

## ACCORDING TO CHRIST (JOHN 17)

The title to our message today, based on **John 17**, is simply put, According to Christ. For anyone who may ask, "what does that mean, 'according to Christ'?", an expanded version of that title could be "Praying and Living our Lives **In** and **According** to Christ Jesus". **John 17** is Jesus' final prayer before He was to be taken and crucified on a cross, and what comes out in Jesus' prayer is at the very heart of God, as Jesus was fulfilling the will and purpose of His and our Heavenly Father. It also gives us an example, similar to what is called "The Lord's Prayer" (**Matthew 6:9-13**), that Jesus gave to His disciples. Not that we just ritualistically or robotically pray exactly as Jesus did but to know the will and ways of God so that we can pray according to His will and ways and then to also live our lives respectively. Last Sunday we went over **John 15-16**, of which Jesus was basically summarizing the overall theme of the gospel (of Christ Jesus), as He spelled it out for His disciples, to where His disciples finally said 'ah, now You're speaking clearly to us'. Jesus spoke of the perpetual and eternal love of God, which for us, a beautiful starting point can be, in the Words of Jesus, from **John 3:16-17**, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **should** not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him **might** be saved." Yet, as we all hopefully know, God's love doesn't stop there. It didn't stop at God sending Jesus, to where, in Jesus' words and deeds, "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (**Matthew 11:5**) The love of God did not stop at the crucifixion of Christ Jesus, nor did it stop at the resurrection of Christ Jesus. Yes, the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, in His calling and mission according to the will of God had been accomplished, to where when Jesus said on the cross, "**Tetelestai**", meaning "**It is finished**" (**John 19:30**).

What we are being led to believe, and to understand, is of the great and marvelous love of God, and the extent to which God would go to, in order to allow us to be in His eternal kingdom, and to be children of God, and that He is still actively working towards building His eternal kingdom from glory to glory (**2 Corinthians 3:18**), from God's glory, to the glory of Christ Jesus, to one day us being glorified together in Christ, and then also from faith to faith (**Romans 1:17**). That means that we are then a part of that, in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus! The love of God did not just die on that cross! The love of God did not **just** raise up from the dead and is now just sitting at the right hand of God! According to Christ Jesus, the love of God is presently calling us, in the words of the Apostle Peter, "out of the darkness and into His marvelous light"! (**1 Peter 2:9**) The Apostle Paul spoke of the great love of God in praying for the saints at Ephesus, which is then also our prayer

for us today, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being **rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – **to know the love of Christ** which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (**Ephesians 3:16-19**)

For a more well-rounded context before we get to **John 17**, the Apostle John begins his gospel account in **John 1** saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (**John 1:1-5**) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld **His glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:14**) Right in between those two sets of verses, we are told, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him [although a remnant did receive Him, as he continues...]. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:10-13**) That gives us two ingredients necessary for being "saved", so to speak, to become a child of God, to be as Jesus put it "**born-again**". As "Jesus answered and said to [Nicodemus], **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** (**John 3:3**) First we are led to believe on Jesus as being the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One of God), that took our sins upon Himself to the grave, and then rose from the grave conquering death, sin, and evil. Then, for those who do believe on Jesus being the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus said and is saying this, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever."** (**John 14:15**) Right after that Jesus elaborated saying, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."** (**John 14:23**) That sounds to me like more than just reciting a "sinner's prayer" and going up to an altar for salvation, doesn't it? It is making the decision to believe on AND receive Christ Jesus and His Righteousness, and to then live our lives in and according to Christ Jesus which includes keeping His Word, His commandments!

In **John 15**, Jesus told His disciples, **"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.** [That word abide is from the Greek Word "meno" which means to remain, to stay in, and the word love used by Jesus was "agape" which typically means "divine love"-so the call to all of us is to remain, stay in, abide in His love] **If you**

keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:9-10) That is, we are to be actively living in and according to the love of God that is through Christ Jesus. Further elaborating, Jesus told His disciples, and is also now telling us, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (John 15:16) When Jesus said, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14), of which He is recorded by Matthew to have said it twice, the second time Jesus had just given the parable of the king who was to have a wedding feast for His Son. Many refused the invitation, saying they had other things to do. There was also someone who showed up in the wrong wedding apparel. (Matthew 22) Jesus was of course referring to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9) and was implying that there is one way to be chosen. First, is to receive the call, second is to be clothed appropriately. The Apostle Paul tells us what that means, he said to the Galatians, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27) John 17 is the final prayer Jesus prayed to His and our Heavenly Father before He was taken by the authorities to be falsely tried and convicted (primarily He was being accused of blasphemy, as putting Himself equal to God, saying He was the Son of God). Just prior to that:

