

Spence Shelton
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Intro

Good morning, my name is Spence and I am one of the pastors here at Mercy Church. Welcome! We are a new church so if its your first time, a lot of us are new. In fact I recently learned that since we launched in September of last year we've had at least one person come to our worship services for the first time every single weekend. We tell our guest services team every Sunday is somebody's first Sunday. Because it is! And it's a big deal to come here if you've never been before. I know it can be a little awkward. Just so you know our services typically last about 75 minutes. We sing, hear teaching from God's word, today we've got a celebration planned as a few people will be getting baptized today. But listen we are glad you are here. To catch you up we are spending our summer in the Gospel of John. If you have a bible with you, get it out and turn it on. Or open it. Whichever. If you don't have a physical copy of the bible, we've got one for you. On your way out you can pick it up on a table in the lobby. I get easily distracted so I like paper copy over one on my phone or something so I can focus. We'll be in John 17 today.

As you get there let me ask have any of you watched the Olympics yet? I LOVE the Olympics. For 2 weeks I get really

involved in really random sports. Especially the sports I think I could compete in, in 8 years. You know what I'm talking about? You do it. "Can't be that hard." Like I wont be ready by Tokyo, but 2024 in LA, I could make it. Table Tennis...I'm in. Watched India-Romania yesterday. Feeling good about my chances there. Badminton – really. Basically any sport you play for fun in your back yard. But there's one that fascinates me. Men's Coxed Eight Rowing. Have you seen this? We lost to Germany in London but we're back. And I think I could be on this team. Not right now. Right now I hit the rowing machine in the gym and 3 pulls later I'm dogging it and praying no one is watching. But if I shifted some weight around, and trained for 8 years, I'm the right size and build to do it. Ok I'm kidding myself but still the event is awesome. Because it rewards unity maybe more than anything else other than synchronized swimming, which I can't follow.

There are eight dudes that are basically the same body size lined up one behind the other. And then there is this tiny dude, the coxswain, out at the front of the boat shouting at these guys. So his job is to keep the 8 muscle men all completely synchronized as they perform one of the most physically grueling whole body exercises there is. And if you watch the event all 8 have to row at the exact same time, the angle of the oar has to hit the water at the exact same time, and come out at the same time. If they get off even a little bit they will slow way down, drift out of their lane, or tip over. The only way to succeed is to function in

complete unison. Listening and responding every moment to the voice of the man at the head of the boat.

As I was reading over our passage for today I couldn't help but think about a rowing team. See John 17 is a prayer. In fact it's the longest recorded prayer by Jesus we have. And in it he prays for something he's spent the whole night talking to them about. He prays for unity among his followers. He prays for them to hold high what gives them unity and he prays for success in the mission they must be unified towards. Much like a rowing team he's got a mission for these guys but their unity is mission critical. Without it they will get off course or implode all together.

So we are going to get into this prayer together and as we do, I want you to hear this burden Jesus gives to God the father. Because if it weighs so much on Jesus that he would pray about it, something we must keep coming back to is do we care about what he cares about? On that:

when Jesus, who is God, prays something, he must be praying in line with the heart of God. See all other prayers are corrupted in some way or another by either our sin or our limits. But not a prayer made by Christ. This prayer has to be perfectly in line with God's heart. So whatever he's praying for you is his hope for your life. So take stock in it! In fact, the way we are going to work through this prayer is to follow the "asks" that Jesus makes. About 5 or 6 times we'll see Jesus just ask the father for something. Those are

our take home points for you note takers. We are just covering what Jesus prays.

It's 26 verses and we'll cover as much as we can. You gotta lock in though. Cause this is rich, rich stuff. Ready?

[1] When Jesus had spoken these words (John 13-16), he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

Glorify the son – That's his first ask. "The hour" is his shorthand for the events that are about to come.

Throughout the gospel he's said the hour has not yet come, says it several times, but now...he's saying its here. And through recording this statement John reminds us again that even in the moment where he seemed most out of control, God is in control. And so Jesus prays. He prays. In praying, He submits himself to God's will. Prayer says God I surrender my way and ask you to do it your way. And he wants God's will to be done in God's hour. This is the only actual request in the first 5 verses. He's going to say it again in verse 5 as well. "Glorify the son."

Jesus Prays his death & resurrection will bring glory to God.

Glory literally means to lift up or exalt. How will his death and resurrection bring glory to God? 2 ways:

The first way: he will be glorified through the praise of redeemed sinners. What will look at first like his defeat will actually be his glory on display. Because in his death and

resurrection he will complete his purpose for being here which will result in him receiving praise.

