**THAT ALL OF THEM MAY BE ONE**

January 13, 2019

John 17:1-26

Key Verse 17:21 “…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.”

This is UBF key verse of the new year 2019. It is the prayer for UBF by Pastor Moses Yoon, the general director. Today’s passage is Jesus’ high priestly prayer. It is a beautiful picture of his present ministry in heaven where he sits at the right hand of God and prays for his people as our High Priest. First, Jesus prayed for himself to fulfill his priestly duty by offering himself as the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. We can learn how to live for the glory of God in this world as royal priests. Next, he prayed for his disciples. He did not say anything about their shortcomings or failures. He did not pray for riches or worldly success. Jesus prayed to protect them from evil and sanctified them by the truth. Here we can learn how to pray for our Bible students. Lastly Jesus prays for all believers. It is amazing that Jesus prayed for you and me 2000 years ago. His prayer is that we may be one, namely we all bear the likeness of Jesus Christ, and that we may be brought home safely in heaven to be with him forever.

**First**, Jesus prays to glorify God. Look at verse 1. Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” Jesus called God “Father.” Even though terrible suffering and painful rejection lay ahead, Jesus did not doubt God’s love. He loved the Father and he knew that the Father loved him. At the beginning of his ministry God said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Now, even though Jesus faced the cross, he called God “Father.” He loved and trusted his heavenly Father. It is important that we never doubt the love of God. The evil one is always working hard to make us doubt God’s love.

What was Jesus’ prayer topic for himself? Jesus prayed, “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” Jesus’ life purpose was to glorify God. He did not seek glory from people, but he sought the praise and glory from God. Because of this he could overcome the criticism and accusations of the religious leaders of his time and minister to the people who were like sheep without a shepherd. He sought God’s glory and praise so that he might live a life that glorifies God. One meaning of glorify is to reveal. Jesus revealed God. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, he revealed God’s love to the whole world. God demonstrated to the whole world, saying, “This is how much I love you.” Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Look at verse 5. “And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” Before Jesus came into the world, he dwelt in heaven with the Father. When the angels looked upon him, they saw the glory of God Almighty. But when he came among men, the glory of God was veiled and hidden. People saw him merely as the carpenter’s son. Here Jesus is praying that the original glory in heaven may be restored. This is the great hope every Christian should have. This is called glorification. When we are clothed with the glorious resurrection body, we will share the glory of Jesus. The apostle Paul said in Romans 8:18, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” This glorious hope gives direction to life. Without hope of glory in heaven we become restless wanderers with no direction.

In his prayer Jesus reveals his life purpose. For Jesus, to live for the glory of God was everything. In order to glorify God, he could even die on the cross. Jesus’ prayer, “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you,” tells us what all human beings’ chief end ought to be. What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (Rom 11:36). When we have to live in this world, we are confronted with various kinds of problems which make us fearful and distress us. When we see the situation of the world, we wonder if we can live for the glory of God. But as Jesus showed us how to live to glorify God even through his death, we also must set our life purpose to live for the glory of God. Paul was a selfish person before his conversion. But after his conversion, he said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” We must know that Jesus’ people must pray first to live for the glory of God. When we live for our own glory, we may feel happy and free for the time being. But we become self-centered and slaves of pride and stubbornness. Also we have to always think about what others think of us and we become tired. One young man at the gospel retreat testified that he lived and studied out of fear of losing face, and tried to please people. That is why he felt very insecure and uncertain about his future. Even at the retreat, he was debating whether he should go to a drinking party on that Saturday at 10pm. He knew he should not go, but he wanted to please his friends. But he decided to live for the glory of God. The deepest desire of the human heart is TO BE KNOWN….to be seen for who we are, to be understood, honored and accepted. Knowing the true God and being known by him is the greatest blessing we can have. It satisfies our deepest desire. It is in fact the eternal life.

**Second**, Jesus prays for his disciples. Look at verse 9. “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.” We cannot change anyone. So we must pray for those with whom we study the Bible. This is what Jesus did. He taught the Bible and prayed. What was Jesus’ prayer topics for his disciples? The first prayer topic is that God may protect them. Look at verse 11. “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me so that they may be one as we are one.” Jesus prayed that God might protect his disciples. He was praying that the small mustard seed of faith which he had planted in their hearts might be protected and grow. He was praying that the word of God which he had planted in them might grow and bear fruit in their lives. He was praying that the love he had put in their hearts might grow. He was praying that they love one another and be one in Jesus.

