



HIGHLIGHT: John 17:20-26

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²⁰I pray not only for these,
but also for those who believe in Me
through their message.
²¹May they all be one,
as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You.
May they also be one in Us,
so the world may believe You sent Me.
²²I have given them the glory You have given Me.
May they be one as We are one.
²³I am in them and You are in Me.
May they be made completely one,
so the world may know You have sent Me
and have loved them as You have loved Me.
²⁴Father, I desire those You have given Me
to be with Me where I am.
Then they will see My glory,
which You have given Me
because You loved Me before the world's foundation.
²⁵Righteous Father!
The world has not known You.
However, I have known You,
and these have known that You sent Me.
²⁶I made Your name known to them
and will make it known,
so the love You have loved Me with
may be in them and I may be in them.



EXPLAIN

The Altar of Incense was the last element of the Tabernacle before the veil to the Holy Place. Twice a day, after tending the wicks and oil on the holy lamps, the attending priest would burn a mixture of three rich and rare spices mixed with frankincense on the altar, producing a pleasing aroma that would fill the Holy Place just beside it.

The incense is a pleasing aroma to us, but it represents what is a pleasing aroma to God: prayer. As we study it, we remember the One who is constantly interceding on our behalf: Jesus Christ. In today's passage, we see an example of Jesus' intercession for us.

- v.20 It is amazing to consider that we 21st century believers are included in this prayer prayed by the Son of God. Because we are beneficiaries of the faithfulness of Jesus' core disciples, the words in 17:20-26 are referring directly to us. It is one of the few instances in Scripture when something was intended directly and intentionally for us, individually.
- v.21 "As you [...] are in me and I am in you" tells us what kind of unity Jesus is referring to—a unity in which the members do not lose their identity. Being unified does not mean being *uniform*. No two people, or groups of people, may look the same, but they will each be working in their own way toward the same end: so the world may believe the Gospel of Jesus.
- v.22 Follow what Jesus is saying here: the glory that the Father gave Him, He is giving to us. This glory is the very presence of God—He once dwelled in a Tabernacle, then a Temple, then in Jesus, and finally in the hearts of those who believe. It is this glory that binds us together. To be one with God is to be one with all others who call Him Father. His glory and presence makes all the difference.
- v.24 In verse 24, Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms what His will is: that we be with Him where He is so that we may see His glory. As we work together to be unified for the cause of Christ, it is Christ's desire for us that we see His majesty. Imagine what this would do to a group of believers: they band together for His sake, and get a glimpse of the kind of glory He was given by God. This will make the believers focus on Him even more, making the small things that divide them fade away as they marvel at the glory of their King.
- v.26 This verse is entirely in line with Jesus' purpose on earth. In the next chapter, Jesus tells Pilate in no uncertain terms what the reason for His coming to Earth was: "To testify to the Truth" (18:37). His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection were all parts of what His purpose was: He revealed the Father and administered the Father's plan for those who are called by His name.



A**APPLY**

1. What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. When is it easy to work together with someone? When is it difficult? When was a time you experienced or witnessed unity—different people operating together for a common goal?
3. Take a moment and consider that Jesus was praying for you in John 17:20-26. How does this make you feel? According to this passage, what did He want from those who believe in Him? How do you think that understanding God's glory helps us be unified?
4. What can make being unified with other believers difficult? If the differences are in areas like doctrine, how do we know when to put the differences aside? How does focusing on Christ help us discern the proper way to work together for the Gospel?
5. How does knowing Jesus' will for His followers—that we all be one—affect how you treat those around you? How does it inspire you to share the Gospel? How does it affect how you interact with people you might disagree with?

R**RESPOND**

- What is one relationship in your life that will benefit from Christ's prayer for you—that those who believe in Him should be one? How can you pursue unity with those around you for the sake of Christ?