The crucifixion & resurrection of Christ will lead to people around the world praising and “lifting high” the name of Jesus who has saved them from their sin. This is what he says in verses 2-4

[2] since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. [3] And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. [4] I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus glorified the father meaning He made the name of God lifted high on earth. How? He accomplished his purpose To give people eternal life. Not just a quick fix to their problems, not just the illusion of peace and security, not a few moments of fleeting pleasure or a few moral codes to live by. Jesus’ role was to be the savior of the world who would give people ETERNAL life. And what is eternal life?

This is one of many moments where we could get swept away in this prayer. The whole sermon could be right here. Eternal life. I told you this prayer is rich. This is one of those doors that if I open too far I’ll still be preaching at 3pm. But doesn’t look like ya’ll brought lunch so let’s be brief here.

What is eternal life? To *know* him. And be sure you understand that because the whole gospel message rests on this. Eternal life is not that you know *about* God. but that

you know him. knowing God means relating to him, trusting him, and resting in what he’s done for you.

We talked about this earlier in the series that many Christians know a bunch of sound bites about Jesus like I know a bunch of sound bites about Donald Trump. That doesn’t mean I *know* him. I don’t have a relationship of any kind with the Donald. And that’s the way many are with Jesus. Jesus is a public figure you can talk about not a person you know. Yet he says the ONLY way to have eternal life is to know Christ. That means surrendering your life to him. Jesus even warns about this very thing in Matthew 7

[21] “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ [23] And then will I declare to them, ‘I never **knew** you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

You can do all the nice things in the world, even in Jesus’ name, but never really know him. And to know him is to believe what he’s done for you. It’s to give your life to him. This is how Jesus is glorified...when someone realizes they are a sinner and then realizes Jesus, and only Jesus, can save them. They come to *know* him as their savior...that’s giving glory to Christ. That’s how this prayer for Christ to be glorified is answered. He is glorified more than anything

else on earth when a prodigal son or daughter returns home to the father.

That's my story. Raised in a church setting and was #1 in teen bible trivia. I could crush some bible drills. I knew all the facts about Jesus. But it wasn't until somebody said this to me. Do you know him? Facts are nice but have you surrendered your life to him? Is he an interesting public figure or is he your Savior? That's when I became a Christian. When I realized I needed to meet him and receive his salvation.

That's one way his death brought God glory. Because sinners who deserve death but are given new life in Christ lift high the name of Jesus. It's what happens when we sing. If you aren't a Christian, just read the words. They are all about how great Jesus is to us. Baptism...lifts high the name of Jesus. One other way his death and resurrection give God glory:

[5] And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

He's asking the father to restore him to the glory he had before the world ever came into existence. He's not asking to lose his humanity. He takes that with him into heaven. But instead seeking a return to his rightful post at the right hand of God. He's asking the father to restore the exaltation he rightfully has over the entire cosmos. **He will be glorified by returning to his heavenly throne.** The one who humbled himself to a thief's death on a cross...he is the

creator and sustainer of the universe! That is your savior. He is God! And the son is concerned with the glory of the father all the way to the end of the prayer:

[24] Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, **to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**

One day we will get to see that glory. The hope of Christians is that though now it is difficult to see the glory of Christ, though its hard sometimes to see he reigns over all things. One day though we will live in immediate proximity to Jesus... And we will be overwhelmed by his GLORY. That's why the NT writers all excited about the hope of heaven! We'll see clearly what we can only see in part now. That God rules over all, is always in control, and is working for our good.

That's his first prayer. To show off the glory of God.

Now he's going to turn from praying for his glory, to praying for what he wants to see happen to his followers.

[11] And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.**

First, "keep them" in your name. This "keep them" is a prayer that God will keep his followers faithful to the

revelation Jesus himself has given to them. The name here is more than just the label, it is everything “the name” represents. Again we could go for days on this name. But it comes down to this; there are two ways you can find security.

1. You can do it under your name by earning your way and you’ll be “kept” by your name. Your life will be judged on how much good you did.

2. The other way (And Christianity is the only one that teaches this) is that you are saved because of what God did FOR you. You are kept by *his* name. One way exalts you, the other exalts God. And Christ is praying God will keep their eyes and hearts on HIS name, not their own or any other.

Jesus prays God will keep them abiding in the gospel of their salvation!

