

Imagine Unity

John 17: 20-26

In August 1987, Jose Arguelles predicted a harmonic convergence, a rare cosmological event. He asserted energy force of unity would emit. Though his guess was miscalculated; his adherents are not discouraged from gathering for another event. They hope to experience, “*life with no limits or separation.*” It is a pitiful attempt of unity in our fragmented world.

On Walking Together Sunday we look at Jesus’ prayer offered the night he was arrested. When we consider what Jesus could have prayed, these words become are remarkable. No one would have blamed him if he had prayed to be rescued from the pain. He might have prayed for the influence of a rag tag of Galilean fisherfolk he left behind. We might have prayed for the size, facilities, and connections of the church he had hoped to build. His prayer was dominated by a single theme—the unity of his followers then and now.



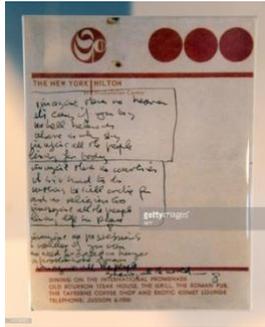
The characters he left behind: James and John, who argued about who’s the greatest. Matthew sold out to Rome for a good salary, Peter who promised to take out people like Matthew. Jesus knew they would never make impact unless something supernaturally made them one. So, he prays for their unity. Let’s look at four aspects of this supernatural unity needed to walk together.

First: **Unity is Donated.** Jesus prays, “As Father is in me and I am in you, may they also be in us (v. 21a). He requests the Father give the disciples unity. We see unity isn’t achieved; it is received the recipient. Unity can’t be fabricated; it’s generated by God’s Spirit. Engineered unity is like plots in a cemetery, lifeless. We fool ourselves, thinking if every person followed the same codes, shared the same goal, or felt the same things we would be unified. Unity is greater than these lifeless attempts.

Spiritual unity is the force field, making the Trinity one, a divine relationship depicting true oneness. it models the unity that sweeps back and forth between the Father and the Son. When we allow ourselves to be swept up in the energetic flow of Trinitarian love we fulfill Jesus prayer to be one.

Figures of speech fail to describe spiritual unity, donated to Christ’s church. A unified church is a ship caught in the trade winds. traveling along the same route. A unified church is full of crystals hanging on a chandelier catching the light of the love between the Father and the Son, then reflecting love to the

world. However, we imagine the donation of unity, we cannot treat the prayer as a second thought. This primary issue deserves our attention.



John Lennon sang, Imagine all the people. You can see a napkin that resides in Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: He sang You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one, I hope someday you'll join us And the world will be as one. Lennon imagined a day there would come a donation of unity that none of us could manufacture. Lennon makes the common mistake that unity is a human act; unity happens from above.

Second: Location of Unity: Unity and growth are connected because unity is to always be found located inside the church. This world is looking for a place of unity, drawn to it when they find it. On the flip side, nothing empties pews faster than when church people speak harshly words of cynicism and suspicion about persons inside and outside the church. Unity inside the church places a sentry on our lips, so we only say unifying words. We deafen the good news and set the stage for a church's funeral when we fail to realize spiritual unity must be located insider the church.

A church is three-ring circus with many sideshows populated by many different kinds of people. Spiritual unity that exists amidst diversity inside the church looks for the common ground rather than a battleground. Spiritual unity seeks the greatest common denominator; rather than dividing over the least common denominator.

Third: The Motivation of Spiritual Unity. In verse 23, Jesus prays for the impact unity will have on the world. He pleads, "The world may know you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Unity is not an inside benefit to be enjoyed exclusively by the church. Jesus says the primary motivation for belief in the world is a church in accord (not a car). It's through unity of those who claim they believe that others will come to believe.

It was once said, "*See how they love one another.*" Now we hear, "*See how they label, exclude, or get behind their motives of one another.*" There is not a unified theology, eloquent preacher, clearer edict, better slogan, ramped up program, or agreed upon goals will overcome our dividing ways and breed unity in the church. It's possible we've worried about everything except that which caused Jesus to say, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you*". He goes on, "*As you love one another they will know you are my disciples.*"



Scott Peck tells of a monastery in The Different Drum with five monks, all over seventy years old. The monks sought advice how to stop their demise from a nearby hermit who was a prophet. They asked, "*What can we do to save the order*"? He said, "*One of you is an apostle of God*". The monks were confused. They wondered if the abbot was the apostle. Or, was it Br. Thomas, who is filled with wisdom? Was it Br. Eldred, who was crotchety, but mostly right? Br. Philip was always there when needed. The monks began to treat each other with respect, for one was an apostle of God.

The monastery was in a forest where persons came to picnic, a few came into chapel to pray. People began to sense the respect shared by the five monks, it was strangely compelling. People came to the monastery with greater frequency, bringing friends. Eventually, some of younger men asked to join. Within a few years the monastery became a thriving order.

What if we assumed every person in this room was an apostle sent by God. People will affirm faith when they see a oneness among people that are strangely unified. We will continue to attract more people the church by walking together with each other as one. When we care for each other with love and respect, those in the world will be find PfUMC very compelling.

Last: **The Elevation Unity**. In verse 22, Jesus prays our unity might shine. He uses the word glory, which means the visible splendor. Jesus sought to shine light of God, so glimpses of splendor might unify others. He did at the wedding of Canaan and Mount of Transfiguration. Those moments of splendor galvanized his followers by elevating them, making them one.

A breath-taking sight can create a mystical unity who witnessed the same sight. We have sat in this spot captivated by the beauty of what we see. No words are spoken, but we are forever connected by this moment. In those moments we look away from each other because we are spellbound by an experience beyond us. Unity happens when our eyes get off the program and people of the church and we become transfixed by a splendor that awakens our holy imaginations. We see one another as images of God dwelling together in an indescribable world.



As we think about passing on our church to the next generation may we remember we are children of God, each one of us. Like the children in this picture, may we walk arm and arm. Try this verse: *To dwell above with the saints in above, that would be glory, To dwell below with the saints below, that is a different story.* That is our story we are telling today from persons who you walk beside. We will tell that story best into our future when we walk together in love.