set in motion the process that would lead to the crucifixion and resurrection. Judas never came to saving faith, but that was not a failure for Jesus, it was part of the plan.
  
- † All the other disciples, Jesus kept safe, but now he was leaving to return to Heaven, and the plan was for the disciples to remain on Earth, subject to demonic attack and human persecution.
  - So Jesus prayed that God the Father would ensure the protection of his disciples, so they would stay on the top line in faith and obedience, and not be tempted, distracted, deceived, or otherwise driven away. We’ll talk more about that in a moment.
  
- † Look at the end of v.11: One further goal of this protection was that the disciples would come to enjoy a unity like that which existed for the Father and the Son. Imagine that! I mean, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are so unified in essence, character, and will, that they are considered one God, even though they are three distinct individuals in personality and activity. That is an amazing unity!
  - If we all walk in the light, living by faith and obedience to God’s revelation, instead of immersing ourselves in the ways and pleasures of the world, then we could enjoy unity in purpose, ethics, and identity in Christ, even though we are diverse in every other way!
  - I have tried to explain the incredible benefits of the fellowship or community which is described in the New Testament. I know many of you don’t understand the distinction, because what you have experienced, even in church, is the kind of fellowship that is offered by the world, which is not a bad thing, but is not the whole thing.
  - Imagine you were a member of a club where every unique aspect of you was cherished, encouraged, and nurtured, yet you were a part of something bigger, because you and the others in the club had strong bonds of shared identity, a single purpose you were pursuing together, and common values. Wouldn’t that be a great club, wouldn’t you love being a part of it?
  
- † On a smaller scale, you can experience this kind of fellowship on a sports team, in a choir, during VBS, or in a club. But God desires for you to experience it in your day to day life as a member of a local church. LeeAnn and I are desperate to experience this kind of fellowship here at COB.
  - So far, we have experienced this most fully while living in Dallas, in a small group with four other couples. We had men and women; from twenties to forties in age; newly married to long married; shy and introverted to gregarious extroverts; ethnicities of European, African, and Asian; ministry focuses on youth, music, drama, women, teaching; and further diversity in hobbies, degree programs, professional backgrounds, style... Oh yes, in hair style too: we ranged from mostly bald, to one lady getting extensions down to her waist.
  - We had great diversity in our group. But we all were determined in those two years to become friends and grow as Christians. Our unity in purpose, identity, and ethics allowed us to cherish and encourage each other – not just *despite* our differences – but *because of* our differences! With such unity in identity, purpose, and ethics, we saw how each person’s unique design made the group better and stronger, and even encouraged the rest of us to be better and stronger.
  - This is Jesus’ prayer for his disciples, then and now, this is his prayer for our church. I pray we can see this come to fruition here. I pray that God would protect us, so we would [application step...] stay on the top line in faith and obedience, and thus enjoy tremendous unity and resulting relational love with each other. If this comes to be, we will be attractive to others.

**John 17.13-16:** [Jesus still praying] **“But now I am coming to you, and I am saying these things in the world, so they may experience my joy completed in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to the world just as I do not belong to the world.”**

- † Jesus taught the apostles as the leaders among the disciples, to prepare them, so that even when his protection was removed, they would continue to walk in faith and obedience on the top line, connected to the vine of Christ, yielded to the Holy Spirit, learning to die to self so as to live for God.
  - And thus all his disciples would experience, not only unity and intimacy with each other, but unity and an intimacy with God the Father, Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, which would result in freedom from the power of sin and freedom from the penalty for sin, all of which would bring them joy and inner peace. Jesus mentions this unity later in the prayer.
  - People try many ways to feel more joyful, hopeful, at peace inside, but the only way to lasting joy, peace, and hope is through having an intimate relationship with the triune God on a daily basis [that’s an application]. One advantage of unity in fellowship with each other would be that we could help each other experience intimacy with God.
  
- † As we learned recently, disciples of Christ can expect demonic attack and hostility from the unbelieving world. Jesus did not pray for God the Father to take believers out of the world, but to protect them from Satan’s work through these attacks.
  - Jesus wants us to remain engaged with our society, to be his light, his representative in the world. If a Christian has faith in Jesus and tries to obey the commands of scripture, but remains isolated from society, isn’t this a partial victory for Satan? How can we shine God’s light, reflect his character, represent him well, if we are not engaging with our society?
  - As an application, Jesus wants us to remain engaged with our society, but he prays that God the Father will protect us, because he knows how hard it will be for us to be in the world, and not revert back to bottom line worldly ways, especially when we are under attack and beaten down.
  - I pray for my own health and improvement physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and financially. But Jesus focused on the spiritual: he wants God to help us stay on the top line, walking in faith and obedience by God’s revelation, so we share in his victory over the power of sin and evil, and we can effectively represent him, shine his light into our society.
  - Do you remember when we talked about Jesus being the vine, how effective the microphone was when unplugged from the source of amplification? Not at all. The biggest threat we face is to be tainted and separated relationally from Christ by temptation, distraction, deception, disunity from accusation, or through suffering, because if we turn away, if we stray off the top line with God, we become even more vulnerable to attack and we become useless at that time for God’s purposes.
  - To prevent that from happening, the Bible teaches us to focus every morning on reaffirming our faith, submitting ourselves to Christ in all things, taking time to connect to the vine through prayer and Bible study, and putting on the rest of the armor of God, and then immersing ourselves in Christian fellowship, so that we all are receiving God’s protection. He has clearly shown us in scripture the way to receive this protection. If you are falling to attack, perhaps you are holding on to the ways you learned from the world and resisting the adoption of God’s ways.

