

**Jesus' Prayer**  
**Chris Hensley**  
**Based on Psalm 97 & John 17:20-26**  
**Sardis Baptist Church**  
**June 1, 2025**

It is an interesting thought for me to consider when I read this larger passage and remember that Jesus offered a prayer for all folks who would eventually follow him. As we discussed a couple of weeks ago, John's account may be divided into two larger sections with our readings falling into the second section which may then be subdivided. This second section is the Book of Glory and this subsection is the Farewell Discourse. The farewell, in our passage for this morning, is coming to a close and Jesus is offering his last bit of comfort to the disciples before they depart from one another.

Specifically, Jesus is offering a prayer for his followers in our reading for this morning. This prayer which Jesus offers is one of unity for the followers as the message of the Christ continues to spread following Jesus' glorification.

Again, this is the language of looming death in the farewell discourse.

This idea of unity is a theme which has flowed throughout the Gospel according to John since the prologue in chapter one. As a reminder, there it is said that God Creator and Christ are one and have been one since before time

as we understand and measure it began. This primordial unification signals that the persons of God Creator and Christ bear the dual identity of sender and sent – this points to a unification of the message of the Christ with the message of the Creator which was presented in the Hebrew Bible, through the Jewish people, and continued into the Christian Testament and the Church. There are two parts to our Christian Testament reading; vv.20-23 and vv.24-26. Both of these subsections highlight the idea of unity for the Church and the followers of Jesus regardless of their location and the era in which they live. The unity is described first in the terms of mission (vv.20-23) and motive (vv.24-26). The mission is that the Church is being sent into the world to further the message of the Christ and the motive of this mission is love. These two are inseparable as the motive clarifies and informs the mission. We need only look to any number of movements throughout our collective history to see that mission, without a unifying motive of love, holds the potential to lead to despotism and/or fanaticism.

Jesus' final prayer which closes this larger section is an echoing of the larger theme throughout John, that of Jesus' unity to God the Creator and a call to this same type of unity for the followers throughout the ages. The unity which draws the Godhead, the Trinity, together, draws the Church together as

well – love. It is this prayer for love which serves as a foundation upon which the Church might be, and in theory was, built. It is this unity in love which continues to drive the Church forward now and which leads to the missional work of serving as Kin-dom builders in the here and now. Finally, the prayer is that all of those who might know Jesus would be glorified as Jesus is glorified in God the Creator and as God the Creator is glorified in Jesus. Full unity is the end goal here between the Godhead and the followers. A fullness of unity which, for relational beings, promises a fullness of love and togetherness with the Divine. This is experienced at infinitesimal levels when the Church does the work to which it has been called, which Jesus prayed for in our reading – that of declaring the Kin-dom of God in the here and now and amongst all people. This is the Church’s moral compass or true north, to be unified with the Godhead for the purposes of realizing God’s intended order for humanity and all creation.

This fits in neatly with our Hebrew Bible reading found in the Psalter. This psalm is an enthronement hymn which signal the greatness of the Jewish God and this God’s works, wonders, power, and authority. For John, Jesus – who is unified with the God sung of in Psalm 97 – is the ultimate example which one must follow when one seeks to unify oneself with the Divine intentions for

humanity. Today is ascension Sunday, the day on which the Church collectively recalls the ascension of Jesus the risen Christ to the right hand of Creator God. We read the psalm with the idea in mind that Christ is unified with Creator and we are called into this unity as well. May we find peace in unity with God Creator and Christ, filled with God the Spirit and encouraged to work to see the fulfillment of God's intended order by giving dignity to all whom we meet in this life.

## **Bibliography**

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