

The Glorious Paradigm for Christian Unity – Part 3
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John 17
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Turn with me in your Bibles to John 17. We are continuing to look at this passage of Scripture as we continue to look at the subject of Christian unity, the oneness that God desires for His people to manifest in the Body of Christ. We've seen with this passage the great heartbeat of Jesus in the prayer that is the oneness of His people. Three times in the passage He asks His Father that 'they' speaking of His followers, that they may be one. That's His desire and that is to be our desire, that is to be our aspiration. Then He tells us about the oneness in saying that the paradigm for the oneness that He desires us to have, the pattern is the oneness in the triune God. For He says, "May they be one even as We are. I in You and You in Me. May they be in Us that they may all be one."

So the pattern is the oneness of the Trinity, and we have been looking at this in recent weeks. We've said that there are five aspects of the oneness of the triune God that are to be emulated or could be reflected in us. There is in the Godhead a mutual knowledge, we saw a couple weeks back, and mutual love. Then last Sunday we looked at the concept of mutual honor, mutual glory. Today I want us to look at the fourth of those five elements and that is mutual delight, mutual joy we might say. I think mutual delight is a better way of stating what we have revealed to us in John 17. The Father delights in the Son. The Son delights in the Father. God intends that you and I reflect that in our relationships as believers, that we are to delight in one another. Now we'll see that ultimately our delight is all in God. The reason that we delight in one another is because we can delight in the glory that we see reflected off the faces of one another. Ultimately, we're delighting in the triune God and the way that He's made us to reflect His glory.

Let's again read the entire passage. That's a treasure.

John 17:

1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You

have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 “ I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me.

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory

which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Let's pray:

Father, we ask that according to the riches of Your grace and loving kindness that You might speak to us today by Your Spirit. That You might open our veiled eyes, our darkened eyes. Lord, even in grace so much of the world in our flesh blinds our ability to see Your splendor and majesty. We pray that today that the entrance of Your Word might give light. We pray it in Jesus' Name, Amen.

One of the most horrible misrepresentations of the Gospel is a joyless Christian. The New Testament makes clear that to be a follower of Jesus Christ is to have come into joy. ***Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!*** Paul says in Philippians 4:4. Jesus prays for His disciples in this passage that His joy might be in them, the joy that He possesses might be in His people. That's what happens when we are born again, God plants His joy in us because we have Christ in us. We have the Father, Son, and Spirit inside of us. We have talked about the fact the triune God is such that where one person is the other two are there as well. So when the Spirit takes up residence in you, the Father is in you, the Son is in you. This is exactly what Jesus said when He said earlier in this Gospel that, “If you love Me and obey My commandments then my Father will love You and We will come and take up Our abode with you.” They take up their abode with us when the Spirit takes up His abode in us.

One of the things that characterizes the essence of God is that God is infinitely happy. There is no unhappiness in God. There is instead this incredible effulgence of overflowing joy that characterizes the Godhead. That is at the essence of Who He is. So that when we come to be partakers of the divine nature, when God comes to dwell in us, we should be marked by joy.

Now, let's be clear. Some of us think we have more joy than we do because we are by nature happy-go-lucky people. The reality is that we all have temperaments, personalities. Some of us tend to be more happy-go-lucky and the glass is always half full. Others are more melancholy, the glass is always half empty. So we can't judge each other by that. That's only temperament, that's the way that

circumstances, personality, whatever you want to call it, work. Because the happy-go-lucky is not the joy we're talking about here. This is talking about joy that comes from the very depth of a person's soul, welling up inside, not a Pollyanna Christianity that says, "Everything is great!" No, this is a joy that in the midst of sorrow, in the midst of the ugliness of this world, in the face of the things that should bring despair, in the face of things that are ugly and that really are dishonoring to God, yet there is a joy because God is at work. We see God, we see His hand, we see His glory, and that fills us with joy.

One of the reasons we miss out on joy, the right kind of joy, real joy, is because we are looking in all the wrong places for joy. We look to the things of this world to make us happy. The things of this world are not meant to make us happy. The good things in this world are meant to be enjoyed. Ted read earlier from Ecclesiastes, and that's a book of realism. If you read the Book of Ecclesiastes it constantly brings you back to reality. There is much that is wrong with this world. As he said, the passage we read, "It's better to be sorrowful than rejoicing." In one sense it is because of the state of the world. Don't be happy and at home in the world is the message, but be joyful in God because you are going to God. And that no matter what's happening in the world, when you're anchored in Christ, even the evil that Satan brings into your life, wait, God is sovereign over Satan. What Satan means for evil, God means for good and it's a constant correction of our minds that leads us to more and more joy.