=====

**Jesus Prays for Himself (John 17:1-5)**

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

=====

When Jesus was asked what is the great commandment of God's, He stated, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31) It usually is noticed and mentioned that there are two aspects to that commandment, loving God and then loving others. Yet, there are three. When Jesus said to "love your neighbor as yourself", He certainly wasn't speaking of having an over-inflated opinion on how much better you are than anyone else. He wasn't referring to one's ego. Yet no matter what we've been through, what we have done, the call to us is

the same that Jesus called out to His disciples, "Come follow Me". Following Jesus though comes at a cost. Jesus tells us that "he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 10:38-39) Once again, Jesus paid the price for our sins, yet following Jesus, as a child of God, requires our submission to the will of God, and to keep Jesus' Word and His commandments. We are then assured that, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [eternal life, joint-heirs with Jesus, that He will come back, etc.], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) We are ultimately being led to respond to the love of God through Christ Jesus, to love God with all that is in us, and to love others as ourselves, as we are all of God's creation, and we are all intended to answer the call to repentance to turn to God for the forgiveness of sins, and to believe on and receive Christ Jesus, to be a child of God, to take up our cross and follow Christ, as we abide in Christ and abide in His love, His divine "agape" love! But notice, first Jesus' prayer was for and about Himself according to the will of God, what God's plan and purpose was for Him. Likewise, God has a plan and purpose for us all in Christ, as He is still calling, "follow Me"!

=====

**Jesus Prays for His Disciples (John 17:6-19)**

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

=====

Jesus initially was praying specifically for His disciples. Why? We get the answer to that in Jesus' Great Commission that He gave His disciples after He had risen from the grave. Jesus told them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus, in His own words, said "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24) If not for the faithfulness of the disciples/apostles, we would not have Matthew-Revelation. The gospel likely would not have spread throughout the middle east, Asia minor, and Europe and beyond without the Great Commission. Praise God He already purposed in Himself through Christ to call out to all the lost from **all nations** to believe on Christ Jesus and to receive Him, and to then live in and according to the love of God in Christ!

=====

**Jesus Prays for All Believers (John 17:20-26)**

"I do not pray for these alone [the disciples], **but also for those who will believe in Me through their word** [their word being His Word]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; **that they may be made perfect in one**, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

=====

To be one in Christ is to be abiding in His Word, which is what Jesus and the disciples/apostles then taught. It is not in what is called "The Ecumenical Movement", that says that we are all, world-wide, one in Christ, to all who just believe on Christ. That sounds nice but Jesus tells us, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' [they are calling Him Lord-twice even] shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven**. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness!**' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." (Matthew 7:21-25) That Rock is Christ Jesus!

Jesus prayed specifically to our Heavenly that we would all be one in Him, as He was and is with the Father. The Apostle Paul taught exactly that in saying, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [the building up] of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (**Ephesians 4:11-16**) Once again, the writer(s) of Hebrews spoke of those who lived by faith in the times past (the Old Testament) saying, "And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that **they should not be made perfect apart from us.**" (**Hebrews 11:39**) What that is telling us, is that all things are according to God's time and His will, and that one glorious day we will all be perfected together in Christ Jesus! "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but **we** know that when He is revealed, **we** shall be like Him, for **we** shall see Him as He is." (**1 John 3:2**) Oneness in Christ is not a compromise of who Jesus is, as He stated, "**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me**". (**John 14:6**) Our calling is to heed the Words of Jesus as He calls us to "**Come follow Me**". As the book of John gives us Jesus' many other I AM Statements. "**I AM the Bread of Life**", "**I AM the Light of the world**", "**I AM the Door of the sheep**", "**I Am the Good Shepherd**", "**I AM the Resurrection and the Life**", and "**I AM the True Vine**". Jesus also stated, "before Abraham was, I AM". And lastly, when they came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked them who they were seeking and they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth". Jesus responded with "I AM He". They all then drew back and fell to the ground!

**"that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."** According to Christ! AMEN