

May 12, 2013

“As Long As It Takes”

John 17:20-26

20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. **21** I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.

23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. **24** Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. **26** I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

At the end of the age when all the believers were standing in line waiting to get into heaven, God appeared and said, "I want all the men to form two lines.

One line will be for the men who were the true heads of their households.

The other will be for the men who were dominated by their wives."

God continued, "I want all the women to come with me while the men report to St. Peter."

The women left and the men formed two lines...

The line of men who were dominated by their wives was seemingly unending.

The line of men who were the true head of their household had one man in it.

Peter said to the first line, "You men ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

God appointed you to be the heads of your households and you were disobedient and have not fulfilled your purpose.

Of all of you, there is only one man who obeyed God. Learn from him."

Then Peter turned to the lone man and asked, "How did you come to be in this line?"

The man replied, "My wife told me to stand here."

This week I sent an email out and asked you to respond to this question: **“What is worth waiting for?”** Here are the responses I received.

1. Everything !!!

Not sure if I agree with that. Is “everything” worth waiting for? What about “Black Friday?” All those people waiting on line from Thanksgiving night to the next morning, camping out waiting for a department store to open its doors for the

start of Christmas shopping season. To me that would not be worth waiting for (especially when someone was actually trampled to death a few years ago).

2. So many things of value are worth waiting for.....
The ice cream man on a hot summer day,
the first snow flake you catch on your tongue.
Running into the ocean on the first warm day of spring!
Visiting or visits of people you haven't seen for a long time.
Waiting for a new baby to be born is one of the best things!
Waiting for a loved one to except Jesus! wow now that's worth waiting for!

A few others mentioned waiting for a new baby.

3. The miracle of a baby. His timing, not always the same as ours...
4. The 10 days past my due date in order to hold that beautiful baby in my arms---it doesn't sound that long, but it is when you're 40+ weeks pregnant! (that was not written by Sue Herrmann!)
5. ... I was never close to my mom. When I became a young mother myself, I often envied other young mothers that had mothers that helped out, babysitting, etc. I wished & prayed that I too could have a mom that would like to go shopping & lunching with me! As time passed & I had to care for my mom in her later years, it dawned on me that The Lord heard & answered my prayers! I was shopping & lunching with my mom & she actually loved me! This most certainly was "worth the wait"!! I continually thank The Lord for the close relationship he gave to me with my mom in her last years!
6. In answer to your question "What is worth waiting for," plain and simple - meeting my Savior face-to-face!
7. "HEAVEN" !!!
8. I can wait as long as it takes because, you waited for me to realize (that) you are worth waiting for. No matter how many times I've back slid or, have done things not pleasing to you, you always forgive me and, that's all I need to feel.

You've given me fortitude to deal with all the travesties in my life and, not a minute more of things I cannot handle.

You've given me the best gift anyone could give a woman, beautiful, loving children as well as, vision to watch the simplest flowers grow into a garden.

You've been patient while I've grown in faith, and I'm still learning to appreciate your creations and it's children. I thank you every day for your grace and love for without it, i'd be lost.

Father of mine I wait to see you one day and, no matter how long it takes, you will always be my Lord and Savior. I stand on these words and will wait patiently, until the day you come for me. I love you.
Your Daughter.

God's people have a long history of waiting. Since the Fall, waiting has been a part of our heritage, so there must be something about it that is crucial to our spiritual lives together. Maybe there are clues within the words of Jesus' prayer as to how we are to live within the tension of the already and not yet.

I have been mentioning the last two weeks that the last time Jesus had with His disciples just before the events of His arrest, death, and resurrection, on the night we call the Last Supper, is recorded in chapters 13 -17 of John. What Jesus taught them is recorded through the end of chapter 16; and after He had said all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed. His prayer is recorded in chapter 17. Our text today is a portion of that prayer.

The problem with reading the prayer is that we don't get a true sense of how fervently Jesus was praying. Can you imagine what it was like to be there as Jesus prayed?

I knew a woman who prayed like I've not seen many pray. I have to confess that there were times she was praying with others and I would keep my eyes open and watch her as she prayed. When she prayed with others (and me) she'd take their hands in hers, close her eyes, wait a moment, I suspect to make sure she was connected to the Lord, then she'd speak to the Lord like she was talking to a friend, a friend she highly regarded. When she prayed you were aware that she really knew the God she was speaking to. Whenever I needed prayer I'd go to her. She has since gone home to heaven, but I wish sometimes she was still around to ask for prayer.

Do you know anyone who prays like that? Do you pray like that? Well, what about being with Jesus when He prayed. That must have been life changing. No wonder His followers asked Him to teach them how to pray.

In this portion of His prayer, Jesus says to the Father that He is praying (v20), "not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message." Who's He talking about, who is He including in this prayer? You and me, and other believers that you know, and all the believers who would ever exist and he was praying for those who have not yet believed in Jesus, but will, perhaps through us.

In other words it is obvious that Jesus was expecting a church – a community that would believe in Jesus Christ and His mission - to develop through the work of His disciples. Though the disciples failed Him at first, Jesus knew it was only temporary, and later the fruit of their mission would be eternal. This should give us confidence as we work for His Kingdom, and hope as we live our lives. Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus prayed for us? And He continues to intercede for us.