One of the reasons we miss that joy is because we're looking to things, we're not looking to God. What we're going to see in this passage is that we will see the way that joy works in the triune God, the Father's joy in the Son, the Son's joy in the Father, a pattern for us. One of the areas that we miss as a source of God's intended fountain of joy flowing into our lives is in enjoying one another. We have not because we ask not. We miss out on the great joy that God has for us. In the same way that we are to emulate the Father and the Son in their mutual knowledge of one another, their mutual love for one another, their mutual honor for one another, we're also to emulate their mutual delight in one another in our lives, in our relationships. We see Jesus' joy in Verse 13 and some other places in the passage, but let's start there.

John 17:13 ~ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

Jesus is praying for us and He prays for us to have His joy to the full. He's praying that we will be people who are characterized by joy. He said that to them earlier,

just a couple of pages back, and the same night after He talked to them about abiding in the vine. He said in John 15:11:

John 15:11 ~ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

God intends that we have a fullness of joy in us. But that joy happens as we learn to walk in the pattern and in the wondrous joy of the Trinity.

We're going to first of all look at the mutual delight of God, the Father, and God, the Son in one another. That's our first point. The second point is to look at mutual delight among ourselves that God intends us to pattern after the delight that He has in Himself.

1) Mutual Delight in God:

What we see in this passage, and throughout the Gospel of John, and throughout the New Testament is that the Son's delight is in the Father. The Son's great joy is in the Father, and the Father's great joy is in the Son. Jonathan Edwards, the great pastor, theologian of the 18th Century said it this way:

"The infinite happiness of the Father consists in the enjoyment of His Son."

Now there are many things that God can be happy about. Everything He does He does well, but the Father, Edwards is saying, that the thing that really thrills His heart is to look at His Son, to look at the glory and beauty of His Son. That is what thrills His heart. By the same token, I think when we look carefully at the words of Jesus, the life of Jesus, what we see is that what thrills the heart of the Son is to behold the glory of His Father, to behold the majesty of His Father. It's interesting, this is really closely related to what we looked at last week. Last week we said that the Father loved to glorify the Son, to prefer the Son in honor, and the Son loved to glorify the Father. Glory and joy are closely related. Glory, we said last time, is a sense of acknowledgement of worth, the weightiness of God, the manifestation of His attributes, and the impact that it has. So that to glorify God is to recognize His worth. The Father recognizes the infinite worth of the Son, the Son recognizes the infinite worth of the Father, and we saw we need to do that with one another, recognize not infinite worth in each other, but great worth in other Christians. That was last week.

This week it's a little different because it's not the recognition of the worth, that's glory. It is the delight in the recognition of the worth. The Father doesn't just

recognize the Son, “He’s really great.” He says, “He is wonderful.” There is a complete enthusiasm, joy, and so we need to understand how this works in our relationships. We are to be characterized by delight in one another. Ultimately, in God and what He’s doing in one another.

But as Edwards said, the Father’s infinite happiness consists in the enjoyment of His Son. The Son’s infinite happiness consists in the enjoyment of His Father. We could add that the Scripture has focused us on the Father/Son relationship, but this would apply for the Father and the Spirit, and the Son and the Spirit as well. There exists in the Godhead a communion of infinite happiness where they look at one another and delight in one another’s glory.

Now let’s see how this passage gives us the window into the Father’s delight in the Son, and the Son’s delight in the Father. The Son’s joy is made full. What is Jesus’ joy? Well we have some windows into it in the passage. His joy, His great delight, is seen as He looks at His Father. This is the first point, A and B. This is actually one of those times where I don’t really like Power Point, but if we had it I’d say, “Point number 1 is the mutual delight of the Father and the Son.” Point number 2 is going to be the mutual delight of the people of God. All right? So we’re on point number 1 and we’re going to be there for a while.

1a) The Mutual Delight of the Son in the Father:

Now, while we’re looking at 1A, the mutual Delight of the Son in the Father, I’m going to say that He delights in two ways in the Father. The Son delights, first of all, in the Father’s presence. Secondly, He delights in the Father’s person and work.

a) The Son Delights in the Father’s Presence:

We see this twice in the passage as Jesus is laying His heart before the Father, He expresses His longing to be with the Father. Look with me at Verse 11:

John 17:11 ~ I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You.

