**One**

John 17:20-26

This is one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture because **Jesus is praying FOR US**. Everywhere that God speaks to His people or someone prays ***it APPLIES to us, but it’s not ABOUT US***. Here, it is literally about US. 2,000 years ago, as he prepared to go to the cross, Jesus prayed for you and me. He prayed for our little church here in Carrollwood. He prayed for the global church that would grow from the tiny seed of His small band of disciples.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.” John 17:20

Jesus had been praying for the disciples right there with him. And they needed every bit of that prayer. But then he pivoted and **prayed for all believers** who would come after these disciples – everyone who would believe in Him through their testimony.

What Jesus prayed for shows us ***the glorious cycle of TRANSFORMATION***.

[OVERVIEW OF CYCLE]

Believe in Jesus > Receive His Glory > Be One in Him > Convince the World > so they believe in Him

This is ***what happened in the early church***, as told in the book of Acts. These apostles spread out, along with the Apostle Paul, and shared the good news throughout the Roman Empire. Then after the NT period, the believers continued to spread out and talk about Jesus, simply loving their neighbors and standing up for what they believed, even when certain emperors persecuted and killed them for it.

And so through history, people have heard of Jesus and ***put their faith in Him***; they have ***received His glory*** in the person of the Holy Spirit and been brought into the ***one family*** of God, the Church. Through the unity and love of the church ***the watching world has seen*** and come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and one by one people believe in Jesus and join in this cycle of personal transformation that leads to world transformation. And so the cycle continues right up to this day and on it will go until Jesus comes back to finish the job once and for all.

So, let’s walk through this beautiful prayer of the Lord Jesus to be reminded of the cycle we have experienced, **the glorious cycle of transformation**. First.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Believe** in Jesus
   1. Hear His **Word**

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.” John 17:20

It starts with faith. Simple personal trust in the Lord Jesus. And “***faith comes by hearing***; and hearing through the Word of Christ.” People cannot believe in Jesus without hearing the message, the good news that Jesus came, died and rose again to pay for their sins and change them forever.

The process is so simple and that is precisely the genius of it. **The message was simply “Jesus is Lord.”** One writer said this kernel of the gospel was so simple and powerful it was ***“sneezeable.”*** Even illiterate peasants could understand, believe and share the good news. Jesus is Lord. This rabbi from Nazareth who was crucified came back to life and proved that He is God in the flesh. He is LORD.

And so the gospel spread from one person to another; from one family to another; from one town to another. **THROUGH THEIR WORD**.

Think about it. ***That’s the reason you are here today.*** Someone shared the message with you. Maybe it was your Mom or Dad. Maybe it was a friend or neighbor. Maybe it was a Sunday School teacher or youth pastor. But some follower of Jesus sneezed this truth onto you. It might well have been messy. But you heard the good news and you believed.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Believe** in Jesus
   1. Know His **Name**

“I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known…” John 17:26

At the center of the gospel is **the name of Jesus**. The Savior. Jesus Christ is Lord. The personal God who made a covenant with Israel as the Great I am took on flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, “And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**The Name of Jesus**. That is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved. It is only those who call on the name of the Lord who can be saved. His Name is our strong tower, our refuge, our shelter from the coming judgment of God. His Name and faith in His name is what washes away your sins and changes you on the inside so the Holy Spirit can come to live in your heart.

That is how the glorious cycle begins: you believe in the name of Jesus because you heard the message, the good news of His love. This is so simple, but it’s so important to remind us to keep praying for our lost friends and loved ones, and ***keep sharing with them***. The gospel is a powerful seed that can change even the most hardened sinner, the most resistant skeptic.

***Paul himself was the least likely candidate*** to follow Jesus. He was hunting down Christians as members of a dangerous cult and throwing them in prison. But Jesus appeared to Him directly and then sent a believer named Ananias to share the good news with him and pray for him. But when Paul believed and was baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon Him and the glory of God filled him and changed him completely. That is step two in the cycle.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Receive His **Glory**
   1. See His **Perfection**

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.” John 17:22

This is one of the most striking verses in the whole Bible.

