

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 24
John 14-17

At the conclusion of the last supper, Jesus prays to the Father. It is the longest recorded prayer that we have of Jesus praying. And it's powerful. It teaches us a lot. I'm not going to read the whole thing but here are some main points and highlights:

“3 And this is **life eternal**, that they might **know** thee the only true **God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast **sent**.

4 I have **glorified** thee on the earth: I have **finished** the work which thou gavest me to do.

8 I have given unto them the **words** which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I **came** out from thee, and they have **believed** that thou didst send me.

9 I **pray** for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which **thou** hast given me; for they are thine.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my **joy** fulfilled in themselves.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the **world**, but that thou shouldest **keep** them from the **evil**.

17 **Sanctify** them through thy **truth**: thy word is **truth**.

20 Neither **pray** I for these alone, but for them also which shall **believe** on me through their word;

21 That they all may be **one**; as thou, **Father**, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be **one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be **one**, even as we are **one**:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made **perfect** in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast **loved** them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17: 3-23)

The message of His prayer is very clear that He wants us to be unified in Him. Five times He uses the word “one” in three verses. Drilling the point that the relationship between God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Ghost is the same relationship that we must have with God and Jesus. A “one-ness”, a unity in purpose and a complete dedication to Them and Their work. But this idea of unity is not well understood and sometimes causes confusion and conflict as the topic of unity is discussed. So, let's be clear; that God's objective is to unite us and complete us.

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Remember what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 12? "A house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt 12:25)

It is its downfall of any group that can not become united in Christ, it shall not stand. That includes a marriage, a family, a ward, a church and even a nation.

You know, God doesn't hate very many things. It is a very short list. It is found in Proverbs 6. Six things that God hates. And one of those things is a heart of devisethness, a mischeifous heart that divides people from Him or each other. Those who feed and relish on conflict. God hates that. But, let's face it. It's in our nature. It is a natural thing for us to do. We are naturally self centered. And when we focus on ourselves we become proud, and we divide or separate ourselves from others. This is the exact opposite to the nature of Jesus and what He was and is teaching us to do.

However, Unity is a loaded word. It is important that we understand clearly what God means in His definition of unity or one-ness. And to understand that we must clearly define what it is not. Or what the world believes that it is, that is not correct. See, the world teaches us that unity is tolerance. Except others and let them be who they are. "You do you" is the common phrase that defines the world's interpretation of unity and even love. And we can see how this can get a little muddy. We have to love and accept everyone and everything, because not to do so would be judgmental and unloving. Do you see how that can create some confusion?

The reality is that Jesus did not tolerate our sins or our sinful lives, He died for our sinful lives. And he called out sin for what it was, condemning sin. At one point He said: "God can not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31)

If Jesus had just tolerated sin in the world there would have been no reason for Him to die on a cross! You be you and I'll be me, it's all good. The scriptures are very clear that it's not all good. And that we are not good and that is why He had to suffer and die for us, that is why we needed a Savior, so we can become good through Him!

It is also very clear that the definition of unity does not mean that we rally around anyone or anything or any purpose. Now, that does not mean that we all have to be the same. Being different is a beautiful thing. Look at a marriage. From our first parents Adam and Eve, God said "a man shall leave his father and mother and shall join unto his wife and they shall be one flesh" (Eph 5:31) Most of us married our complete opposite. Life would be boring if we liked the same things, did the same things. Even looked the same. We can be one in Christ and one in the bonds of marriage and be two completely different people. We can be one in a family or a ward and be very different people. Think of it as an orchestra. Could you imagine each section playing a different song at the same time in an orchestra? Say the violin players really want to play a classical piece, but the percussion really wants a rock number. The trumpets, well they just want a jazz melody. Think how horrible that would sound. It takes everyone doing their individual part and playing the best they can to make what seems like magic when you hear it. An entire symphony playing in harmony with each other. Some of the most powerful, moving music ever made, was done with the unity of a host of musicians playing very different

instruments following exactly the conductor for the betterment of the whole. That is what Godly unity looks like. It is the sum total of all our strengths combined to help all others around us. And it creates the most beautiful music.