John 17:13 ~ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

Jesus is delighting Himself in the fact that He’s coming to the Father, that He is about to come into the presence again of the Father unveiled. The humanity of

Christ is now to be for the first time in the presence of the Father. Whatever it means for God to become incarnate, and the distance that that has brought in some mysterious way, that distance is about to be covered. Jesus is about to come into the presence of the Father. We see that longing in Verse 5 where He said:

John 17:5 ~ Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

John 17:24 ~ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

He's thinking about what it was like before the foundation of the world, "When I was in Your presence. And I want to come back into Your presence." What thrills the heart of the Son is to be in the presence of the Father. That is His joy.

In John 1:18, the apostle John gives such wonderful windows into that love relationship of the Father and the Son. He says:

John 1:18 ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

What a precious picture that is. Jesus, the One and only, is distinct from everybody else in that He alone is in the bosom of the Father. The picture God is speaking anthropomorphically, that is in the form of man. God doesn't have hands and a literal bosom, that is to pull someone close to one's heart, to one's chest, but He's speaking anthropomorphically so we can understand that the intimacy of the Father and the Son is pictured in a father grabbing his son and holding him to himself. So at that moment there is no one else in the world, there is just this relationship. That is the Son's great delight. That is what sets Him apart. He is the One Who is in the bosom of the Father. We said earlier, "What is His joy?"

John 17:13 ~ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

The same phrase, my joy, is in John 15:11 that I mentioned earlier as well. I want us to look at that for a moment.

John 15:11 ~ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

He's telling the disciples how they can have joy. He says basically, "You can have joy the same way I get joy." When you read the passage, He's just told them, in Verses 1-11, to abide in the vine. Ten times in the passage He says the word 'abide'—remain, continue with, look toward, dwell with. It's His connection. Abide. When you look at it, what does abide mean?

John 15:10 ~ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

What Jesus is saying in this passage is that the way that we as Christians, we get saved by grace, but that we enjoy more and more communion with God through obedience. That when we are obeying Him we are abiding in Him. The true believer is someone who comes to understand over time, through the teaching of the Word, and they've lived this way. They see obedience not as satisfying a God Who is angry, they see obedience as relational. To obey is to draw near to Him. "Lord, I want to obey because I want to be with You. Not because I want You to love me, I'm not trying to earn salvation. I know that You love me and I want to be with You." So Jesus is saying, "Listen, obey My commandments, abide in My love, just as this is the way I've abode in the Father's love. I have obeyed Him."

Every act of obedience that Jesus ever made and He obeyed every single moment of every day of His life. No sins of commission, no sins of omission, He always did what pleased His Father, and every moment of it was to dwell with Him, to abide with Him because He longed to be in His presence. This is what makes sense of Jesus' words to the disciples in Samaria when they said, "Don't You want something to eat?" He said, "I have food that you don't know about." "Did anybody else give Him food? Who gave Him food?" Jesus said, "My food and my drink is to do the will of Him Who sent me. The thing that satisfies my soul above everything else is to do His will because in doing His will I'm drawing close to His face. I love nothing more than seeing the face of my Father. That is what thrills my soul."

What a relationship of love. What a relationship of joy. What a relationship of delight. We're to emulate that when we suffer. Earlier, Ted read the words from Hebrews 12:2:

Hebrews 12:2 ~ fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The cross was horrible. The cross was heinous. The cross was wickedness. The cross was something that He despised in and of itself because it was ugly. It was unjust, it was wicked, it was incredibly difficult, and yet He endured it for the joy that lay before Him. What was that joy? To be back in the presence of the Father, and to have the Father smile upon Him. So He longed for the presence of the Father. He delighted in the presence of the Father. That's the Son's delight in the Father, in His presence.

2 b) The Son Delights in the Father's Person and Work:

You see this in a couple of ways in the passage as well. First of all, in the fact that His way of addressing God is 'Father'. The most personal way that He can address the Lord is 'Father'. The word 'Father' is on the lips of Jesus 100 times in the Gospel of John, six times in the passage. When He looks at the Father He delights in His person and His work. In Verse 11 of John 17 He says, "Holy Father." He looks at the Father and He sees His holiness. He's delighting in the Father's essential character. "Father, Holy Father." He sees the beauty of God's holiness, His transcendence, His exaltedness. Holiness means 'separateness'. At its essence, it means 'separateness of being' more than 'moral separateness'. It means more of a separateness of being. He's transcendent, He's far above us. Then secondarily, yes, it means He's separate from sin. He looks at the Father and He sees His exaltedness, "Your greatness. Your majesty. Holy Father."