***The GLORY the Father gave the Son*** He has given to us. What is that glory?

In the Old Testament the glory of God was **a blinding cloud** that symbolized the holy, unapproachable presence of God. When it came down on Solomon’s temple everyone in the area had to back away and cover their eyes. This visual display of the glory cloud reminded the Jews of the days after the Exodus when God led them directly through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They knew His presence was with them.

And God met them at ***Mount Sinai in a thundercloud*** that descended on the mountain and the land trembled. Moses went up to meet with God face to face for 40 days while the people looked on in wonder and were warned not to approach lest they be struck dead.

So the glory of God represented His presence, His power, His holiness – and ***mainly His unapproachability.*** You did not dare go near Mount Sinai or the Holy of Holies in the temple or touch the ark of the covenant.

But now this unapproachable glory is IN US? ***He has given it to us?***

Of course we know this was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through which the **people of God became the TEMPLE OF GOD**. Each believer is now the home of the Holy Spirit and together we are a great global temple made up of individual living stones Jesus is building up for His own glory.

If you’re not blown away by this verse in Scripture you don’t yet understand it.

The eternal glory God the Father has given to God the Son – limitless power, infinite goodness, absolute holiness, overflowing honor, and extravagant love (just to name a few aspects of God’s unimaginable glory). This is the glory that now lives in us.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Receive His **Glory**
   1. See His **Perfection**

“Father, I desire that they also… may be with me… to see my glory that you have given me.” John 17:24

For Jesus this was a future desire when we will all be together in the new heaven and earth and we will see him face to face. This was ***the joy set before Him*** that enabled him to endure the cross, scorning its shame: the joy of eternal reunion. He endured the most agonizing separation from the Father in order to achieve eternal UNION. He suffered crushing rupture of relationship in order to forge eternal relationship with us.

He died on the cross so we would see the glory of his sacrificial love and by seeing His death we would one day be with Him to see His unending life.

***Right now we can GLIMPSE his glory***; we can see as through a glass darkly, as in a dim reflection of a mirror. But on that day we will see Him in all of His glorious perfection. Then we will know Him even as we are fully known by Him.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Receive His **Glory**
   1. Experience His **Love**

“To see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

There are lots of ways you can understand the glory of Jesus, but the primary way we see it in this prayer is the overflowing, never-ending ***love of God the Father for God the Son***. Before the foundation of the world God has always existed as a loving union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God did not need to create this universe, He did it out of the overflow of His love.

***The Father gave the Son this whole world*** and people in it. The Son redeemed those people and gave them back to the Father. The Holy Spirit empowered and enabled the whole plan and process from beginning to end because the Spirit IS the eternal procession of love that flows from Father to Son and back. That love is so real and tangible He is a PERSON.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Receive His **Glory**
   1. Experience His **Love**

“So that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:23

How much does God love us? How much does God love YOU? The SAME LOVE God the Father has for God the Son is the love He has for you.

Just as the Father spoke from heaven saying, ***“You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased,”*** so the Father speaks those words over you and me. He could not love you more. He will not love you less.

That is the expression of the gospel that changed my life when I was 12 or 13 years old. ***“Nothing you do can make God love you more. Nothing you do can make God love you less.”*** I had grown up being taught that Jesus died for my sins but there was a cloud of guilt and fear over my relationship with God until my youth leader explained that God’s love is like a Father’s love. It doesn’t come and go. It isn’t conditional. You cannot lose that love.

“Nothing you do can make God love you more.” You can’t earn more of His favor. You can’t impress Him to the point that He delights in you more. “Nothing you do can make God love you less.” You can’t lose His grace and commitment. You are safe in the Father’s arms. No one can snatch you from His hand. This is how Jesus closes his prayer.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Receive His **Glory**
   1. Experience His **Love**

“That the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:26

The love of God the Father for God the Son is IN US and as we experience that love we are filled with all of the fullness of God – Jesus Himself dwells in our hearts through faith. That is what **Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3 shows us**: the way to be filled with the Spirit of God is to PRAY that God would help you personally know and experience “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” It involves cognitive understanding of Jesus sacrifice for you but is more about a deep experience of that love.

