

It Is Good For Us To Be Here

Daily devotions from
THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
through the Saturday after
THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Out of the Many, One.....	3-9
Jesus Keeps His Promise—the Holy Spirit.....	10-16
The Trinity in Action.....	17-23
A Great Faith.....	24-30
Jesus Makes Everything Right	31-37
The Incarnate God Forgives Sinners.....	38-44
Knowing and Following Jesus	45-51
Following Jesus Calls for Total Commitment.....	52-58
Jesus Sends Workers Into His Harvest Field	59-65
Rejoice in Undeserved Mercy	66-72
One Thing Is Necessary	73-79
“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”.....	80-86
Be Rich Toward God.....	87-93
Daily Prayers	94-95
Seasonal and Special Prayers	96-97

The following pastors (listed alphabetically) wrote the devotions and prayers contained in this booklet: Paul Bowe, Ryan Cortright, Daniel Foelske, Andrew Frey, David Frey, Alexander Groth, Peter Hagen, Preston Heuer, Jesse Johnston, Benjamin Kempfert, Brett Krause, Lyle Luchterhand, Gregory Lyon, and Michael Schultz.

Copyright 2019 by
NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
All rights reserved.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." (John 17:20)

ONE ANSWER TO ONE PRAYER

He watched the news as he did every night, but this time he saw it through a different lens. He saw it through the lens of a dad. He and his wife had just found out that they were going to have a new baby. What blessed news! They were so excited. Then he turned on the news, and a reality struck him that he hadn't considered before: "This is the world my child is coming into."

Suddenly scared, he said a silent prayer, "Lord, protect my child from the evils of this world." It was then that another reality struck him: "I am the answer to my prayer! I am my child's earthly protector. God has sent me to care for this baby!" His prayer shifted a bit to "Lord, equip me to do my job."

I wonder if the disciples were going through a similar thought process as Jesus was praying this prayer. John chapter 17 is known as Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. It was the night before he died. He prayed for his disciples, but here at the end of his prayer, he shifted to "those who will believe in me through their message." As they

listened to Jesus' prayer, did they think to themselves, "Their message? Who's their? Oh, that's us! You mean, people will be relying on us?"

It can be a terrifying thought that someone might be relying on you, but think about it the next time you pray for your children, for future generations, for "those who will believe"; you may be the answer to your own prayers. Our Savior has put the message of forgiveness for the sins of the world into our hands. We are his ambassadors.

The soon-to-be dad felt the weight of raising a child in a world of sin and evil. But then he remembered, "This is why my child needs me to share what I know to be true. The comfort I have that cuts through the darkness of this world is Jesus Christ, the gospel for me and for my child."

As we work our way through the end of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer this week, be reminded and rejoice that you are the answer to your prayer. Thank God that he uses you!

Heavenly Father, you have placed a great and noble task in front of us to share your gospel with future generations. Give to us the courage, the patience, and the faith that we need to carry out your work for Jesus' sake. Amen.

“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.” (John 17:20,21)

ONE IN PURPOSE

“As soon as you think you understand it, you probably got it wrong.” Those words have been said about the doctrine of the Trinity. Three divine persons, each distinct yet completely united as one God in a profoundly mysterious way. As soon as you think you have it figured out, you probably got it wrong.

It is this truth of the Trinity that makes Jesus’ prayer for unity so deeply profound. “May [they] be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” This unity that Jesus describes could never be accomplished by simply “working together for the common good.” This unity goes far beyond that and cuts straight through to a unity that transcends time and matter. Only Jesus could achieve such a unity.

But how does he do it? A unity that is so complex must be accomplished by such complex means that we could never comprehend, right? Wrong. The great unifier is none other than the Word. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through

the word about Christ” (Romans 10:17). Through the Word, the Holy Spirit works faith in your heart and mine. And as that one Holy Spirit works the one faith in the one Christ through the one Word of God, he creates unity between believers in Christ.

What an amazing act of God’s grace: So many people, from so many backgrounds, with such varying life stories, are all bound together as one holy Christian church—all those who are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). And if God’s grace in unifying his holy Christian church were not enough, he gives to his church the amazing task of sharing the joy of the gospel “so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

We join the prayer of Jesus that he would keep us united around the truth—the whole truth—of Scripture so that we might boldly proclaim his gracious gospel, “that with one mind and one voice [we] may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

Dear Father in heaven, bind us to you through the power of your Word so that we may rejoice in the blessed unity that you grant to your church on earth. Amen.

"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." (John 17:22,23)

ONE IN GLORY

A Civil War Union Army officer carried a beautifully crafted sword. It was based on a French Model 1845 Infantry Officer's Sword. A meticulously crafted brass hilt had the letters US interwoven into its design. The carefully engraved blade, rarely used in actual battle but at the ready if need be, had the Latin phrase *E pluribus unum*, "Out of the many, one." Ironic, isn't it? *E Pluribus Unum* was the Latin phrase used by our founding fathers to describe the unity of this amazing new country: the United States of America. And yet the battles that this sword saw were battles over a country divided in two.