Then in Verse 25, twice in the passage, He gives adjectives, attributes of God. "Oh, righteous Father." The attribute of righteousness is that everything that God does conforms to the standard of Who He is. He's always consistent with Himself. He always does what is right. There is no standard above God. God is the standard, but He never does anything that does not conform to Who He is. So Jesus looking at Him says, "Oh, righteous Father." I think in the humanity of Christ in the moment, He knows in these moments that He's right before the cross. The cross is the next day. The agony of the cross, the suffering of the cross. As He stands before the cross He sees the plan of God coming together, and in His humanity He's wrestling. We're going to see in the other Gospels that tell us about His prayer in Gethsemane where the anguish of it was so great that He sweat drops of blood. No easy thing that the Son is doing. The greatest work that has ever been done, done by the Lord Jesus Christ in going to the cross, and as He stands before the cross, One Who is Himself perfect righteousness, about to become sin, about to be separated from the Father, He reminds Himself, encourages Himself in desiring the Father's presence, reflecting on the Father's person and work.

In John 1:18, there is a very important word, and that is the word ‘only begotten’. It occurs four times in this Gospel, but it’s in four pivotal passages:

John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 3:16 ~ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:18 ~ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

‘Only begotten’ in Greek is monogenes. The etymologists and the scholars have some debate over exactly what the word means. ‘Mono’ means ‘alone’. There is no debate about that. ‘Genes’ either comes from ‘gennao’ which means ‘to beget’, or it comes from ‘ginomai’, which means ‘to become’. The difference is not huge, but it’s either ‘only begotten’ as in proceeding forth from, or it is ‘only one of its kind’. The point, though, is that Jesus is completely unique. There is no one like Him. So the emphasis of one and only is how we need to see this. He is the One and only of the Father.

...and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father,...

No one has seen God but the only begotten of God. The one and only has declared Him. God gave His one and only Son. In John 3:18, He’s explaining how the Father judges the world. ***...he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*** What he’s saying is, “How could the Father not hold guilty he who rejected His only begotten, His one and only, His precious treasure?” If you reject the Father’s precious treasure, He will reject you. Anything less would be unthinkable, because Jesus is so precious to the Father. He is the one and only. He is the one who is in the bosom of the Father as well. The Father brings Jesus to Himself and delights in His presence. The Father delights in His person and work. He delights in the attributes of His Son. He delights in the things that He does.

John 5:20 ~ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

It's interesting to note there that the word used for love in John 5:20 is the word 'phileo', not 'agape'. The word phileo doesn't connote the same things that agape does. Agape means to love in an all consuming, giving sort of way, where nothing in the object calls it out. That's how God loves us. Nothing in us calls love out of God. In fact, all that is in us calls out wrath from God. He chooses to love us in spite of ourselves. Phileo is not like that. When the Father looks at the Son, He loves the Son because of what He sees in the Son. That's what John 5:20 is saying. The Father loves His Son and shows Him all things that He is doing. The word phileo means to have affection for, to hold dear, to want companionship with. So the Father looks at the Son and delights in Him. He wants to be with the Son. He delights in Him personally. I want to be in Your presence. I want to delight in who You are. And also we see the Father's delight in the Son probably most profoundly in the times where the Father speaks out of Heaven. The other three Gospels all record that at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus, a voice was heard from heaven.

Three times in Jesus' ministry we have a voice from heaven. Once in John's Gospel, where the Son prays, "Father, glorify Thy Name," and the Father says, "I have glorified it and will glorify it." That's in John 12. The other two times are at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and the transfiguration. The beginning of ministry is the baptism of Jesus. In Matthew 3:17, we read that when Jesus came up out of the waters, the Father looked at the Son, and He said, "This is My Son whom I love, with whom I am well pleased." At the transfiguration, He said the same thing, the Son's glory shining out, God unveiling the glory, the majesty. "We beheld His glory, the shekinah glory shining out of the man Christ Jesus."