**John 17.17-19:** [Jesus still praying] **“Set them [these disciples] apart in the truth; your word is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I set myself apart on their behalf, so that they too may be truly set apart.”**

- † In v.17, Jesus asked God the Father to set apart his disciples. The Greek verb is ἀγιάζω, meaning consecrate or sanctify. Here is a little theology, but it is useful for how you think about yourself.
- Jesus prayed that God would set believers apart for his purposes, in other words that God would consecrate or dedicate the disciples for his purposes.
  - The word “sanctify” can also mean this. I tell you that, because most English translations say “sanctify” here. There are three stages of sanctification, of being set apart for God’s purposes.
  - First, you receive positional sanctification, which is to say you are chosen out of the world by God the Father to belong to Christ, to be justified or declared righteous in God’s sight through your faith in Christ. That is the same as saying you are consecrated or set apart for God.
  - The second stage is what we call progressive sanctification, otherwise known as spiritual growth. This is an ongoing transformation of your character throughout your life, which makes you more like Christ and less like the sinful world, and thus makes you ever more set apart from the world to be useful for God’s purposes.
  - The third stage is glorification, which happens to your soul when you physically die and go to Heaven, and to your body in your resurrection when Christ returns. Then you will be completely pure, with no corruption or sin, the way God designed you to be, and thus most useful to him.
- † Jesus is praying on Thursday night. By Friday night he would be dead; on Sunday morning, he would rise from the grave. When Jesus asked God the Father to set apart his existing disciples in truth, he was asking that God would make their faith in God’s revealed gospel complete through Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, so they truly would be his people, saved to be transformed into his image, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to represent the Father and the Son here on Earth.
- When we respond to the gospel truth with faith, we are separated out from the world to belong to Christ and be his people. That is why we follow Christ, adopt his values, shine his light, pursue his mission. And we see here that, just as the Father sent the Son into the world on the gospel mission, so Christ is sending his disciples to remain in the world to pursue that mission. One application step would be to accept that salvation leads to following Christ, adopting his values, shining his light, pursuing his mission.
  - Here is another application: Just as Christ consecrated himself to this purpose of God by going to the cross, so must we consecrate ourselves. We no longer belong to the world, so we consecrate ourselves by responding to all God’s revelation with faith and obedience; by cooperating with the Holy Spirit and God’s Word to experience transformation in character that results in transformation in our lives; and by taking part in the community of God in the church, so we experience the empowerment that comes from unity with both God and his people.

**John 18.20-26:** [Jesus praying] **“I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony [so now he is praying for future disciples, including us], that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. [i.e. our unity with each other in the church and our unity with both the Father and the Son will make us an effective missional community for the gospel... Jesus**

continues...] **The glory you gave to me I have given to them** [to the existing disciples, but also to those who would come to faith through them, including us], **that they may be one just as we are one— I in them and you in me— that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they can see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, even if the world does not know you, I know you, and these men** [actually, the Greek text does not say “men” here, it just says “these,” so let’s think of it as a prayerful statement that these people, these existing disciples,] **know that you sent me. I made known your name to them, and I will continue to make it known** [that is, through them to new disciples], **so that the love you have loved me with may be in them, and I may be in them.”**

† Originally, I was going to reserve that part of the prayer for a separate sermon, thus you get two sets of devotions this week. But most of the issues in this part of the prayer reiterate what Jesus talked about just before he prayed, so you can refer to our previous sermons and devotions if you need to learn them, and the essence of Jesus’ prayer for future disciples – including us – is the same as what he prayed for his existing disciples.

- Jesus yearns for all his disciples to continue making more disciples, leading people to accept the gospel truth in faith, and thus be saved by grace. God has set you apart from the world for his purposes, and in that process Christ has shared his glory with you, so now you must consecrate yourself, by doing your best to be faithful and obedient, every day separating yourself out from the world for God’s purposes, including the gospel mission.
- Jesus yearns for us to have a stunning level of unity with each other and with him, a unity so distinctive and compelling that it would prove the validity of Jesus’ claims to be the divine Son. If each of us enjoys God’s protection and we make our own individual efforts to walk with God in his light, we can enjoy absolute unity in identity, purpose, and values; and that unity will lead us to cherish each other’s diverse characteristics and to empower each other for success in life and ministry, as we fulfill and experience the “one another” commands of scripture together.
- And Jesus yearns for us to reap the benefits of such unity, including beneficial fellowship in the church, an effective witness outside the church, and effective defense against the attacks that come in the course of life. If we pursue unity with God and unity with each other, we can be strengthened and prepared to stay on the top line walking in faith and obedience, to shine God’s light effectively, to realize inner joy and peace that transcend the ups and downs of life.
- Let’s pray and ask God to help us realize these things...