

Pray “Together”

August 5, 2018

Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Kumfer

Our summer began with an idea. That we could come together as a church, school, singles, families, young and old, and grow the people of God. We began this because over the past few years we have experienced some division or separation. People are exceedingly busy. They don’t have time to meet and do things together. Or they haven’t been growing in their faith. People across the world are becoming more divided.

In our reading from John 17 today, Jesus prays, “My prayer is not for them alone. 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. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them 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. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” In this prayer Jesus is talking both about the disciples and those who will believe in Him.

You might think that our topic is unity today but we’ll actually be looking at prayer, and how prayer brings us together towards unity. To set that up a little bit, Anita Born, one of our members, highlights some of the benefits of prayer in her testimony for us this morning.

Anita spoke about things that can happen to us when we are separated and Jesus does the same thing in his prayer. In the prayer from John 17 there are essentially two parts. The first part is Jesus praying for the disciples. And the second is Jesus praying for all who will believe. Both groups are united in their belief in Christ. This belief changed their lives forever.

Just as it should for us. We believe in Jesus. And that belief changes things for us. It changes our behavior, our thoughts, and our attitudes. It changes how we see other people. But it also makes things a bit more dangerous.

Our belief in Jesus opens us up to attacks from others and even from the spiritual world. Jesus says, "I pray for them.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 sees what is to come. He sees the hardship that the disciples will face. He knows that they will abandon him, they will argue amongst themselves, they will face persecution and hardship. All of this will happen because they believe in Him and are still in the world. Jesus is going to be with the Father and his struggle with the world will be at an end, but the disciples, their struggle is just beginning in a way. As he closes his prayer for the disciples he says, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." Their journey will be challenging and attempts to divide them will be strong and so Jesus prays for them.

This prayer is a powerful thing. We sometimes hear the platitudes that prayer changes things, or real men pray, or the power of prayer. And they make us feel good. We like hearing that God hears and answers our prayers. We like that prayer is a powerful thing, we want to be powerful too.

But there are times when it feels as though prayer is useless. That God doesn't answer our prayers. There are times when we don't

know what to pray for or how to pray because we are so burdened and crushed by the weight of our world. What do we do then, when we don't even have the strength to pray?

Jesus saw this coming too because the second part of His prayer was a prayer for us, those who will believe. He prays that we may be one. Because being one in Christ gives us strength. And multiply that by being one church together, the effect is even greater. Together in Christ we encourage and support. Together we bless and pray for one another. Even when our prayers feel ineffective and meaningless, through Jesus' example we see how powerful they really are.

They're powerful not only for us who believe now, but for all those who will believe. We don't know who they are, so we share Christ with everyone. But even as we are sharing our message about Christ to them we pray for them because the evil one is always trying to pull people away, trying to keep us isolated and alone. When that happens we are easy prey, and I don't know about you but I don't want to be easy prey.

To help us avoid being prey I think it's helpful to learn how to pray. This wheel comes from a book called *The Hour that Changes the World*. The idea is that we pray for one hour giving 5 minutes to each section. Many of them are familiar to you but I want to review them together.

Praise and worship is how we begin and give God the praise that he deserves. Waiting on the Lord is a time of silence to surrender to God. Confession is the blessed opportunity we have because of Christ's sacrifice. Praying Scripture connects us to the saints who have gone before and the struggles that still afflict us. Watching is looking at your life and seeing where you may be being attacked. Intercession is prayer offered on behalf of another. Petitions are our requests to God. Thanksgiving is pretty straight forward. Song gives us a chance to sing God's praises or worship him through music. Meditation is the silent inner processing of the spiritual matter. Listening is to mentally absorb divine instructions from God concerning specific matters. We end with praise as a way to

complete the circle remembering it is God who deserves all the praise. Praying in this way grows in us the dependence on Christ and His provision for us. I pray that you use this guide to grow your own prayer life.

I want to close with the end of Jesus' prayer today. He says, "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 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." Christ being in us gives us strength. It is a strength that comes from Jesus and the work of faith He is doing in us. We also have the support and love that comes from our community. Together in Christ. The prayers we offer both for ourselves and others are powerful ways that we come together and grow as God's people. Let's pray.