

Our Mission in the World

John 17:18-26

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Introduction: As Jesus finishes this prayer for us, He reveals His mission for us in the world. It is surprisingly simple and yet almost overlooked. It is essentially the same mission that Jesus had when He came into the world. In its simplest form it is “To reveal God to men.” Jesus was able to do this because He was fully God. Any son receives his nature and essence from his father. The Son has the human nature of his human father. In the same way Jesus had the nature of God because He was the Son of God. Jesus brought God into humanity and was then able to reveal the God

1 Timothy 6:16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 6:46 ⁴⁶ "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

But how can a band of brothers like these 11 do anything that even remotely approaches what Christ did? You can be certain they were asking themselves the same question at this point. The answer is...They Can't! And because this is a prayer for subsequent generations including ours....We can't do it either. So...what are we doing in the world? What did Christ want us to do? What did He pray for us to do in the world after He left it? In short...how do mere men reveal anything about the immortal and invisible and eternal God of Creation.

Jesus prays for your life to reveal Him to men. It makes known, at the same time, the purpose of the church in the world. It saddens me that the church seldom even considers what Christ wants, let alone teach and encourage it. These then are Christ's final prayers for us....

John 17:18-26 ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they

may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

There are six things Christ asks the Father for in these verses. People often say to me..."I wish I knew what God's will is for my life." Jesus tells you right here. If you mean your vocation or your spouse that is slightly different, but if you want to know with precision the character of your earthly life then it is wound up in this prayer.

- Jesus sent us to reveal Him in the world [18-19]
- You are the witness to the next generation [20-21]
- Your Union with God is your purpose and Testimony [22-23]
- Your Destiny is eternally to be with Christ [24]
- Your union with God is characterized by love [25-26]

Jesus sent us to reveal Him in the world [18-19]

As You sent Me into the world [18a]: The Father sent Him to do something.

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

I also have sent them into the world [18b]: Now Christ sends us to do something. Our mission is the continuation of Christ's. This is why we should not spend a lot of time longing to be out of the world. We have been sent into the world by Christ Himself. Jesus is praying for all subsequent generations of believers to

John 17:19 ¹⁹ "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

For their sakes I sanctify Myself [19a]: This does NOT mean He made Himself holy. He was always sinless. He purposefully embraced and fulfilled his purpose in life. For Jesus that purpose was to redeem men. He did it by living a sinless life and dying a sinners death. He then gives both to you. I tell you this all the time in the hopes that it will one day just resonate with you. He did this on your behalf. I will show you in just a minute how God applies this to you, but for now please realize; Jesus lived for your sake.

That they themselves also may be sanctified in truth [19b]: The truth is, only God can justify us and sanctify us. By justifying us before God, He also set us apart for a purpose. Your life is sanctified already.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father sent Christ into the world for a purpose...Jesus fulfilled that purpose and now sends you into the world for a purpose. This is what sanctification means! It also means dealing with sin and becoming more Christlike, BUT it primarily means that YOU HAVE A PURPOSE FOR BEING HERE! Now....I put it to you....Would you like to know what it is? Okay....here is the first one

You are witnesses to the next generation [20-21]

John 17:20 ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word: Jesus was not praying for just the disciples. This prayer is a two edged sword. On the one hand He reveals a part of our purpose to exist and then prays for its success.

Does this mean that God expects every believer to drop their vocation, leave their homes and families and live as itinerate preachers....like the disciples. No! Are redeemed lives are tools in the hands of our Sovereign God to turn the hearts of men back to Him. He set you apart for this on the day of our Salvation. We were given a ticket into heaven, but also a testimony to the light of the world....Jesus. Now stop thinking about what you have always heard about testifying.....

You do not need special training for this task. God caused this to happen at the moment of your salvation. It is called Union with Christ. It is the way that God applies the righteous life of Jesus to you and your sins to Him. It is a spiritual union with Christ that makes you a unique people in the world. As He prays Jesus explains it to us.

Your Union with God is your purpose and testimony [21-23]

That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us [21a]: This is not outward, organizational unity. It is shared life in Christ. It is total, complete and eternal. We did not receive physical life from the same source, but we all have eternal life from the same exact source. God has created a spiritual bond that is as perfect and unbreakable as the one between Him and the Father. Paul explains practical application of Christ's prayer when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:2-4 ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

So that the world may believe that You sent Me [21b]: The bond of peace and the unity of the Spirit are uniquely of God. We are placed into both when we are united with

Christ at salvation. Christ's prayer and Paul's exhortation is that we start thinking this way about one another when you are tempted to be impatient and intolerant of one another's foibles.

This is how every believer no matter what their training, understanding or gifting, testifies that Christ came into the world to bring men back to God. To take their sins on Himself and to put His righteousness on them.

"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one [22]: Glory is "God on Display." Everything about God is glorious. Every experience of God and piece of knowledge makes Him glorious in creation. Christ prays about one specific part of who He is. He is one with the Father. What the Father does, Christ does. What the Father thinks, Christ thinks and who the Father is, Christ is.

John 10:30 ³⁰ "I and the Father are one."

John 14:9 He who has seen Me has seen the Father;

Christ has shared His glory with you. IT IS NOT YOUR PERFECT SINLESSNESS! It is your life giving union with Christ that is revealed by your union with one another. This is gloriously unique in the world. It is revealed in the bond of love and affection. Most believers consider living in love and fellowship an optional thing. BUT, God considers it part of His shared Glory. He has bestowed it on His church because it fulfills the mission for which He sent you. That the world may believe that God sent the Savior.

