

## **Fellowship Pathway 1.3.26 pm John 17.20-26 Vision: Where are we going together?**

John 17:20-26 New International Version - UK

### **Jesus prays for all believers**

<sup>20</sup> 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

<sup>24</sup> 'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> 'Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.'

[Read full chapter](#)

### **Footnotes**

a. [John 17:26](#) Greek *your name*

### **PP slide 1**

This evening we are continuing to look at our vision for the next few years and are focussing on overall on '**Where are we going together?**' and particularly the Fellowship Pathway, particularly thinking about **Our Welcome, Our Pastoral care and Our cultivation of Togetherness within our church family.**

**And as a focus for that Fellowship Pathway, we are looking at this passage from John 17. So please keep your bibles open at John 17: 20-26.**

### **Pray**

### **1) Unity**

When you get to my sort of age, or even before, and you are married for a long time - have you ever experienced that sort of thing when one person

says something and the other finishes the sentence for them? Or when I tell a story and Jane, my wife, has just told the same story to the same person that I am now chatting with? Or if you aren't married this sort of thing may happen in your family or with a friend you know very well and for a long time.

### **Pause**

I think something of what is going on in these situations is that, as what the scripture says about marriage right at the beginning of the bible in Genesis 2

**Genesis V24 ....a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

Something of marriage, in it's ideal state, is about becoming **one with each other**, but it doesn't mean you **aren't still an individual person, a human being fearfully and wonderfully made by God, an individual person**. But you do become increasingly one with each other.

When Jesus prays just before his death, in our passage this morning ...Jesus prays for all people who believe or **will believe in Him..**

**That is us! You and Me if we follow Jesus! Jesus is speaking directly to us tonight in this prayer! So let's see what he says!**

*<sup>20</sup> 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who **will believe in me through their message,** <sup>21</sup> **that all of them may be one,** Father, **just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us***

When Jesus prays to his Heavenly Father in this final long prayer before he dies and rises from the dead, he emphasises unity. When you know you are about to die you tend to emphasise the things most important to you. So Jesus thinks unity is really important.

The **oneness of a good marriage** or these other close long term relationships is so important is because it reflects in a small way Jesus' **oneness with his Heavenly Father**. It's a bit like a man and woman becoming one through the years. **It reflects the very oneness of God who is three persons but also one God**. And in order to grasp what Jesus is saying here we need to grasp this **Trinitarian nature of our loving God**.

### **PP slide 2**

Many of you will have seen this slide before. It attempts to explain something which is very hard to grasp. We may not fully understand the oneness and threeness of God until we meet him face to face. But I hope this helps a bit.

To understand the chart you have to focus initially on God in the circle in the middle...

One God

Then you can look up and see the Father is God (looking back to the middle).

Then if you look to the bottom left you can see the Son (Jesus) is God

And if you look to the bottom right you can see the Spirit (Holy Spirit) is God too.

As it says on the top left **One God three persons**. But the scriptures are clear that does not mean (top right) that there are three Gods (Not 3 gods).

As the scripture tells us in Deuteronomy 6:4

***4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one...***

***The Lord is one.***

**Pause**

**So when Jesus walked around in Palestine he was one with his Father and one with the Holy Spirit who filled him.**

**Jesus is a model for us. He shows us the way we can be as his followers - and he also wants that same incredible loving unity that he has with the Father and the Holy Spirit to be ours today. He wants us to walk around one with the Father and one with the Holy Spirit who fills us.**

We saw that One God in unity when Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. Picture this scene at the river Jordan..

**Matthew 3: 16-17**

***16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***

So here with have Jesus in the water, the Spirit of God descending like a dove and the voice of the Father from Heaven saying "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

**The One God who is 3 persons, in action, in unity at Jesus' baptism.**

And I believe Jesus wants the Father to be able to say of us who follow him, sitting here this morning **“This is my son, or this is my daughter , whom I love; with them I am well pleased.”**

This is a reminder that God loves us and wants us to be **one with him**, like the Father Son and Holy Spirit are **one with each other** - they in the Godhead share that **overwhelming love** together.