The second prayer topic is that God may sanctify them. Look at verse 17. “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Here “sanctify” means to make holy, or to set apart for sacred use. First, Jesus wants us to be holy, and separated from the world. God is holy. We are called to also be a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1Pe 2:9). But it is not easy for us to be separated from the world, and yet in the world. We cannot hide away like monks. We are sent into the world, but should not be worldly. We should not follow the standard of this world, but live according to the truth. The word of God is truth. When we hold on to God’s word, God’s word begins to change us on the inside. We are being sanctified, or molded into the image of Christ. Without God’s word, human beings cannot but live according to their sinful nature. They become the slaves of their sinful nature, compromising with sin, thinking that they are not so bad because everyone does it. Then when we believe in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit, yet our physical body is not changed. All of our old sinful habits may still be there. Then begins our real struggle with sin. How can we live a holy life in this tempting world? Only God can do it. We see here that Jesus prayed to God to sanctify them. Through the word of truth, our heart begins to conform to Christ. This is called sanctification and it takes a life-long effort. That is why we emphasize daily bread, which is daily Bible reading and reflection writing. When we are faithful to daily Bible study, God’s word purifies us. One young woman at the gospel retreat testified that she had a hard time living with her in-laws. She was resentful and bitter and became angry at her husband. But whenever she felt that way, she began to write a Bible verse in her phone or in her journal. Then the word of God cleansed her of all her bitterness and anger.

Verse 19 says, “For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” Here “sanctify” means that we have been set apart for special purpose. Jesus set himself apart for the work God sent him to do, namely, as the Lamb of God. Likewise, God set apart each of us for his special purpose in this generation. We have been chosen as royal priests in this generation to bear much fruit. It is an awesome privilege and responsibility to be chosen by God.

**Third**, Jesus prays for all the people of the world (20-23). Look at verses 20b-21a. “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” The unity for which Jesus prayed was not a matter of external church union. Nor does it mean that we should all be alike, having the same hobby and the same talent, enjoying the same food. Jesus is praying that we may be one in displaying the character of God. This is the unity which makes the world say, “I see Christ in those Christians as the Father was seen in Christ.” Acts 4:32 says, “All the believers were one in heart and mind.” Peter and John were very different in character. But when they were one in Christ, they could work together to boldly testify Jesus Christ. What does it mean practically to be one?

Firstly, we can be one when we have the same life purpose. One of the main reasons why believers are not one is that they live for their own glory, not for the glory of God. When we give up the desire to seek our own glory and start seeking God’s glory, we can be one. Secondly, when we humble ourselves and serve one another, we can be one. We are all self-centered. Everyone thinks that he is right. Nobody wants to give in. One day, two pastors quarreled on the street. They quarreled a lot but could not agree. One pastor said, “OK, that’s enough. Now you go your way! I will go the Lord’s way!” 1 Peter 5:5b says, “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’” Thirdly, in order to be one, we should acknowledge that we are all different. We are not an organization like a business. We are a community like a family. In particular, we have been called to campus mission. Under this clear spiritual identity, when we acknowledge our differences and co-work together, we can be one. But if we fight over trivial issues, we get exhausted and have no energy to serve campus students. When we forgive and love one another, God can build up a community of love and unity.

What happens when we become one? Look at verse 21b. “…so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” The key message of the gospel we preach is God’s love. People see whether we just preach God’s word with our mouths or we actually practice our teaching in our lives. In the first century, the Christians were an absolute minority. Compared with the Roman empire, they were a tiny group of people. The Roman empire seemed to last forever. Yet it was conquered by Christianity. What power did Christianity have that it could conquer Rome. It was the power of love. Roman fathers threw away newborn babies when they looked weak. The Christians took the abandoned babies and brought them up with love. Many husbands were not faithful and had mistresses. However, Christian husbands loved their wives and remained faithful. Christians dearly loved one another. The Romans saw this and said, “Look! How the Christians love! They are ready to die for each other!” What they saw was the love of Christ. Through the Christian community, they came to know Jesus’ love and believed him as Christ. Evangelism cannot be done just with words. It also needs to be done with genuine love. If someone says, “I find this community is full of love that I cannot find elsewhere; I want to belong to this group,” that is the most effective way of evangelism. People see and know how we live. If they find our community cold and indifferent to each other, who will want to stay with us? Do you want to remain in such a community? That kind of community has already failed as a church of Christ. I pray that we may truly forgive each other, love each other, and humbly serve each other, until other people say, “Look! How dearly UBF people love one another! They are ready to die for each other. I want to belong to them!”

Look at verse 24. “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 have loved me before the creation of the world.” Jesus really wants all of us to be with him in heaven to see his glory. What a blessing it will be when we sing loudly together with millions of angels, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12) Until then, Jesus wants us to love one another and build up a loving spiritual community. For this, Jesus who is sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, is still praying for us to be one. Becoming one with the love of Christ is the most important work of God that we have been given. Complete unity itself is our most powerful message to the world.