That’s what happened to me as I realized how my teenage sins grieved the heart of the Father but then saw that is precisely why Jesus died: To pay for those sins and reconcile me with the holy God of heaven. Once I began to feel that glorious love and to know God’s delight in me as a Father for His Son, I was never the same again.

And I know the same thing is true for you. ***The key to the Christian life is not duty but DELIGHT.*** You have to realize how much God delights in you, which is why Jesus paid the ultimate price to save you. So the eternal, infinite love of the Father could be in us and as we experience that love, Jesus Himself lives in us and His love flows through us to others.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Live **Unified** in Him
   1. As Father and Son are **One**

“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you.” John 17:21

As those who have been transformed by the love of Jesus and filled with His glory, we are called to live out that love first within the church and then in the world. ***The pattern for our unity is GOD HIMSELF.*** As the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father.

Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father… I and the Father are one.” Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct persons, so the unity of the Godhead does not remove the personality distinctions. But there is a deep and eternal union of the three persons so we worship ONE GOD, not three gods.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. Live **Unified** in Him
   1. Now we are **In Them**

“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.” John 17:21

***How can we be ONE?*** By living, walking, resting, breathing - by BEING in the LORD.

“May they be in us.”

Is your brain hurting a little? The Trinity will do that. There is mystery here we cannot fully comprehend. But Jesus is praying that we would be one with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the same way the Father and Son are one with each other. That we would be IN THEM.

***Which is how we do baptisms.*** We baptize IN the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But the actual grammar in Matthew 28 is the command to baptize them INTO the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

By going under water and coming up we symbolize the death of the old person and the ***resurrection of a new person IN CHRIST.*** The old you was in sin, enslaved to sin, under the control of your worldly flesh. But that YOU died when you called on Jesus to save you. And a **new person was born IN CHRIST**. You come up from the water alive, filled with the Spirit, free from the power of sin. Water baptism represents what happens at the moment of saving faith. It’s not the water that accomplishes these miracles – it is the grace of God applied to your heart by faith alone.

That is your ***new position in Christ***: you are connected with the full power, grace, love and life of the Godhead. As Ephesians 3 says it “That you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” And the result is the fourth part of this cycle of transformation.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Convince** the world
   1. Our apologetic is **Unity**

“That they may all be one… so that the world may believe that you sent me.” John 17:21

Jesus believed that the best proof we could show the world that He is the Son of God is our UNITY. The evidence that Jesus really is the Savior, that He truly is the Lord of heaven and earth is that we actually love one another and live as His one body. “So that the world may believe.” This is so important to his closing prayer he states it again in v. 23.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Convince** the world
   1. Our apologetic is **Unity**

“That they may become perfectly one so that the world may believe that you sent me.” John 17:23

Jesus knew that unity would not come naturally in the church. Goodness, he saw it with his 12 apostles! ***They could hardly get along just with each other***, frequently fighting over who was the greatest… So Jesus was very motivated to PRAY for the love of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit to bring us to perfect unity. “I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one.”

Only as we abide in Christ and His love abides in us do we have any chance of living out the unity Jesus desires for us. But when we do exemplify family love, cooperation and unity, the world takes notice.

***Crises like hurricane Milton create opportunities*** for the church in a region to mobilize and collaborate like never before. We have certainly begun to see that in our region, PTL!

* COLLABORATION STORY - Houston after hurricane Harvey? Columbia, SC?

And it doesn’t have to be a citywide crisis, it could be a personal challenge. ***The Care Portal*** is helping believers and churches come alongside parents in crisis to build a support system around them and keep them from losing their children. Ministries like Safe Families and ***Better Together*** help churches like ours assemble support teams to surround, say, a single mom, and help her get back on her feet in order to keep her children out of foster care.

When we started using Crisis Cleanup, the first need I found was a tree issue in Lutz that turned out to be a longtime friend of one of our deacons (LaVerne). That need was on the CC site for a week before we went there with the Crisis Response team and removed the trees. ***The second need I found was Kayda***. I saw her posting 35 minutes after she submitted it. The next day several of us were at her house helping her support her elderly parents with a just flooded house.