And what does Jesus ask the Father for on our behalf?

(v21) I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

Jesus prays three things here. It may be easier to see them in the NKJV; where each petition begins with the word “that”:

John 17:21NKJV

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.

1. That they all may be one
2. That they may be one in Us
3. That the world may believe that you sent Me

Each of these requests hinges on the other. First Jesus prays that we would be one with each other. What does this oneness look like? What is the extent of it? Jesus compares it to the oneness He and the Father have: (v21a) I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you.

How will we achieve that kind of unity? That is explained in the second petition: “that they also may be one in Us”

Christians will only remain in unity with one another as they remain in unity with the Father and the Son. Jesus described this in chapter 15 when He said,

John 15:5

“... I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

To live in unity with the Vine is to live in unity with the branches. In Him we can be fruitful; apart from Him we can do nothing. Our unity with one another, by staying in union with the Father and the Son will result in the world believing that the Father sent the Jesus to be the world's Savior. This is the third request Jesus makes: “that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

How does this unity become most visible? We have been talking about it the last two weeks. This unity becomes most visible through love, obedience, and commitment to the Father's will- exalting Jesus.

Unity through Christ Jesus should be the ongoing mission of all of those who believe. This is both what we are waiting for and what we are living into each day. We are one in Christ, yet we are continually working at it.

(vv22) "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. This unity among Christians takes place when we understand the glory of God in Christ. The glory of God in Christ is because Jesus accomplished the plan and purpose of the Father, the task of redeeming people to God by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. We share in this task when we share the message of Jesus and by sharing this task, Jesus' followers share the glory.

Jesus gave all true believers His glory by completing His mission of revealing God. Jesus' ultimate purpose was to present both the splendor and character of God (God's glory) in such a way that God would become personally real to us. We in turn, pass on what we have received to others who would also believe. Those who, in fact, received the glory would become unified by their shared relationship with Christ.

"I have given them the glory you gave me, [why] so they may be one as we are one. Jesus is further explaining this oneness in terms of mutual indwelling:

(v23) I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

He repeat this same prayer for us:

1. That we may be one with each other. Unity in the local church grows when we practice Christ's teachings. Satan doesn't want this unity, because it testifies to the reality of Christ, so we can expect resistance and attacks from the enemy. So to achieve Christian unity, we need the Holy Spirit's help and power.
2. That we may be one with God: the Father is in the Son and Son by His Spirit is in us therefore God is in us (this is what the disciples were waiting for -that we will celebrate next week- the filling of the Holy Spirit). It is this being one with God that is the basis of our oneness with each other.
3. That we would experience such perfect unity that the world will know that the Father sent Jesus

Then Jesus adds the supreme encouragement of this prayer for us today when our Savior proclaims, (Father) you love them as much as you love me. I pray you can grasp that God loves you and the extent of that love.

We have unity with each other in the church while we wait for perfect unity
We have unity with the Holy Spirit while we wait for perfect unity with God in heaven

We have God's Presence and glory yet Jesus prays...

(v24) Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

The unity Jesus prays for is full of hope. Hope for the present and hope for the future. It is comforting to know that Jesus wants us to be with Him. In the future, we will be with Christ in eternal glory and enjoy with Him the love He experienced with the Father forever. It will be worth waiting for. In the meantime Jesus wants to share with us His unity with the Father

(25-26) "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

The world failed to recognize that Jesus was the one sent by God. They failed to recognize Jesus was God's communication to them. But the disciples got it. Jesus, who knew the Father personally and intimately, revealed the Father to those who believed and will continue to do so. Finally, Jesus asked the Father to love the disciples with the same love the Father had for his Son.

Jesus asked that the Father's love would be in us and that Jesus Himself would be in us. This is the heart of God, this is the Father's desire, to have His Son in us. And because it is the Father's desire, He will make sure it is accomplished. Is His love in you? Do you have His Spirit? This is what every human being longs for. Want to know how to share the message of Christ, you can be certain that everyone you meet is empty and longing for completeness on Christ.

Jesus prayed for our unity, we have it yet we must continue to work and wait for it - "As Long As It Takes" – are you protecting and working for that unity.

Jesus prayed that we would be one with God. He wants to give us Himself. Is Jesus in you? He will continue to draw you - "As Long As It Takes" -for His desire is to be one with you.

You may have received Jesus and have the Holy Spirit, but does the Holy Spirit have all of you? We have Him yet we need more - "As Long As It Takes" – He will draw you nearer.

Jesus prayed that our unity, our love for one another, as He has loved us, and sharing the message of Salvation would bring others to Christ - "As Long As It Takes" – Don't give up sharing that message and revealing His love.

Jesus prayed that one day we would be with Him in heaven and see His glory. Until then we exalt Him for we desire His glory and His Presence now - "As Long As It Takes"

Jesus wants us to share in His unity with the Father
Jesus wants us to see His glory.

This was His fervent prayer for us, just before He gave His life for us.