And God wants us to **share in that love too** and **love each other** with that same **overwhelming Godly love**. That's why Jesus' summary of the law is **Love God and love your neighbour. We love God, are one with God who is love and the source of all love, and we can then share that love with others.**

If we do this God is **well pleased** (as we Londoners would say) God is **well pleased** with us **if we are one with him**, as he said he was with Jesus, his Son at his baptism.

**Pause**

**I do wonder sometimes if the scripture favours people from London?**

My wife Jane makes a chicken dish which friends of our son said was **‘Well Nice!’** So now we call it Chicken **Well Nice!**

Is God favouring us London locals by saying **‘Well Pleased’** here? ...

**Obviously I'm not being serious but remember if we love God and our neighbour he is Well Pleased with us!!**

## **2) Unity within Diversity**

The other thing about God being one God and three persons is it shows us that God is **unity within diversity**. God is One God but also 3 individual persons – God is a unity (One) and a diversity (3 persons).

So within God's nature we see a **unity and a diversity**. And that's what we are meant to be like too. If I look around here this morning I see a group of people, all different, diverse, in many ways and yet we are united in our **faith, following and service of the One God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

And if I look around the local area and the world, I see Christians united in their faith in the One God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Unity in diversity.**

**Pause**

Of course, sadly, we are not all perfectly united all the time as Christians, I am the first to admit that. **We are not united and we let God down in this.** Like Paul says **we all fall short of God's glory in many ways.**

But Jesus says in **verses 22 and 23**

**I have given them (that's us) the glory** that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they **may be brought to complete unity.**

**So how has Jesus given us the Glory of God?**

**Through giving us his Holy Spirit to live in us.** As Peter says about the sufferings we may face as a Christian **filled with God's spirit...**

1 Peter 4:13-15

But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when **his glory** is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, **for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

**The Holy Spirit gives us that glory and Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit. You might not feel very glorious a lot of the time but be encouraged – God's glorious spirit does live in you!**

**Pause**

**So to conclude this part of the talk we can see that...**

**PP slide 3**

Jesus is praying for us directly here – take note!

He emphasises unity, oneness with God and with each other

He is reflecting the unity of the One God who is 3 persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit and wants us to reflect that too with love at the centre of all we do

Also Jesus is showing us unity is within diversity as God is One God united in 3 persons just as we Christians are united in our relationship with Jesus, but are a diverse bunch of people!!.

Now for the last part of the talk let's look at..

### **3) What does being One with God and our neighbour look like?**

**Let's look at the Big picture first ....**

**We are one - All of humanity!** – All human beings are one as we are **all made in the image of God - male and female. (Genesis 1:27)**

**So if you have faith in Jesus here this morning or you aren't sure about all this you are still one with everyone here as we are all made in God's image. We all face the same kind of problems in life and God loves us!**

**John 3:16 God so loved the world that he sent his son (Jesus)..God loves all of us in the world**

We have chosen to walk away from our Father God like the prodigal son in Jesus' story.

**He wants us back and those who have returned to God are one in a special way as we acknowledge our heavenly parent - The I am, The Father Son and Holy Spirit. We return to him through Jesus..**

**John 3:16 in full**

*16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**Without God we perish, with God, one with God we enter into his eternal life where there is no war, suffering, death but love, goodness and justice.**

We are all in one family reunited with God.

No matter **where we are from, where we are going, where we have been** we are all one in God's loving and just family.

The oneness Jesus is talking about is not because we all **meet together in one place**, it's not because **we are on the church database**, it's not because we go to a **particular branch of the Christian church**.

The oneness we have is from a unity of personal relationship with Jesus, a unity of the personal relationship we have with the one God who is 3 persons in a family of love. And so we have a unity with all others who have that personal relationship with Jesus throughout the church, locally, nationally and worldwide.

We are one when we agree, we are one when we disagree, we are one when we get on with each other, we are one when we don't get on with each other. **We are still in God's family.** That never changes.

We are one if we are male or female, we are one no matter what colour our skin is, we are one, whether we find learning things easy or hard, we are one no matter what language is our first language, we are one whether we have

a lot of money or little money, we are one whether we are physically well or we struggle with health or disability or dementia, we are one whether we are shy or outgoing. We are one in all having various gifts given by God through the Holy Spirit, .... **We are One!**

#### **PP slide 4**

**So that's why, as it says in our vision..**

We want to **welcome all** into the church, we want to have **pastoral care** that nourishes and leads to wholeness as a people made in the image of God, we want to cultivate **togetherness, friendship and hospitality**.