Just by going over I met her pastor, Richard, who has already become a friend and joined my monthly pastor prayer meeting. And by working together at Kayda’s house we have represented the gospel to her extended family, friends and neighbors. Unity is our best apologetic. The love we have for one another is the best illustration of God’s love for us. People see it. They feel it. It moves them to believe in Jesus.

Conversely, ***division works against our message.*** One of the obstacles to faith in Jesus is the fact that there are hundreds of major denominations and thousands of minor ones. The modern estimation is that there are 45,000 denominations in the world. 45. Thousand. When Christians can’t agree on the major things or even the minor points of doctrine and practice, it makes it harder for non-Christians to figure out what the message even is.

But when we actually work together, we demonstrate that what unites us is stronger than what divides us and that is compelling to a watching world. Our apologetic is unity. And our message is love.

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Convince** the world
   1. Our message is **Love**

“So that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:23

Our gospel of grace becomes much more credible when it is delivered in a loving package. Of course, that’s how Jesus did everything – in perfect love. ***He didn’t just preach truth. He loved people.*** He healed diseases. He delivered people from demonic oppression. He spent time with them. He ate with the undesirables, the untouchables.

And **the early church** did the same thing. They continued the healing ministry of Jesus and the deliverance ministry. And above all, they loved each other. They shared everything they had. We read about this in Acts, and we know that unified love continued through the first three centuries. Those were grim times with periodically terrifying persecution and then other times of suffering through outbreaks of the plague.

But in those times when ***whole villages were wiped out by disease***, the people who stayed to care for the sick were Christians. And many of them died by doing so. But ***what everyone saw was the LOVE***. And when the plague ended, the people who survived, having been cared for by Christians, pretty much all became Christians. I mean that’s a pretty powerful apologetic, to have someone take care of you when you are sick and then THEY die but YOU LIVE. This is the love of God in the hearts of believers, made manifest through works of love. Jesus ended his prayer saying “I made known to them your name…”

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Convince** the world
   1. Our message is **Love**

“I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:26

Here is the end goal toward which Jesus prayed and for which he died: that the infinite, overflowing ***love of God would be IN US***. The love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit poured into us and flowing through us to a hurting, broken world.

Follower of Jesus, be amazed at this truth: the love that lives in you is DIVINE. Supernatural. The same love within the Godhead has been poured into our hearts, and we CAN be filled with this love if we will just place ourselves regularly before God so He can fill us. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is not automatic. His filling is available to every believer, but any number of things can block that filling, mainly sin in its myriad forms.

Are you feeling dry today? Discouraged? Here is the cycle for which Jesus prays:

**The Glorious Cycle of Transformation:**

1. **Believe** in Jesus
   1. Hear His **Word**
   2. Know His **Name**
2. Receive His **Glory**
   1. See His **Perfection**
   2. Experience His **Love**
3. Live **Unified** in Him
   1. As Father and Son are **One**
   2. Now we are **In Them**
4. **Convince** the World
   1. Our apologetic is **Unity**
   2. Our message is **Love**

***Step one is to believe in Jesus.*** Listen again to His word of grace and healing and freedom and fix your faith in Him. Call on His Name as you did the very first time. Change always starts there. As you trust in and walk with Jesus, learn to receive His glory. See the fullness of His perfection, His goodness, His amazing grace and mercy. Experience again the overwhelming wonder of his love.

And as the Lord fills us, let’s walk out that unity in Him. As Jesus is one with the Father, the Holy Spirit unites us with God and with each other. We are IN the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You were baptized into the Godhead at the moment of your faith in the Lord Jesus. We ARE one in Christ, let’s live that way. Which is our best apologetic as we seek to share the good news of Jesus with others. Unity adorns the message, division clouds the message, which is love. If we can’t love one another why would people believe us when we talk about the love of Jesus?

But as we live out the unified, overflowing love of Jesus, a watching world hears His name, feels His love and is enabled to put their faith in Him, so more and more join in the glorious cycle of transformation. That was Jesus’ prayer. Let’s make it our prayer.