

“JESUS’ LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT”

JOHN 17:1-26

VERSES 1-5. JESUS THANKS GOD THAT HE WILL SOON RETURN TO HIS FATHER.

VERSES 6-19. JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS FIRST DISCIPLES, THE ONES WE OFTEN READ AND SPEAK ABOUT...THOSE SAME ONES WHO WILL NOT ALWAYS ACT AS WE IMAGINE THEY SHOULD. YET THESE ARE THE VERY ONES FOR WHOM JESUS PRAYS.

VERSE 20-26. JESUS PRAYS FOR THE PEOPLE WHO READ JOHN’S GOSPEL. THE PEOPLE WHO SEEK TO FOLLOW JESUS AT LEAST THREE GENERATIONS OR MORE AFTER JESUS’ DEATH AND RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

VERSES 20-26. WHO MIGHT SUCH PEOPLE BE?

US. WE ARE THOSE FOR WHOM JESUS PRAYS.

VERSES 20-26 ARE JESUS’ PRAYER FOR US.

LET’S READ IT...READ TEXT JOHN 17:20-26.

WHAT A MAGNIFICENT PRAYER.

I NOW READ A SERIES OF FIVE STATEMENTS BASED ON THE SCRIPTURE WE JUST READ.

AS I READ EACH, I INVITE YOU TO LISTEN AND TELL ME WHICH OF THESE FIVE IS NOT WHAT THE BIBLE SAID.

1. VERSES 20-21. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD LIVE IN UNITY WITH EACH OTHER.

2. VERSE 22. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD WEAR THE GLORY OF GOD.

3. VERSES 22-23. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD KNOW GOD LOVES US AS MUCH AS HE LOVES JESUS.

4. VERSE 24. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD ONE DAY JOIN JESUS IN HEAVEN.

5. VERSES 25-26. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD KNOW GOD'S NAME AND THAT WE WOULD KNOW GOD'S LOVE FOR US PERSONALLY.

DID YOU HEAR WHICH OF THOSE FIVE IS NOT WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAID?

I AM ASKING THIS BECAUSE IN THE YEARS I HAVE BEEN AN ORDAINED UNITED METHODIST CLERGY, I HAVE PREACHED ON THIS TEXT FROM JOHN 17 SOME 12 TIMES AS A PASTOR, PREACHER, AND MINISTER.

12 TIMES. IT WAS JUST THIS PAST WEEK I FOUND WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAID FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THOSE 12 SERMONS.

MAY I READ THESE FIVE STATEMENTS AGAIN AND PERHAPS HELP YOU HEAR THE ONE THAT IS NOT BIBLICAL, AT LEAST IN JOHN 17?

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1. VERSES 20-21. JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT WE WHO ARE CALLED CHRISTIAN WOULD LIVE IN UNITY WITH EACH OTHER.

CORRECTOMUNDO. IT IS THE FIRST STATEMENT. IT IS THE ONE BASED ON JOHN 17:20-21 THAT IS ALMOST WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

BUT ALMOST IS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR SCRIPTURE.

IT SOUNDS RELIGIOUS, DOESN'T IT?

A PRAYER FROM JESUS THAT WE MIGHT ALL BE ONE, THAT WE MIGHT ALL BE BROUGHT TO COMPLETE UNITY.

BUT WE KNOW THAT HAS NOT YET HAPPENED.

HOW MANY DENOMINATIONS ARE THERE IN CHRISTIANITY?

OK, HOW MANY DIFFERENT FLAVORS OF JESUS ARE THERE IN JACKSON COUNTY?

OK, HOW MANY CONGREGATIONS DO YOU KNOW WHOSE MEMBERS HAVE SPLIT AT LEAST ONCE?

MY DAD AND I USED TO LEAVE WINDER TO GO FISHING AT A BRAND NEW LAKE THAT WAS BEING FORMED BEHIND A HUGE DAME NEAR CUMMING, GEORGIA.

THE LAKE WAS NAMED AFTER A GREAT POET LAUREATE OF GEORGIA, ONE SYDNEY LANIER.

HAVE YOU BEEN TO LAKE LANIER?

THE WAY WE OFTEN TRAVELED WAS TO GO TO GAINESVILLE TO A GAS STATION, GENERAL STORE, AND FISH BAIT PLACE AND THERE STOCK UP FOR THE DAY.

ONCE WE LEFT GAINESVILLE, WE TRAVELLED UP THE CLEVELAND HIGHWAY.

AND THERE ON THE LEFT IN A CURVE WAS THE SIGN THAT READ: DEWBERRY CHURCH.