After that, as Peter sees Elijah and Moses beside Jesus, Peter says, "It's good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles." He's terrified. He thinks he's going to die because you can't see God and live. So we've got to cut him some slack here. He's trying to stay alive. "It's good for us to be here. Let me make three tabernacles to recognize these three great ones: Moses, Elijah, and Jesus." The Father's rebuke comes in the form of the praise of His Son: "This is My Son, whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased. Listen to Him." It's as if He's saying, "Forget Moses. Forget Elijah. That's My Boy. Listen to Him. Moses was a great prophet. Elijah was a great prophet, but there's never been a Prophet like Jesus My Son." So the Father's delight is coming out.

I remember hearing a pastor preaching and talking about this. In those moments during the baptism and the transfiguration, it's sort of like a dad watching his son play ball, or perform in a play, or performing with a musical instrument in a symphony, and saying to someone beside him, "That's my son. I'm so proud of him." That's the heartbeat of the Father for the Son. He delights in His Son. Now this is the relationship of the Triune God. Not only seeing the worth, but delighting in it. There's to be a reflection of that in us.

2) Mutual Delight in One Another:

All of our joy is, in essence, rooted in God. The verse we read earlier, Psalm 37:4, says, "*Delight yourself in the Lord...*"

Philippians 4:4 ~ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

He is our joy. He is everything that we long for. In Genesis 1:26-27, the fact that we were made in the image of God, made to reflect the radiance of His worth, were made to see His glory, that's the wiring of every person is to see the greatness of God and to praise Him. But I think we can also see in the unfolding of the plan of redemption, that there's a sense in which God has made men and women distinct. We see that in Genesis 1:26, where we see that God made man in His image. Male and female He made them. Image means reflect, replicate. There's a sense in which male and female come together and reflect God in a way that they can't separately. That's a reasonable inference from the text.

Then we go to the New Testament and we see the giving of Spiritual gifts. What's with that? Why does God give us unique gifts? Why didn't He give us all the same gifts so that we have all the gifts we need? Why do we have to have just one or two gifts? It's because God delights in making us different and distinct to reflect His glory, and there's a sense in which every single person uniquely reflects the glory of God. Every person who is created has the opportunity as the image of God, even unbelievers, to reflect God in some way, but the born-again Christian who comes to know the living God, is the restored image of God. Now he can reflect God's glory. She can reflect God's glory. And our joy is to come to see how each one of us uniquely, distinctly reflects the glory of God. This is the root of our joy if we follow the example of the triune God. The Father delights in the glory of the Son, the Son delights in the glory of the Father. We are to delight in the way we reflect the glory of the Father, and the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Spirit. You're to delight in the way I reflect the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Think about some of the gifts from Romans 12. God gives some people the gift of administration. It's a gift of being able to see a situation and know how to handle it, and to know how to divide labor. The gift of service sees a problem and fixes it. The gift of administration mobilizes resources to fix it. The administrator is the one who says, "Jim, get a broom. Sally, get a mop. Bill, move that chair." That's a wonderful gift. We need that gift. I need that gift. We need the gift of administration around us. So why did the Lord give the gift of administration? Because God is a God who administers wonderfully. God is a God who never leaves out any details. There's never been a time in all eternity where God said, "Oops, I forgot about that. The list was there, but I left one thing off." No, it never happened. So the gift of administration reflects His glory.

The gift of service reflects His glory. The gift of service reflects His glory. Look at Jesus, the glorious Son of God, bowing down and washing His disciples' feet. The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve. Look at the servant reflecting the glory of God. The teacher. The exhorter. The comforter. The word for exhortation is the same word for comforter used in John, Chapters 14-16. It means to call alongside. The advocate. The comforter is the same as the gift of exhortation. The exhorter is someone who comes alongside someone in weakness and suffering, and calls them forward. And when they do, they're reflecting the image of Jesus, who is our first Comforter. Remember, He said when He gave the Spirit, "I will send another Comforter." The implication is, "I have been the first Comforter. I'm the first one that comes alongside. I'm the first Paraclete. Another will come" The gift of exhortation is paraklesis. So our gift calls us to see the glory of God in one another. There's a uniqueness about us. In fact, there's a verse in Revelation 2. Jesus, in talking to the church at Pergamum, encourages them. He says:

Revelation 2:17 ~ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

This is a window into one of the glorious realities of what it means to be a follower of God. One thing that I think that passage teaches is that there's going to be a sense in which there is a personal connection, a distinct and unique connection between every saint and the God who saved him. The closest example that I can give you as an analogy is nicknames that a parent calls a child. I have nicknames for my kids. I call them names that nobody else calls them, because I love them. They would be surprised if somebody else called them the names I call them. It's a

name between me and them. Even Patty doesn't use them. She has her own set. They're precious to me, but that's something we share. The Lord is saying that to those who overcome, to those who follow Christ and reach glory, He's going to give them a stone with a name which is only between you and Jesus. You will remain distinct and personal to God. There is no Eastern kind of melding into the monism. It's not that kind of oneness. It's a oneness that is distinct. It mirrors the Trinity, because the Trinity is One, and yet there are three distinct persons. In all eternity, we will be distinct persons with distinct value. In the idea of a name is the idea of character, attributes, and contribution. There's a unique way in which every single saint somehow reflects the glory of our great God in a distinct way. That's astonishing.

Part of our joy consists in recognizing the fact that the way you reflect the glory is distinct from how I reflect it. And if you think about the facets of a diamond, it's kind of like that. Each person is a different facet, and we need to learn to look at one another and delight ourselves in God in how you show Him to me. Even when someone's sinning against us, there should still be a sense of joy. We should be joyful because the Lord has brought this person into my life. This person who has offended me has been put into my life as His instrument to make me like Christ. You're a chisel right now. It's not a nice thing to say to somebody, but in your mind, you can understand it when it's happening. The Lord's helping you even through their sin. As you humble yourself and don't judge them, but love them and get the log out before you get the speck out, He's giving you the opportunity to see them grow to be like Christ. You speak the truth to them and you watch them grow over time. You love them and you see God at work in them. You see the Spirit who jealously guards His people, according to James 4, who strives in us. We're supposed to see that in one another, get close enough to one another, and delight in each other's presence enough that we see the Spirit transforming them. When we see that, our hearts are to be filled with joy. "Man, I remember what you were like two years ago." Don't necessarily say it like that. That's not the most loving way to say it. But that's what was really happening in a celebration of Charlie's going Home. That was part of what made this last year and a half so joyful, was that we watched the Spirit of God work in the man's heart. We saw the glory of the Triune God. We saw the glory of the Father in ordering the events of his life, His providential dealings with our Brother Charlie, giving him the cancer and giving Charlie the faith to see it. What's happening there is I'm seeing Jesus. I'm worshipping Him. God has made me to look at His glory and reflect it. What happened is if you look at me rightly and I'm looking at Jesus, suddenly you're looking at Jesus. You see the reflection in my face, and you look up. We're supposed to be helping each other to continually look up. We come across one

another, and whatever the circumstance, you make me look up, and I say, “Thank you,” and I wrap my arm around you. “Thank you for making me look. Isn’t He glorious?” That’s the pattern. That’s where the unity comes from. It’s not just a superficial kind of love. No, it’s joy in God that is rooted in the very love of the Triune God that comes out in us.

There are so many ways that I saw that, and you have seen that, as you’ve gotten to know Charlie. Think about the ways the Lord reflected His glory in him. I shared this already with the folks who were at the funeral, but I’m going to share it again. Spending time with him and watching him do his work and the way he went about things, he was so zealous. If he was going to start learning to do wood, he was going to learn to do wood, and he got training. He put himself around people that could help him. He humbled himself and said, “Hey, help me out,” and he went at it with a vengeance. You can see it. I was looking at the bowls and the various articles in our house the other day. We’ve got a number of them, and each one of them is treasured. I was looking at them with a whole new sense of appreciation just the other day, looking at the glory of this work. How does this happen? You have a log and it becomes this!

Patty and I took Thelma and Charlie up to the mountains one time last fall, and we were up there and had a great hamburger, and then went to a place called Mark of the Potter. We thought they’d find it interesting. It was just kind of a stop along the way. Patty likes the store. I’m like, “Well, they’ve got some fish outside that you can feed and that’s kind of interesting,” so I’d fed the fish already, and then I was inside, and my level of thought was, “Do I really want to pay \$12 for a coffee cup?” That’s where my mind was in the store. Charlie was different. He was looking at the pottery and thinking about what it takes to make something like that. I found out that’s what he was thinking about, because the guy walked in that turns and makes pottery, and Charlie talked to him for at least half an hour, asking him questions. “How do you do this?” He asked things I would never have thought to ask. But I had to stand with him. I couldn’t leave without him. At the beginning, I was a little bored, but I just kept watching and thinking, “Man, isn’t this amazing? He’s not just passing the time of day. He’s really trying to understand how you make something like that.” That challenged me.

