

UNITED AT ST. ANDREW

What Is Genuine Unity?

TEXT: John 17

INTRODUCTION: What a wonderful time being together, worshipping together, this has already been this morning. I know that you have missed us all being in the same room together and lifting up the name of Jesus.

But I also want to remind you that just being together is not unity. You can tie two cats together and throw them over a clothes line. You may have union but not unity.

Jesus desires that we should have unity. He prayed for our unity in John chapter 17. Let me just read you a small portion of His prayer.

John 17:20–23 NKJV

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 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.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

I hope you have already noticed that the unity Jesus desires for us is a very special type of unity. It is a genuine unity. It is the kind of unity that Jesus the Son of God has with His Father, such that Jesus said, "My Father and I are One."

Because our culture speaks much of unity, we should clearly understand what this genuine unity Jesus is talking about is.

I. OUR UNITY IS NOT A UNITY WITH THE WORLD.

- The unity movement of the world continues to grow.
- For the past fifteen years, thousands of people supported by hundreds of institutions have participated in the 11 Days of Global Unity summit, which subscribes to

- “the inherent goodness in the world and how our collective light can overcome any darkness we might face as a global family”
- And supports “leaders who are collectively capable of creating the global transformation we all would like to see”
- The call for unity in religion also continues to sound. In June of this year, the pope said, “Unity is the DNA of the Christian Community.”
- **Jesus’ call for unity was very different.**

John 17:14 NKJV I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

- It was not a call for unity with the things of the devil.

John 17:15 NKJV I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

- Nor was it a call to unity with the lost of the world.

John 17:25 NKJV O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

John 17:9 NKJV I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

- Scripture does not call for a unity with the ways of the world.

1 Cor. 6:9-11 NKJV 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

- In fact, the Word of God urges us to be separate from the evil of our culture.

Col. 2:6-8 NKJV 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

- **Our unity is not with the world or the things of the world!**

II. OUR UNITY IS WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

- There are two ways to move objects closer together:
 - By moving them directly toward one another.
 - By moving them both closer to a common point.
- **When dealing with people, some try to create unity by making people more like each other.**
 - Get rid of your differences with each other.
 - Deny your differences with each other.
 - Forget your differences with each other.
 - Ignore your differences with each other.
 - **This does not work well in a church!**
 - For while we have many important things in common,
 - We also have many distinctives, many differences with each other as well.
- **Jesus offered a much better path to unity.**
 - **The unity Jesus prayed for us to have is a unity akin to the unity between the Father and the Son.**

John 17:21 NKJV 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.

- **There is a unity of essence.**
- **There is a unity of purpose.**
- **There is a unity of mission.**
- **There is a unity of values.**
- **There is a unity of perspective.**
- Do not take that to mean that there are no distinctives between God the Son and God the Father.
 - One was sent, the other the sender.

- One was begotten, the other unbegotten.
- One was clothed in human flesh; the other never was.
- One is our Mediator; the other the One with whom mediation is needed.
- But in spite of those distinctives there is an unmistakable unity of spirit, that while it is unattainable among believers in this life, is nonetheless the goal to be sought among all of us who are truly a part of God's family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

While moving toward each other by the abandonment of our differences may please the world's perception and even please some of us, it does not achieve the desire of our Master.

- **Jesus prayed that we should not merely be one with each other, but that we should be one with Himself and with the Father.**
 - **God's way to achieve a genuine unity is to draw each of us closer to Himself.**
 - God's goal is not that we should become more like each other but that each of us should become more like Christ.
 - So, you do not need to become like me; and I do not need to become like you.
 - Each of us needs to become more like Christ.
 - As each of us becomes more like the Lord Jesus, we will have a greater unity between us.

III. THIS GENUINE UNITY IN A CHURCH ADVANCES THE GOSPEL.

John 17: 23 NKJV I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and **that the world may know that You have sent Me**, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

The unity that we enjoy at St. Andrew Baptist Church is a strong factor in our church being able to share the gospel with tens of thousands of Bay County citizens every year and to be able to take the gospel to people in Mexico, China, Indonesia, Africa, and Brazil.

That is not to say that our unity cannot be enhanced.

- As long as any of us need to grow more in Christlikeness, and we all do,
- So also can our unity grow.

- For as we become more like Jesus,
- We draw closer to Him and closer to other believers growing in Him as well.