NOTING UNUSUAL ABOUT A CHURCH NAMED FOR A FOUNDING FAMILY. PLENTY OF DEWBERRY'S AROUND GAINESVILLE.

I HAD NOT BEEN ON THAT CURVE IN THAT HIGHWAY IN YEARS WHEN I BY CHANCE I TRAVELLED THAT WAY AGAIN.

NOW ENTERING THE CURVE WAS THAT SAME CHURCH BUILDING. BUT THE SIGN NOW READ: DEWBERRY CHURCH NUMBER ONE.

I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, HMMMM.

THEN FURTHER AROUND THAT CURVE I SPOTTED A SECOND CHURCH, A NEWER BUILDING THAN HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE. THE SIGN READ: DEWBERRY CHURCH NUMBER TWO.

I YELLED OUT: THERE'S GOTTA BE A STORY THERE.

WE ALL KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT CHURCH UN-UNITY OR CHURCH DISUNITY OR CHURCH DIS-FUNCTION, DON'T WE?

MAY I TELL YOU WHAT I BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS ACTUALLY PRAYING?

WHAT JESUS PRAYED WAS THAT BELIEVERS, LIKE US, THAT BELIEVERS BE ONE WITH JESUS, HIMSELF.

...THAT BELIEVERS BE UNITED TO JESUS HIMSELF AND TO THE FATHER GOD.

THIS PRAYER IS NOT ABOUT DENOMINATIONS OR CONGREGATIONS OR CHURCHES

IN FACT JESUS' PRAYER IS NOT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE IN CHURCH WITH OURSELVES OR WITH ONE ANOTHER.

HOW MANY OF US HAVE EVER BEEN HURT BY SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH?

IF THE HUMIDITY IS RIGHT, I STILL POUT AND SULK ABOUT IT?

HOW MANY OF US HAVE BEEN IGNORED OR TREATED AS IF YOU ARE INVISIBLE BY SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH?

WHEN GASOLINE PRICES GO UP AT LEAST FIVE CENTS, I STILL FAN THE FLAME OF THAT MISTREATMENT EVERY NOW AND THEN?

HOW MANY OF US HAVE EVER WISHED SOMEONE ELSE OR EVEN THEIR FAMILY WOULD LEAVE THE CHURCH?

SO THE CHURCH WOULD BE MORE LIKE ME WOULD HAVE IT WITH PEOPLE MOSTLY LIKE MYSELF?

SOMETIMES WHEN THE MOON IS RIGHT I STILL WOULD HELP THEM PACK?

HOW MANY OF US BOYCOTT THINGS, LIKE CHURCH ACTIVITIES OR CERTAIN BUDGET ITEMS OR MEETINGS?

IN MONTHS THAT CONTAIN AN R, I TRY TO GET OTHERS TO DO THE SAME?

DO YOU SEE THE PROBLEM? IF JESUS WAS PRAYING FOR THIS STUFF TO BE HEALED OR DONE WITH OR OVER, IT HAS NOT CHANGED A THING.

JESUS SAID THE POOR WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU. HE JUST MEANT THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN THIS WORLD THAT ARE WHAT THEY ARE.

HE ALSO SAID WE ARE TO FEED THE HUNGRY, CARE FOR THE WIDOW AND THE ORPHAN, CLOTHE THE NAKED, VISIT THE SICK AND PRISONERS, AND GENERALLY DO WHAT WE CAN TO SERVE AND TO LOVE OTHERS.

BUT WE WILL NEVER SOLVE THE HUMAN DILEMMAS BY JOINING ANOTHER CHURCH, OR BY NEVER GOING TO CHURCH AGAIN, BY THROWING MONEY AT THEM OR SPONSORING SOME NEW LEGISLATION OR VOTING SOMEONE IN OR OUT OF OFFICE OR...

ARE YOU WITH ME CHURCH?

JESUS SAID DO ALL YOU CAN TO HEAL THE BROKEN AND WHEN JESUS COMES BACK ONE DAY ALL WILL BE HEALED!

MAY I GIVE YOU THE SIMPLE AND QUICK SERMON POINT?

MOST PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH ARE BECAUSE WE ARE NOT UNITED WITH JESUS AND GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

IF WE WERE UNITED TO JESUS AND GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, MOST OF OUR PROBLEMS WOULD NOT BE SO IMPORTANT. THEY WOULD STILL BE IMPORTANT, BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE THE MAIN THING.

YOU SEE, WE ARE TO BE THE CHURCH WHETHER THERE ARE PROBLEMS BETWEEN US OR NOT.

AGAIN...