The years that followed the Civil War saw a renewed effort to bring the country back together, and one might argue that it worked for a time. The trial that our country had been through together gave us a bonding point. Everyone was affected by it. But there is far too much evidence that the lasting unity and glory that our founding fathers envisioned cannot be achieved by sinful mankind.

With that context, Jesus' talk of glory in unity might seem a little

suspicious. Consider the time of year that you are reading this devotion. The Ascension has just happened. The great unifier, Jesus Christ, has left. Did the disciples feel more unified after Jesus left? Perhaps unified in their fear. And as Jesus spoke this High Priestly Prayer, they were about to see Jesus die in the most inglorious way imaginable. There must have been no thought of unity and no thought of glory.

At the beginning of his prayer, Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (John 17:1). And how was Jesus glorified? In gruesome death. Glory? Yes. In that gruesome death, Jesus Christ displayed his great love for you and me by giving his very life so that out of the many sinners—you and me—one glorious body would arise, in which Christ is the head.

So Christ prays for our glory. On the surface, sharing in Christ's glory doesn't seem so glorious, but we know where it leads. Christ's glory takes us through the cross to the mansions of heaven. So we, who are many, are one in glory.

Lord God, we thank you for the glory that you have revealed in your Son Jesus Christ. Make us one through your Son so that we, together, might share in your eternal glory. Amen.

“Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:23)

ONE IN LOVE

When we’re united, we can accomplish more than when we’re divided. It makes sense. There are entire movements based on standing together against or for a common good.

It makes perfect sense, then, that Jesus prays for our unity so that we might stand together for the common good. In fact, the word *synod* means to “walk together.” Christian congregations walking together as a synod is a statement of unity around one common thing, working for one common goal. But what is that one common thing, and what is that one common goal?

We stand together around one common truth: Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners. Simple enough. But packed into that statement is the whole truth about who Jesus is and what he has done for us and how he does it. So all of God’s Word is truth—the truth that unifies us.

If the Word is that common unifying truth, what is the common goal that flows from that? Sharing Jesus, right? Simple enough. But so many people and churches do that in so many varying ways—helping the poor, promoting social causes,

supporting political ideologies—but, really, where is Jesus in all of that? Sadly, Jesus Christ often gets pushed to the back as the issues come to the forefront. There can be room for those kinds of causes within the life of a Christian, but is that the purpose for which Christ gave us his Word as a unifier? Hardly.

Christ unifies us for this purpose: that the “world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” The apostle Paul said it very clearly in 1 Corinthians 2:2: “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Paul’s goal and ours is centered on knowing and proclaiming the love of Christ who died for all.

For all the important causes that people stand for in our day, how vitally important it is that we, the church, rally around Jesus Christ and him crucified. It is the message of life forever through the love of Jesus Christ that separates us from all the other causes of this world. For what could be more important than eternity? May God continue to unify us around his Word, that we and the world may know his love better.

Lord God, we thank you for unifying us around the truth of God’s Word. May our unity remain strong so that the world may know that you are our loving Savior. Amen.

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” (John 17:24)

ONE HOME

The school year is about to begin, and that brand-new college freshman has grand thoughts: “Finally, I can get out of my parents’ house. Finally, I can be on my own.” Then two weeks into the school year, reality hits. “I want to go home.” That 18-year-old who spent four years longing to be away from home is now homesick.

Have you ever felt that way? There’s just something about my bed and my kitchen and my couch and my mom and dad. I can recall longing for the taste of homemade spaghetti. But our “homemade” spaghetti was hardly homemade. It was a jar of sauce with noodles. It wasn’t the food itself; it was the home that I longed for.

The Christian church longs to be home. One of the great blessings of the unity of the church is that the church stands together in the muck and mire of this world. So often we get ourselves bogged down by the world we live in, and even though we’re surrounded by so many people, we feel so alone. But we are not alone. The church stands together.

The truth is, Jesus longs for you to be home. He longs for you

to see what he has prepared for you. He longs for you to see his glory—not the glory veiled in humility but the full glory of his eternal majesty. He longs for you to stand side by side with all the saints who have gone before you as you sing with one heart and one voice, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty.” He longs for you to be out of the mess of the world that he has overcome and to take you to the place that is hardly worth comparing to any of our struggles. He longs for it. He prays for it.

And yet here we stand, united around one truth, living with one purpose on this earth, and heading to one home. So let us stand united together and heed the words of the writer to the Hebrews: “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24,25). So may we stand together, encouraging one another as we together long for our eternal home.

Come quickly, Lord. Amen.

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.” (John 17:25)

ONE IN CONFIDENCE

Have you ever heard a prayer that sounded something like this: “God, if you’re really out there, would you please . . . (fill in the blank)?” This is not so much a prayer as it is a test—a test that God would prove his existence by giving me what I want and if he doesn’t, he must not really love me.

