

May 28, 2006

"Jesus Prays for His Disciples and Us"

God wants us to complete the tasks He has given us to do in unity and harmony with fellow Christians.

Key Verse: John 17:11 (NIV)

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.

Bible Passage: John 17:1-23 (NIV)

Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ... I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ... I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ... 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. ... 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. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Lesson Thought

We glorify God by accomplishing the tasks he has given us to do in this life, but we do not do this in a vacuum. Rather, we do it as part of the church, which the Bible calls the body of Christ. It is not my job to simply run as fast or work as hard as I possibly can in my church ministries. Rather, it is my job to work in unison and harmony with other Christians. This is especially difficult for those whom He has gifted with loads of talent and drive. Such people often go around busily driving their steamroller. When they pause long enough to look around, they are surprised and exclaim, "Wow! Where did all these flat people come from?" When we

steamroll over people in our church ministries, we do not glorify Jesus. Rather, we are poor ambassadors for Him and provide opportunity for the world to deride not only us, but also the one that we represent, Jesus himself. Little gives Satan more joy than to see Christians fighting and working at cross-purposes with one another. Satan is like a roaring lion looking to devour whomever he can. When we allow our egos and ambitions to take over and cause dissension in the church, it is as if Satan were "devouring" the body of Christ. Jesus won the victory over Satan on the cross. Let us not give Satan an opportunity to gain the upper hand over us. Let us ask our heavenly Father to protect us from Satan and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to do all things in unity with fellow Christians.

Application: what does this lesson say to us today?

1) Are you running at your own pace, or are you in step with your family and church? What can you do to strengthen the unity of the body of Christ in your family and church?

2) What are the opportunities for you to use your talents within the body of Christ here at Bethlehem Church? How will you get "plugged in"? Identify one ministry in which you are currently using your talents. If you are not involved in a ministry, identify one in which you could use your talents. Step out, and get involved today!

3) Have you "steamrolled" over anyone, whether in your church, work place, or home? Has anyone "steamrolled" over you? If so, is there someone that you need to ask forgiveness of or need to forgive? If there is, do so today!

Family Activities: putting the lesson into action

Have everyone plug their ears, turn away from everyone else, and sing a different hymn or worship chorus. Then have everyone sing the same hymn or worship song in unison. Each person should take a turn listening to both singing times. Discuss the differences between the two. Discuss which time sounded better and why. If you have a recording device, record each singing time. Play back the result for everyone to hear.

Suggestions for further study

John 17:1-23

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Colossians 3:12-17

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