WILL YOU ALLOW ME A TOTALLY SIMPLISTIC WAY OF SHOWING THIS?

SOME OF YOU MAY BE INTELLECTUALLY OFFENDED. I ASK YOUR FORGIVENESS.

THE CROSS HERE IS JESUS.

SOMEONE FROM THERE AND THERE AND THERE STAND UP AND BEGIN TO COME NEAR TO JESUS.

WHAT BEGINS TO HAPPEN TO THESE VERY DISTINCT INDIVIDUALS AS THEY DRAW NEARER AND NEARER TO THE CROSS OF JESUS?

AFTER THEY COME, THANK YOU.

WHEN WE PROFESS OUR FAITH.

WHEN WE SAY JESUS IS MY SAVIOR.

JESUS IS MY LORD.

I WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS.

I WANT TO GROW EVERY DAY TO BE A LITTLE MORE LIKE JESUS AND A LITTLE LESS LIKE ME.

WHEN WE DO THAT WE ARE UNITED WITH JESUS AND HIS PRAYER FOR SUCH UNITY HAS BEEN ANSWERED IN OUR LIVES.

WHAT MIGHT THAT UNITY LOOK AND SOUND?

HER HUSBAND HAS LEFT AGAIN. THE CHILDREN WERE FOUR AND TWO AND A HALF. SHE GOT A TOTAL OF \$382 IN CHILD SUPPORT AND ALIMONY.

PLUS, SHE ALSO GOT ONE OF HER HUSBAND'S CHILDREN FROM A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE OF HIS.

SO THE SUPPORT WAS \$382 PER MONTH FOR HERSELF AND THREE CHILDREN.

SHE REFUSED COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL ASSISTANCE.

THERE IS A SAYING: WHEN YOU REACH THE END OF THE ROPE, TIE A GOOD KNOT AND HANG ON.

THE TROUBLE IS THAT YOUR ARMS AND HANDS GET TIRED AND BLOODY LIKE THAT.

ONE DAY SHE HAD MORE TIRED ARMS AND BLOODY HANDS THAN SHE COULD STAND.

WHERE DO YOU GO AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

SHE MADE HER WAY TO A NEARBY CHURCH BUILDING WHERE SHE HAD ATTENDED WORSHIP.

IT WAS AFTER OFFICE HOURS. NO ONE SEEMED TO BE AROUND.

INSTEAD OF BEING LOCKED UP AS SHE KNEW IT WOULD BE, THE FRONT DOOR WAS UNLOCKED.

SHE MADE HER WAY DOWN ONE AISLE TO THE ALTAR AND THERE KNELT TO PRAY.

SOME OF YOU KNOW THAT KIND OF PRAYER, DON'T YOU?

MAYBE SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN AT SUCH AN ALTAR.

MAYBE SOME OF US HAVE CAUSED SOMEONE TO GO TO SUCH AN ALTAR.

IT IS A TOUGH PLACE.

**ALONE
HEAVY BURDENED
HEART SICK
SOUL WRENCHED
FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY AND A LOT OF BOTH
END OF ROPE
KNOT UNRAVELING**

NEVERTHELESS SHE PRAYED.

**WHAT SHE PRAYED DOES NOT REALLY MATTER,
DOES IT?**

SHE Poured IT OUT.

**AND THEN SHE ROSE TO GO BACK HOME TO THAT
KNOTTED ROPEY MESS OF HER LIFE.**

**AS SHE TRAVELLED BACK UP THAT SAME AISLE,
THE VERY ONE SHE HAD WALKED DOWN WITH HER
HEAD AND HER LIFE AT HER FEET, SHE SAW
SOMETHING.**

**IT WAS A PIECE OF PAPER ON THE FLOOR RIGHT
WHERE HER FEET HAD EARLIER WALKED.**

SHE THOUGHT THAT ODD.

**SHE PICKED UP THE PAPER AND READ THE ONE
SENTENCE, JUST ONE SENTENCE WAS
ON THAT BIT OF PAPER.**

**IT READ: I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS EVEN TO THE
END OF THE WORLD.**

IT WAS SIGNED JESUS.

**LOTTA FOLKS WOULD SAY HER PRAYER WAS
ANSWERED.**

I THINK SO. YEAH I DO.

**BUT I ALSO THINK WHAT THAT PAPER CONTAINED
WAS THE ANSWER TO THE PRAYER THAT JESUS
PRAYED ON THAT TERRIBLE THURSDAY IN THE
LATE AFTERNOON.**

A PRAYER THAT IS RECORDED FOR US IN JOHN 17.