Ok here’s why that is important...because this name, this gospel, is what will unify the church! There is this preposterous phrase at the end of this verse. “Even as we are one.” He’s praying for these believers to have unity that is in some way as closely knit as Jesus is to God the Father. But they cannot “be one” unless they are being kept as one in his name. It is the name of Jesus that unifies one believer to the next.

Jesus Prays for deep unity in the gospel!

the gospel is what unifies the church and what protects the unity of the church!

That’s why we make such a big deal about the gospel all the time around here! The salvation we have in Jesus is what unifies us to one another. Our age doesn’t, our race doesn’t, our income doesn’t, our musical preference doesn’t. Only one thing unifies the church: the gospel. Which is why that is the primary thing for us here at Mercy Church.

Everything else is secondary. Because the gospel that unites us is stronger than anything that divides us. What keeps us rowing in unison in the same direction is our constant rehearsal of the gospel over one another. Jesus is the one at the front of the boat and he’s yelling one thing: his love for us! And he’s telling us to let that be what we unite around. Let that be what pulls us together and compels us forward.

[12] While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. [13] But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, **that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.**

Blaise Pascal said there are 3 kinds of people:

- those who seek God and have found him—they are wise and happy.
- Those who seek God and have not found him—they are wise (because they know they need him) but unhappy (because they haven’t found him).
- Those who do not seek God and so have not found him—they are both unwise and unhappy. In other words, Fleeting pleasures are a fool’s errand.

I've found too many "Christians" who are chronically unhappy people. It's because They've never found the joy of Christ. Again they know about him, but the missing piece is JOY. **Jesus prays for his followers to share in his joy.**

Do you have joy? Like unshakable joy? The way too that joy is knowing God & resting in what he has done for you. We should have more joy as Christians than as, for example, panther fans. Yes, panthers unites us as a city and its fun. Football is almost here! But...that joy is not exactly unshakable is it? Von Miller and the Broncos D reminded us of that in February. Light hearted example but there are plenty of things you look to for joy. But his joy...his joy is the only one that really lasts and really satisfies the soul.

Doing ok? These next few verses are going to fly:

[14] 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. [15] I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but **that you keep them from the evil one.** [16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17] **Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

Last week I shared several stories with you of men and women who have come under attack and died for following Jesus. And they came under attack because there is in this world an enemy to the gospel. The evil one. And Jesus could have said, "keep them safe." HE DIDN'T PRAY THAT! He didn't pray keep them safe. He said I'm NOT asking you to

take them out of the world. I can't. That's not the plan. Their safety is not my biggest concern. Their love for me is my biggest concern. So I pray that you KEEP THEM...FROM THE EVIL ONE! I'm not praying you keep them away from the mouths of Lions, I'm not praying you keep their heads off the chopping blocks, I'm praying you keep them safe from the evil one. How? Verse 17. Sanctify them. That means make them holy. And do it by plunging them deeper into your word. See we said last week Jesus believed the greatest danger for the disciples was not death, it was rejecting Christ. Death lasts a moment and then they'd spend eternity with him. But if they deny Christ, they spend eternity apart from him. The enemy's target is not their blood, it is their belief. Satan's target on you is not your blood, it is your belief. His win is you shrinking back from following Jesus.

So Jesus' heartbeat isn't physical safety, it is that believers would be anchored in the word of God so much so that the enemy would not pull them away no matter what he throws at them.

Jesus prays for the word of God to keep his followers from falling away.

Is this what you pray about?

It concerns me that many Christians pray more for safe travel than we do for a closeness to God.

Listen, community group aside: I've led groups for like 15 years. And nothing bugs me more than when I say, "hey how can I pray for you?" And then somebody says, "driving

to Buffalo. Traveling Mercies.” UHG. I do not want you to die of course. “God, let Joe live.” Or “My aunt’s friend’s cat is having claw removal surgery.” So... SO WHAT!? Do I need to pray for the cats recovery? Or thank God for this? “My ankle is pretty swollen from pick-up basketball so...” So put some ice on it! Amen.

Listen, I believe God cares about every small little thing and I think he likes that you will pray about the smallest stuff with him. BUT, if that is as far as your prayers go. If you’ve got a group of Christians who want to pray for you and traveling mercies and joint pain are all you’ve got to share, You are not praying in step with Jesus. There is a spiritual war going on and you have a target on you that can only be protected by drawing closer to God himself. Here’s my point:

Our prayer lives need to be far more concerned with God making us holy than God making us safe.

We need to be praying, regularly, that we would draw closer to God himself! Nothing is more important! Gonna come back here in a second.