#### **Welcome all**

So when you walk into the church there are a team of people whose job it is **to welcome and help you**. There is also a red desk and display where you can find out more about the church and what we get up to and, hopefully you will feel welcomed by the person on that desk. We do need some more people on the welcome team at both services and also to help on the **welcome desk** (particularly in the evening service). **If you would like to help then please contact Carolyn Akers or the church office.**

#### **Pastoral care**

We have a pastoral worker called **Sue** and various people are involved in visiting people and helping at the service at the Westcombe Park Nursing Home. You can contact **Sue** (church office) if you would like to help.

We also have the church open during the week from Tuesday until Friday from 10 till 1 for prayer and support. If you would like to help with this do contact **Cathy in the church office**.

**There is a leaflet on the Welcome desk called **Join a Team** and this brings all this information together – do pick one up after the service.**

#### **Togetherness, friendship and hospitality**

We have various opportunities within the church to develop these areas.

The ones that come to mind are simply **chatting to someone you don't know after the service** before you chat to someone you do know better.

**Joining a small group** (you can chat the Stephen and Anne Greenall who oversee the small groups or contact the church office). In a small group you

can develop closer relationships than you can chatting after a service. You can get closer support in your journey through life with God and you can support others and help them develop their faith and service of God in everyday life through prayer and bible study.

Some people pray with other people in a prayer triplet or group too.

**PP slide 5** There's a great encouragement to help us in our unity with God and each other... from Paul writing to the church in Philippi

*Philippians 2:1-4* **Imitating Christ's Humility**

*2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in 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 of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

**Outside church/ frontline**

We have thought about church, but most of the week we aren't in church.

We are at maybe at work, caring for someone, at school, whatever we do in our frontline during the week.

**How can we be one with God and other Christians in our frontline? How can we show unity within the diversity of other Christians and serve our neighbours?**

Marie has kindly said she will share with us about something of her frontline. What she does through the week...

**Marie interview**

**1) What's your job? Do you pray at work with other Christians?**

Then you can chat about prayer group, prayer 'box' prayer requests both staff, parents and children, Christian vision and ethos.

**2) You're a Mum - do you have any involvements in prayer at your children's school with other Christians?**

And you can chat about that. I'll probably also ask

**3) Do you feel a oneness with other Christians in these situations?**

**Many thanks Marie.**

Something that has occurred to me is ...

We are one with other Christians in our **neighbourhood** (shouldn't we get together to pray with them for area?) I don't do this apart from with Jane - Maybe that's God prompting me...and maybe you too.

#### 4) What is the effect of being one?

##### PP slide 6

Jesus prays..

, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** . <sup>22</sup> I have **given them the glory** that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. **Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

Jesus repeated twice to make the point..

**Our witness of being one with God and each other** in our lives, in church in our frontline maybe at school, work, family, socially means that others in the world who don't yet have a relationship with God through Jesus may know him.

When people see a variety of diverse Christians from various churches and backgrounds praying or working together in a school, in a workplace, in a neighbourhood - **then that is a tremendous and glorious sign of God's love and unity at work in diversity! It's powerful even if we don't feel very powerful! It's glorious even if we don't feel very glorious!**

#### 5) Conclusion Summary - so how can we can make God well pleased with us!!

**You can show God's glory in your unity and diversity – don't try and be like someone else, allow God to work through your personality, skills, gifts and talents but work in unity with other Christians**

You can reach others, serve others in your way, with your contacts, with your diverse skills.

**But even though we are all diverse, different from each other** - The unity is in the One we serve who gave his life as a ransom for many, to bring us back into God's loving diverse, being of love, a family of love – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **Let's pray**

**Those who aren't yet Christians – put faith and trust in God who is an eternal family of love -Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

**Those who are Christians – pray along with Paul *that we are like-minded, have the same love, are one in spirit and of one mind. And that we will do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, Lord, may we in humility value others above ourselves, not looking to our own interests but to the interests of the others. And Lord we pray as we do so that you will be well pleased with us!* Amen**