

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Christ is our Advocate!

- He pleads for us before the throne of God.
- He pleads mercy and grace for us.

If, and more accurately when, we fall into sin.....

- Then the devil, not as our advocate but as our adversary, has a good case against us to accuse us before God.

Christ is our intercessor. He intervenes for us.

- When the devil accuses, Christ our Advocate, intercedes for us and points to His payment for the sins of the world.
- Christ does not intercede for those in unbelief.
- To those in unbelief, He is not an advocate but a judge.

That said....how would you like to be an observer, listening to Jesus plead our case before the throne of God?

- How would you like to be an observer, listening in on the prayers of Jesus?

Well, today we are given that opportunity!

- The Book of John, chapters 14 through 17 is called Jesus' upper room discourse.
- Here is where He spoke to the disciples in the upper room just hours before His arrest.

And within all this, John chapter 17, which includes our Gospel reading for today, is Jesus' high priestly prayer.

- The Book of John is a very valuable book in the Bible; and chapter 17 is one of the most important chapters in the Gospel of John.

It captures some of the inner self of Jesus and His speaking with God the Father.

- In verses 1-5 He prays for Himself.
- In verses 6 -19 He prays for His disciples, and I include in that, you and me.
- And then in verses 20-26 He prays for all future believers. Again, that would include you and me.

There are many, many thoughts and treasures we can get from Jesus' prayer, and I invite you to go home this week and read and study John chapter 17 as part of your personal devotions.

- But in the brief time we have for this message this morning, I would like to focus in on one verse and thought of Jesus' high priestly prayer.
- John, chapter 17, verse 11.
- "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one."

Unity.

- One of the themes of Jesus' high priestly prayer is unity.
- And that is what I would like to focus in on this morning.
- I've entitled this message, "Unity In Action."

Our entire life, our salvation story, is an account of unity, and unfortunately, disunity.

- Perhaps it is easy for you to relate to the unity and disunity.
- Perhaps, at times, even right now, you can more relate to disunity than unity.
- Some times God feels so close to you; and sometimes far away.
- Some times you seem to be walking in step with family and friends; and some times it seems distant. The same goes for the church.
- I invite you to join with me in looking at the example Jesus sets and what He has to tell us this morning in His high priestly prayer about unity.

Make no mistake, in perfect unity the Triune God created the world.

- Genesis chapter 1, verse 26, God said, "Let US make man in OUR image."

And if there is question or wonderment about Jesus' eternal existence or involvement in creation.....

- Hear the words of verse 5 in Jesus' high priestly prayer.
- "And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You BEFORE THE WORLD EXISTED."

And that creation of the world was very good.

- And we were created in perfect unity with God.

And you know what happened.

- Adam and Eve wanting to be more like God became less like God.
- And in their action, man broke the unity between God and man.

Man hid from the Lord when He came in the cool of the day.

- And the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”
- And the man said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid.”
- And Adam and Eve fell out of unity not only with God but with each other.
- Adam blamed Eve for eating the fruit.

But the Father and the Son are one and remained in unity, even though the disunity of man.

- Jesus says in the high priestly prayer today.....
- “You Father are in Me and I am in You.”
- And elsewhere in the same prayer, “You, Father, and I are one.”

But man broke the unity we had with God.

- But God desired and continues to desire unity between God and man.
- And so God had to make reconciliation, oneness, unity restored between God and man.

And that was done in the only way that could be done.

- In perfect unity, God the Father sent His Son into the world.

And Jesus spoke to this also in His high priestly prayer.

- Jesus is in the upper room and He is about to go out to be the perfect, ultimate sacrifice for our sins.
- And He says, “He is doing the will of the Father.” He is obedient to the Father.
- In verse 3 of our Gospel reading for today Jesus says, “I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do.”

And perhaps said even more clearly in John chapter 6 verse 38.

- “For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.”
- Jesus took action so that we may be in unity with the Triune God, and, with one another.

Which now brings us back to the question of unity versus disunity.