I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity [23a]: When a full pitcher is immersed in water then the pitcher is in the water and the water is in the pitcher. To be in Christ is to be in The Father, because Christ is in the Father. This union with God transcends human experience. Our love is conditional and our lives are finite. God's is unconditional and eternal. It stands in stark contrast to all else in the world.

NOTE: This practical application of sanctification can only happen among people who know and embrace the truth of the Word of God. Hence Jesus specific prayer...

John 17:17 ¹⁷ "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

So that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, [23b]: Christ was not just another child born in Israel. He came down from heaven. He was sent by the Father....He said...

John 6:38 ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

This is a crucial part of who Christ is. He is not just a man. He is God the Son in union with Jesus the man. This is Union that reveals God's love for mankind. Being human is not your problem. It is being a fallen, broken, sinful human.

Even as You have loved Me. [23c]: God is love. There is a perfect and undiminished love for one another within the Trinity. This is the same love God has for you. It is not diminished by your sin, weakness, lack of faith and failure. You need to understand this

truth. This is not license to sin! It is the realization that the God loves you with the same intensity as He loves His Eternal and Perfect Son....because you are part of Christ. You are now in Christ....in union with Christ. This is the pure love of God that believes seldom ever enjoy, because Satan constantly works to keep it from your mind and life because it REVEALS THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE WORLD. Jesus is talking about Union as the source of revealing God to men. This is the purpose for which you have been set apart. Satan will resist this more than preaching and teaching.

Your Destiny is eternally to be with Christ [24]

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am [24a]: Christ's specific desire is for you to spend eternity with Him. What does a shepherd need to be a shepherd? What does a groom need if he is to be a groom? What does a physician need if he is to be a physician. What does every father need if he is a father? This obvious prayer reveals the longings of Christ's heart toward you and me. He wants you. He does not just put up with you while wishing you would grow up and be good. He wants you. He petitions the Father to give you to Him for all eternity.

So that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world [24b]: Seeing the Glory of God is the greatest good any man can experience. It is what Christ prays for you. We glorify God in our life by our union with one another through Him...

John 17:22 ²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

For You loved Me before the foundation of the world [24c]: In this context GLORY is the Eternal Union...oneness of life and purpose.....that The Son has eternally shared with the Father. Christ Glory is His eternal divine Sonship. Jesus prays for us to all get to heave to see Him in His Glory.

We only get to taste His glory in this life: The Eternal Son has willingly left heaven to die for a sinner like me. The Father was driven by love to redeem you. The Son, having that same love willingly became a human so that He could die for humans. Love is not only a feeling. It is profound enough to redeem all of creation.

John 3:16-17 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Your union with God is characterized by love [25-26]

John 17:25-26 ²⁵ "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

"O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You [25a]: God cannot be known by men. Christ was God the Son who became a man. For this reason He could say..."I have known you."

These have known that You sent Me [25b]: We know that Christ came directly from the Father. Jesus was not just a man on a mission. He was the Eternal Son sent into the world as Jesus of Nazareth. The ones who belong to God do not trust in a false Christ, but worship and know the true Christ of God. It is a recurring theme of saving faith..."They have known that you sent me."

I have made Your name known to them [26a]: We did not discover Christ. We did not find Christ. We did not even come to know Christ. He made Himself and the Father known to us. I know a lot of people get up in arms by this but before you do realize this. God wanted you. He loved you. He knew you were lost. He sought you and showed Himself to you and you believed. I do not understand why this truth would offend a believer.

1 Corinthians 1:30 ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

1 Peter 1:3 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

And will make it known [26b]: A future promise. Better translated "and I will continue to make it known." This is why you can pray for and testify to anyone with expectation and hope. Only God still makes Himself known. That is how you came to know Him. Here Jesus promises to continue to do this in the future.

So that the love with which You loved Me may be in them [26c]: He loves us with the same love that the Father had for Him. This is a work of the Spirit. You need the Holy Spirit to give you Christ's love. With it you can love God with all your heart, and soul and mind and strength. Without it you are adrift in the world.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

And I in them [26d]: Jesus returns to the theme of these closing verses. Union with God through union with Christ. From this one thing...which is a gift of God and accomplished by the Holy Spirit....From this one thing comes every Christian virtue. They are the doing of God in your life ...because your life is in union with Christ's.

Colossians 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

CONCLUSION: This is why He has left us behind in the world... to complete the task of bringing the lost sheep into the shepherd's fold. It does not require special training. It requires humble willingness to depend on God. He has made Himself known to us through the truth of the Word and through the words and lives of other believers in His true church. Your testimonies were activated on the day of your salvation.

- We have been saved by Grace and not of ourselves. To this we can freely testify and it is to the praise of His Glory when we do.
- We have been placed into Union with Christ and so also to one another. Our unity in the church and our love for one another testifies to the truth of Christ's existence. *By this all men will know that we are His disciples.*

I beg you to not take this bond in Christ lightly. Jesus gave it to us to reveal His unbroken union with the Father. It is The Glory of God! Nurturing our church unity and love was so important that Jesus devoted the last six verses of His last earthly prayer to it. Please...I beg you to take it very seriously. Consider how you can love one another more deeply. How you can be a part of the body and serve them more. Any act of service or kindness is welcome in any family I know. Any prayer or encouraging action is a blessed gift in any family I know. Do not think these things happen without pre-meditation. God told us to contemplate them specifically...

Hebrews 10:24 ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

The Glory of God is revealed now in your redeemed life and then hugely in your loving union in the body of Christ. It will reach its climax.....

Colossians 3:4-17 ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed!..... then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- ¹¹ *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. ¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of **unity**. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.