



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

May 15, 2022: Fifth Sunday after Easter Unity Marches Victorious in Diversity

John 17:20-26

²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,
²¹that 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. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴“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.

²⁵“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.
²⁶I 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.”

1. One of the struggles we face is remembering to pray continually. On Maundy Thursday evening Jesus offered many prayers including what is called his “High Priestly Prayer” for all believers. For what reasons were these moments of prayer so important for Jesus? For us?

This night was fraught with the struggle of the ages. Jesus need to complete the most crucial chapters of salvation. Through Holy Week, he was constantly finding time to commune with his Father in prayer. In these moments, he was strengthened and ever more determined to do the Father's will. His prayers kept his purpose and mission in his sight. His prayers also bore us on his heart to his Father. In moments of trial and tribulation, God wants us to call on his name and he promises to deliver us. In moments of joy, he wants us to praise him and share our joy with him.

2. In the preceding sections of this chapter, Jesus prayed for himself. He prayed for his disciples. Here, he also prays for all who would believe the message. Make a list noting all the different things Jesus asks his Father on behalf of believers.
 - That all of them may be one, as he and the Father are one.
 - That they be in us, so that the world will see them and believe in Jesus.
 - That they may be brought to complete unity with each other as well as with God.
 - That the world will know that the Father loves them as much as he loved Jesus.
 - That they will be with Jesus and see his glory.
 - That Jesus and his love may be in them.
3. Try to imagine the complete unity of the Trinity from eternity. Jesus wants to share that with us and others. What is the only way that we as sinners would ever be able to share in that complete and perfect unity?

Only when Jesus' blood washes away every stain and reconciles us back to God will we be able to experience that unity. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. This is the message of reconciliation he has given to us to share with other sinners, so that they too can share in unity with God.

4. Jesus prays that we may be brought to complete unity with him, with the result that the world will then know that the Father loves the world just as much as he loves Jesus. In what ways does living in unity with God and each other show the Father's love to the world.

When people see Christians living in unity and showing love to each other, they recognize it as something special and unique. It's attractive to see people, though sinners, practicing what they preach and living together in harmony as God wants us to live. This demonstrates a kind of love to the world that is otherwise foreign.

5. Division can often stem from diversity. When people of all different backgrounds, cultures, and ways of thinking come together, their sinful natures can take over and divide them. What are the things that tempt you to be most divisive or angry, or resentful? How will you let Jesus transform those divisive tendencies into uniting ones?

I can still remember as a boy hearing grown-ups get angry and start grumbling about the...[insert political group, ethnic group, president, etc] as they were reading the newspaper or watching the news. Needless to say, I've become my father's son in many ways and those same kinds of things get me upset and make me grumble foolish things. Right now, the abortion issue is at a fever pitch in our nation. There may be times where our anger is a proper response to injustice, but we need to let God's Word instruct us on constructive ways to address those injustices.

6. The true unity that Jesus is interested in does not come from glossing over differences, but from addressing them in truth and in love. Both need to remain in balance. Which do you think WELS Lutherans have typically focused on more as they deal with people- truth or love?

Truth and love go together like wings on a plane. In many instances, WELS Lutherans who have been raised to know our doctrines well are good at standing for the truth, but struggle at doing it in love. For this reason, many view us as judgmental and condemning. I'm not advising that we look the other way about sin, but we can always find ways of balancing love with the truth that we share. It may even be that leading with love and showing an abundance of love will offer a better opportunity for sharing the truth. Sometimes the truth shared without love shown can send people running the opposite direction.