[18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. [19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

So I have sent them – embedded in the bible is a running theme that God saves people and then sends them out to proclaim that salvation to the rest of the world. Jesus says so right here. In the same manner that God the father

commissioned the son to leave heaven, empty himself, and become one of us, so Christ commissions us. He doesn’t say keep them from the world, but instead arms us with the gospel, the word of truth, and sends us out into the world. Tell you where I see this most often challenge our normal lives:

Parents – are you ready for the day your child says “I sense God calling me to take the gospel to some place like the middle east?” If you are praying for their safe happy American dream life, this will rock you. But if you pray like Jesus for them to be protected from the enemy and to draw closer to God through his word...a moment like that is coming. The natural outworking of a closeness to God is a desire to participate in his mission. But that mission isn’t always safe. Are you ready for them to follow Jesus into the dangerous places on earth?

Are you ready for that day mom & dad? Are you PRAYING for that day? I am. I’m 10-15 years from that day. And it scares me right now. Because I realized some time ago I was praying more for my children’s health than I was for the state of their souls. And that is not Christ’s prayer. Let’s pray our kids become so grounded and strong in the gospel they can handle anything the enemy brings at them. That’s what we are doing each weekend. Kids team, you need to be praying this for the kids you will see before you see them. That the gospel will take root just a little more this weekend. Parents you pray it too. Yes our kids will get sick sometimes & we should pray for them & if you ask us to we

will. But the bulk of our prayers should be about the real battle being waged for their souls. That's what Jesus prays for.

By the way, We are all sent. That's why we say it at the end of every service. We send you out. Because that is what Christ has done. He has sent us out. So we conclude reminding you of the heart of Christ. That you are his sent one!

[20] "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, **so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**

The love of Christians for one another has a purpose. Rowing in sync has a destination in mind. It's so the watching world will come to know Christ. Francis Schaeffer, one of the great philosophers of the 20th century, said in reflecting on this very verse "the final apologetic for the Christian faith is the love of Christians for true Christians." By that he meant the love of God must be visible. And its visible in how unified we are...in how much we love and care for one another. We should take great care to defend truth, but people will

watch how we live to see if it matches what we say. Great example of this: Ben Franklin. Founding father guy... was not a Christian himself but he was great friends with George Whitefield. One of the most well known pastors in American history. He wrote Whitefield many times and gave all kinds of money to his orphanage.

"I cannot buy this Christianity but I have tremendous respect for it. I think we ought to have churches everywhere." –Franklin

The love of God when put on display by the church is something even the harshest skeptics cannot ignore!

Jesus prays for the lost world to believe in the love of Christ through their experience with the Church

The gospel cannot stay confined to us. If you've been in church circles you've heard this a lot. The word gospel is the word "announcement" or "news." And it is only news if it is told to people who haven't heard it before! And Carl Henry is known for saying its only *good* news if it gets there in time. This is the mission God has put us on. Like that rowing team...there is a reason they are so unified. The closer they are together, the more they are in sync, the more prepared they are to win the race. Listen, I've seen this so many times and it seems like this is what Jesus is getting at here. The chief enemy of an evangelistically healthy church is disunity.

And I'm not just talking about conflict though we do need to always pray against that. I'm also talking about lack of focus & contentment with going through the church motions. We must be locked in on our purpose. To make disciples who will love God (that's v. 1-5) love each other (that's v.6-19) and love our world (that's v 20-23). When we have a unity in the gospel that is driving us together onto that mission, then we are well set up for God to work through us. And what you'll see today in baptism is evidence of that!

The gospel will not go out through a divided people. Only through a united people. I'm praying that our non-Christian friends around the city will encounter the love of Jesus through the way we interact with each other. In fact, I hope that when they finally make it to a service, what I say will just be putting words on what they've experienced with you.

This is a long rich passage. This series is all about growing closer to God. That's the "grow" idea. And in John 17 Jesus shows you what he's praying will happen in your life. It's his hope for your life. Let me summarize it with three ways to respond to Christ's prayer in John 17.

1. **Enjoy the God of the Gospel**¹

¹ The "enjoying God" idea comes from John Piper's sermon delivered at the 2006 Desiring God pastor's conference. The sermon was titled "The Supremacy of Christ and Joy in a

The ultimate goal the cross — the ultimate good of the gospel is the everlasting enjoyment of God. The glorious work of Christ in bearing our sins and removing God's wrath and providing our righteousness is aimed finally at this: *that he might bring us to God*" ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). Jesus died for us so that we might say with the psalmist, "I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" ([Psalm 43:4](#)).