- How are we to now keep that unity that once again has been restored to us?

- Man with God and as an extension of this, man with one another.

It is not easy.

- The devil is always on that attack and when he can cause conflict and disunity, then we have separation and loss of all that God has intended for us.
- You want any organization to fail, put her members in conflict and disunity with one another. There is so much lost. The results can be disastrous. And that can be the church.

A family of four—a husband, wife, and 2 boys decided to move out west and start a cattle ranch.

- As they were establishing the ranch, they couldn't agree or compromise on a name for the ranch.
- Dad wanted Bar-J.
- Mom wanted Suzy-Q.
- The oldest son wanted Flying-W.
- And the youngest son wanted Lazy-Y.

They ended up with the name of the ranch being all 4 names joined together in succession.

- Some friends came out to visit the ranch.
- They remarked, this is nice but where are the cattle?
- The response was, none survived the branding.

So how then are we to live in unity with the Triune God and with one another?

- By looking to Jesus as the standard and the example He set for us.
- If 100 pianos are going to be tuned and be together, it does not take place by comparing each piano to the others.
- Rather, for all to be tuned together, they must all bow to another standard and be tuned to the same tuning fork.
- So as worshippers, worshipping together, we must look to Jesus.

The first thing we see in Jesus is that He was subordinate to God the Father and did the will of the Father.

- Jesus said in verse 4 of His high priestly prayer this morning.....
- “I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do.

Only hours later in the Garden of Gethsemane He would pray.....

- “Not My will but Thine be done.”

The question was asked of the late celebrated orchestra conductor, Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic orchestra.

- What is the hardest instrument to play?
- His reply.....second fiddle.
- He said, “I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm....now that’s a problem.”
- And yet, if no one plays second, we have no harmony.
- We have to live in humbleness and service to God and to one another.

And God makes Himself known and what His will for us is in His Word.

- Go back again to Jesus’ high priestly prayer and we hear this in verse 8.
- “For I have given them the words that You gave Me. And they have received them and have come to know in truth.”
- Jesus even continues on to ask for our protection.
- “Holy Father, keep them in Your name.”

And in that same upper room, He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar.

- Where He gives us His very body and blood that we can go forth in His strength as He dwells in us.
- When you partake of Holy Communion today, you will be doing so in unity with God and one another.

Jesus knows that to be in unity with God and one another is not easy.

- It is only through the Holy Spirit that Jesus sends to us that this can happen.
- And the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God.
- Next Sunday is Pentecost. The Holy Spirit will be at the center of this special festival day next week.

And in that unity with God and one another we find strength, peace, comfort, and joy.

- I have used a fair amount of illustrations in this message today.
- I would like to begin to bring this message to a close with one more.

There is a small fish called the Gold Saddle Goatfish that is native to the Hawaiian reefs.

- They have a distinctive coloring.

In the past few years divers in Hawaii have come across a fascinating phenomenon.

- During their regular dives, they've begun to notice a large fish with the same brilliant colors as the Gold Saddle Goatfish.

Upon closer inspection, the divers realized this wasn't one large fish.....

- But in fact a school of Gold Saddle Goatfish swimming together in such impressive unity and in such a perfect fish-shaped pattern as to appear like one impressively large fish not to be trifled with.
- It turns out when the Gold Saddle Goatfish feels threatened, they join together, unified in fish formation to appear much larger.
- In our walking with Christ and one another, could that not be the story for us here at Hope also?

In the upper room, Jesus allowed us to listen in on His prayer to God His and our Father.

- We learn much.
- Just as Jesus was in prayer we ought to be also.
- Just as Jesus was in the Word we ought to be also.
- Just as Jesus was in submission to the will of the Father, we ought to be also.
- And just as Jesus was in unity with the Father, we ought to be in unity with Jesus and one another.

Jesus in the upper room was our advocate and intercessor for us.

- He still does that today.
- And in that strength and unity with Him and one another, may we go forth as one and as He would have us to go.....
- Today and for all eternity.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.