There are specific qualifications for God like unity that will truly unite us. And Jesus talks about it in His prayer. Lets relook at verse 17:

“17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Truth is a key element for real God-like unity that we are discussing here.

Truth in the eternal sense of the word. If you recall the city of Enoch before it was taken to Heaven it described them as all having one heart and one mind. They were united in their beliefs about God and the truths that He taught. I don't believe that that great city would have been translated if, for example, a small group believed that Jesus was only a great teacher. See, it takes a unifying belief in the eternal truth that Jesus is our Savior, the Son of God in order to produce the power in unity that Jesus is praying for. It is a unity in Jesus Christ.

Elder Marion G Romney said this:

“If a single person, yielding to Satan, is filled with the works of the flesh, he wars within himself. If two yield, they each war within themselves and fight with each other. If many people yield, a society [reaps] the harvest of great stress and contention. If the rulers of a country yield, there is world-wide contention.”

President Romney continued: “As the works of the flesh have universal application, so likewise does the gospel of peace. If one man lives it, he has peace within himself. If two men live it, they each have peace within themselves and with each other. If the citizens live it, the nation has domestic peace. When there are enough nations enjoying the fruit of the Spirit to control world affairs, then, and only then, will the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle flags be furl'd. ...

(See Alfred Lord Tennyson, “Locksley Hall,” The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson, ed. W. J. Rolfe, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1898, p. 93, lines 27–28.)”

There are lots of examples of unity in Christ in the scriptures. One that stands out to me is the story of the good Samaritan. In this story Jesus showed his disciples that their hatred for the Samaritans was dividing their hearts. He illustrated that they can not love God and Jesus and hate those whom God loves. In other words. How we talk about and think about others has a big impact on how we unify ourselves with the body of Christ.

The way the parable of the Good Samaritan was set up has a lot of teachings that we sometimes overlook. What was the question that prompted Jesus to tell the parable of the good samaritan?

“25 ¶ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Although the question was not a sincere one on the part of the lawyer, it is an important question none the less. One that we all need to reflect on. What shall I do that I may have eternal life? Jesus asks in response "What is written in the law?" or, what do the scriptures say? Oftentimes we focus on the second scripture and we forget that these two scriptures or laws that are quoted are nearly equal in their importance. In fact if we were to balance them with a heavenly scale the first is more weightier than the second. Or we could say that the second is only applicable because the first one exists.

“27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy **heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and [thou shalt love] thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And [Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt **live**.”
(Luke 10: 27-28)

It is because we love God and Jesus that we also love our neighbor. It is because we are unified with God and Jesus that we willingly do good to others and love those around us. If we find ourselves being mean or speaking ill or thinking badly of others at that moment we are not united with God. We are not one with them. And God says: "If ye are not one, ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27)

We hear these teachings over and over again in the church and yet for some reason they don't sink in. or it is lost in translation because, I know in Utah we rarely see someone beaten and robbed on the side of the road. And if there was, most wouldn't even see him because we are too busy yelling at the driver in front of us.

If we pondered this question perhaps the Spirit will whisper ways that we can lift and edify others whom we serve. If a neighbor is struggling with addiction we can encourage them and teach them of Jesus Christ and His love for them. If a friend is struggling with immorality, we can show them God's love and encourage them to seek Him through prayer and fasting, and teach them how to receive personal revelation. If a member of your family is sick or afflicted can we exercise faith and prayer as we seek God will for their healing. If we meet someone with a different opinion, or that looks different from us, could we try and see them through God's eyes? Recognizing that they have a beautiful role in God's tapestry of life.

All these things and so much more will unite us as one as the body of Christ. Might we see each of God's children as incredible wonders that God created for a purpose that will someday be known by all. Including ourselves. Might we see ourselves as the master's masterpiece sent here to earth to show forth His light and His love in all that we do.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, Amen.