Is it an answer to that kind of test that instills confidence in us in God’s ability to answer our prayer? Certainly not. The reality is that God will answer our prayers in his way and his time. We can ask for anything that we want, but we always leave it to God’s gracious direction to answer in a way that is appropriate for us.

But if we are leaving the answer in God’s hands, on what basis can we have any confidence that he’ll actually hear and answer for our good?

Jesus has prayed for our unity in his High Priestly Prayer. And now as he closes this amazing prayer, he appeals to God to

answer it. Did you notice how he addressed his Father in heaven? He said, “Righteous Father.” Jesus Christ knows that his Father in heaven is righteous, and he gives evidence of that righteousness. He says, “They know that you have sent me.” The very fact that God the Father sent his Son to die for sinners like us gives us all the confidence we need to know that God will answer our prayers and that he will care for us now and into eternity. He has sacrificed too much for us to leave us now.

So as Jesus concludes his prayer, he does so with confidence in the promises of God, the promises that he himself is accomplishing. It is with that same confidence that we approach our God in prayer. United under Christ, we have the one singular confidence that God will always act according to our good because that’s who he is. He is the God who fulfills his promises, above all, the promise made in the Garden of Eden to save us through his Son.

Heavenly Father, we approach your throne in prayer confidently, not because of who we are but because of who you are. Grant to each of us all the blessings that your Son prayed on our behalf. Grant us unity, faith, and boldness to carry forth your Word of Truth. Grant it to us because you are our faithful God. Amen.

"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." (John 17:26)

ONE IN CHRIST

Picture the scene. So many people. So many different people. The young. The old. But age isn't an issue here. So many different skin colors. But skin color isn't an issue here. So many different languages. But language isn't a barrier here. Why? Because in the center of this picture is a lamb. As that Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, looks out at the sea of people before his throne, he doesn't see differences; he sees his people. He sees the souls that he has won. He sees the body that he has gathered together. And that body is beautiful in its singular praise of their head: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. . . . Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:10,12).

This picture is the culmination of everything that Jesus prayed for in his High Priestly Prayer. This picture celebrates the fulfillment of Christ's work. His whole earthly life was about establishing peace between us and his Father

in heaven so that he, Jesus, might dwell in the hearts of his people. And in Revelation chapter 7, we see just a sneak peak of Jesus' answered prayer through his accomplished work.

This week, we saw Jesus praying for unity. He prayed for a unity that breaks down any man-made barriers that might exist. It's a unity that runs far deeper than any "common good" kind of external unity and cuts straight to the heart. And what do we see in those hearts? We see Christ. We see the common bond of faith centered around the truth of God's Word that culminates in the beautiful scene before the throne of God "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9).

On this side of heaven, divisions remain. False unity that ignores the truth of God's Word is prevalent. But Christ, through his Word of Truth, binds us to himself through faith so that we might be bound together now and into eternity. God grant that we, together, though we are many, might be one in Christ.

Heavenly Father, we pray also for those who will believe in Christ through our message, that we all may be one, just as you are in Christ and Christ is in you. May many more also believe that you have sent Christ for the sins of the world. Amen. (Adapted from John 17:20,21)

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” (John 15:26 NASB)

WHAT WAS ON HIS MIND IN THE HOURS BEFORE HE DIED?

Death was coming—it was coming fast—and Jesus knew it. In the coming hours, he would be betrayed, arrested, whipped, mocked, unfairly tried, unjustly condemned, and then led away to be crucified.

And that was just the physical side of things. The spiritual reason for why it all lay ahead was infinitely worse. Jesus was about to pay for the sins of all time. Separation from God’s love and blessings is what sin deserves, so that is exactly what Jesus was about to experience as he would soon give up his life on his cross. He would be enduring hell itself in the place of the world so that all who put their trust in him would never have to.

With everything about that future running through his all-knowing mind in the hours right before it would happen, I suppose it would have been only natural for Jesus to spend those hours thinking about himself.

Except, he wasn’t. Instead, he was thinking about his friends—the disciples who were with him that night. He was thinking about the confusion they would experience,

the troubles they would face, and the fears they would endure.

And so, with his thoughts fixed on them, he made them a promise. After he was gone (and not just dead but dead, then risen, then ascended!), he would send them a “Helper.” This Helper would be sent from God himself—this Helper would be God himself—“the Spirit of truth.” This Spirit would “testify about [Jesus].” His testimony would open their eyes to everything Jesus did, to why he did it, and to what it would now mean for their lives. And so, his testimony would take away their confusion, ease their troubles, and calm their fears.

Friends, it wasn’t just his first disciples who were on his mind in those hours before he died. It was all who would follow after them too. And that means you were on his mind before he died. And the Helper he promised is for you too. This Helper continues to testify about Jesus—about what he did, about why he did it, and about what it now means for you. Where is this testimony? You’re reading it right now!

O Holy Spirit, as you testify to us about Jesus in your Word, open our hearts to receive it in faith and comfort us with the truths it reveals. Amen.