And listen, enjoying God is not a means to something else. Enjoying God is the means. This is how we exalt his name and praise him.

The enjoyment of God above all else is the deepest way that God's glory is reflected back to him. The enjoyment of God terminates on God alone and is not performed as a means to anything else. It is the deepest reverberation in the heart of man of the value of God's glory. – John Piper.

We can do good works as a means to many things. We can speak good words as a means to many things. We can think good thoughts as means to many things. But we cannot enjoy God as a means to anything. We don't choose joy in God as an act for the sake of something beyond joy in God. That's not the way joy works. I don't enjoy my wife *so that* she will make me dinner. I don't enjoy playing ball with

Postmodern World". Accessed on 8.06.16 at desiringgod.org

your son *so that* he clean up his room. You don't enjoy a sunset *so that* you can become a poet. There are no *so that's* in the experience of joy. Joy is the end. So take the time to immerse yourself so much in the gospel that you begin to enjoy the God of the gospel.

2. **Go deep with the Mercy Family**

Ok this one is always scary. Because some of you aren't ready. It's your first weekend and listen, I'm not really talking to you. I want you to know this about us, but you can calm down.

Jesus prays for us to be unified. We cannot accomplish our purpose unless we are unified, and unified around the gospel. That means us getting in the trenches together. Those rowing teams...they spend hundreds of hours together practicing, hanging out, getting to know each other. They don't show up on competition day and hope for the best. You need some people to row with! Who you can jump in with & get real with. They need to know your story. And you need to let them challenge you to bring more of your life into conformity with the gospel. And you gotta do the same.

The way we do that here is through community groups. These are groups of mercy people who are all over the area. They meet in homes once a week to study the bible and they hang out with one another in the rhythms of everyday life. Like eating meals once in a while and going to the store and stuff. You need a group of people who you can throw in with! And listen we are in a spot where we need to launch

about 6 more community groups and I gotta ask you to jump in. That's scary for me because you are new. But this is how God raises up new churches. People who haven't known each other for very long both look each other in the eye and say "I'm in this with you." We have that unity in the gospel and in our mission and we go take the hill God has charted out for us.

We need to launch groups in uptown, south end, west charlotte, concord, and east charlotte. Like yesterday. And some of you need to jump in. See John or Jared after the service right down here.

3. **Pray for lost people to believe the gospel**

Listen, I could say "share the gospel." And that would be the right thing for me as a pastor to do. But honestly, you never will until you believe they need the gospel. Jesus believed it. So I want you to pray with Jesus on this one. I kid you not. If you prayed for your non-Christian neighbor, co-worker, friend, roommate, your classmate, your campus...every single day. Write some names down. Pray every day that they come to faith in Christ. Couple things will happen: you will start to care more about where they are with God. And you'll look for ways to share the gospel with them. The other thing is that you'll start to see God working in their life. I don't know why, but God seems to always show up when we get serious about praying in line with his purposes. So get serious about it. Then I believe you will find yourself sharing the heart of Jesus who longs for people to find salvation in him. And then you will begin

sharing the gospel because you MUST. Because lives are at stake.

1844: Samuel Semmelweis (pronounced *Zemmelvise*): In those days, doctors would practice surgery in the morning on cadavers, then, go straight from there to deliver babies. (Seems gross to us today, but they didn't understand germ theory, and the more blood on your apron, the more it was considered a badge of honor.)

Semmelweis, who was only 26 at the time, figured out there was some connection between working on cadavers and infant mortality, and so he made the practice of washing his hands and when he did he noticed the mother and infant mortality rate dropped dramatically.

He tried to persuade the medical world... but nobody would believe him. Accepted practice for years had been to go from one patient to another.

"He fought with such vigor he was accused of madness!"

In a famous speech to the medical society at the time he said, "While we talk, talk, talk, gentlemen, women are dying... *For God's sake, wash your hands!*"

When you finally see the connection between the lostness of your friends and their only hope in the salvation of Christ, you'll stop standing around and you'll take the gospel to them. You'll plead with them for God's sake look to Christ!

And when a whole group of people get unified around that heart...that's a group of people who can change their community. That's Mercy Church.

I can't tell you how many people have already come to me and said "1. I feel at home here. 2. I finally understand the bible here 3. I love that you guys have a mission." Listen, its time for you to jump in with us. There are so many pockets of our city that need the gospel. Let's go all in together.