It’s kind of like you walk through life not smelling the roses, and then somebody stops you and says, “Hey, smell this.” It’s different. Thank you. I didn’t think God had made something to smell like this. It’s just like these beautiful flowers that are left over from Friday which were given in his memory. So I was thankful just for that opportunity, and how he taught me in so many ways, that generosity, the

giving, but more than that, how he changed. He didn't like to talk to people when he first came here. He was always the first one to leave or one of the first ones to leave after church. Thelma would still be here, but he'd be in the car. And yet, it changed. As the Lord confirmed his salvation, he was worried about his salvation, but kept focusing on the Gospel. You have got to look to Christ and Christ alone. That's right, but if you're saved, your heart will change, and you will have fruit grow. And if you don't have fruit, examine yourself. We began to see fruit grow.

He told me about six months ago, sometime in the last year, "Ty, I didn't used to like to talk to people. I'm not really good at small talk, but I find myself at church just being filled with the desire to talk to people now, and they come up to me." He was just marveling at that. And as he was marveling at that, what was happening was he was saying to look at what the Spirit of God has done. And I was saying, "Look at Jesus in him." My heart was being filled with joy. It was lifting me up. Maybe I was down that day. Maybe I was discouraged. Look at what's going on in my life. I should be doing better than I'm doing. And Charlie says that, and I say, "Look at the hand of God in his life. Look at the hand of God doing this work with cancer." So many times I heard him say, "I wouldn't trade anything. God gave me the cancer and he purified my heart." That's what he said. He said, "I wouldn't trade that tumor for anything," right up til the day he went Home. Look at him giving glory to God's sovereign hand, God's wisdom, which says, "This life doesn't matter. This life is passing away. It's a vapor. It's over. What matters is eternity. Pain in this life is momentary. It's light. What matters is what's coming."

The Lord is doing that in each one of you if you love Him, if you've been born again. You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The idea is that you are a work of art in some way, and it's not the way that so many evangelicals make it all about you. It's not all about you and it's not all about me. It's all about Jesus, but the reality is there is a way in which we do reflect His glory. When are hearts our set on Him and He is our desire, then there's a sense in which His glory shines off of you in a way that it can't shine off of me, and I ought not to be jealous of that. I ought to glory in that and glorify God because He made you to reflect Him like that. And then you become a treasure to me, and this means that we start delighting in being in one another's presence. We start delighting in the person and work of one another. I just want to be with you, Christian. Sometimes I'm down and I don't feel like it, but wait, if I put my mind on right, yes, I want to be with my brother and sister, because when I can be with my brother and sister, I can see Jesus and I can help them see Jesus. Then the joy of Heaven can come and take up residence in this dark, difficult, dying world. The joy of Heaven can come and flood a room at a hospice. The joy of Heaven can come

and flood a situation where there's been sudden loss, sudden separation. The joy of Heaven can come there, because Jesus Christ is a great Savior, and our God is a great God. If we can learn to keep our eyes on Him, and keep looking for Him, then we're going to be a people who become one, more and more every day, and the world will know that the Father sent Him.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we praise and honor You. Lord Jesus, we marvel at Your majesty and Your glory. Holy Spirit, we praise and worship You. We adore You. We're so grateful that You've come to take up residence in the hearts of those who believe, that You caused us to be born again. We pray that You would help us to be people who are zealous to see the Lord, that we would continually be asking, "Lord, show me Your glory," and not being content with the vision of yesterday, but saying today, "Lord, show me Your glory." And Father, for those who are in this room who have not yet been born again, or maybe who thought they had been Christians, or like Charlie, had made a profession of faith years ago, or had been involved in the church but wrestled and realized that there wasn't a change, if they're sensing that, Lord, help them today to repent and believe. Give them grace to look to Christ, to cling only to Jesus. Give them the gift of new life. Father, our desire is that we would by our daily lives testify to how glorious and wonderful You are, that we would stop being preoccupied with the cares of the world, and stop being overwhelmed by the sorrows - we know sorrows are a part of life - but that we would be in the midst of sorrow, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, for You are making all things new. It is happening. We are moving closer inexorably, unstoppably to the day when You shall make everything right, and may we rejoice in that and be filled with Your glory because of that. May we be signposts that point others to You for their salvation. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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