That the World May Know

John 17:20-26 #50 in John Series Peter Hiett June 19, 2011

Worship song

"One Life, One Love", written by Dupri, Cox, Paul, Mariah Carey.

Is it getting better
Or do you feel the same?
Will it make it easier on you
Now you got someone to blame?

You say one love, one life When it's one need in the night One love, we get to share it Leaves you, baby, if you don't care for it

Did I disappoint you
Or leave a bad taste in your mouth?
You act like you never had love
And you want me to go without

Well, it's too late
Tonight to drag the past out
Into the light
We're one, but we're not the same.
We get to carry each other
Carry each other
One

Have you come here for forgiveness Have you come to raise the dead Have you come here to play Jesus To the lepers in your head Did I ask too much More than a lot. You gave me nothing, Now it's all I got

We're one, but were not the same We hurt each other Then we do it again

You say Love is a temple
Love is a temple, love the higher law.
You ask me to enter
But then you made me crawl
And I can't be holding on
To what you got
When all you got is hurt.

One love, one blood, one life You got to do what you should One life with each other Sisters, Brothers One life, but we're not the same We get to carry each other, carry each other One. . .

Prayer

Father, we sing about it. We all want to be the same. We all want to be different. We all want to be one. And yet, the prospect scares us because that sounds like we could hurt each other. We might have to bleed for each other. Lord Jesus, you prayed that we'd be one in John chapter 17. It's what we're looking at these three weeks and this is the middle week. Jesus, I pray that you would help us to understand just a little what you prayed. It's such an incredible prayer Lord God. There are lines in there that I could barely even dare to believe. So Lord, would you help us to believe? Maybe we'd say that in modern English as, "Would you help us to trust and surrender to what you are doing," Lord God our Father, help us to do this through Jesus Christ and the power of your Holy Spirit because you are good. Help us to preach, Amen.

Message



This is my Grandpa–Grandpa Ralph (There would often be live deer right in his living room.) I have a very high-class sort of pedigree.

It must've been about 1977. I screwed up the courage to witness to my grandpa. I was scared of Grandpa and scared *for* Grandpa because I was scared of God. I think I suspected that I loved Grandpa more than God and so needed to save Grandpa from God.

You know, we all need saving, but I figured Grandpa especially needed saving. I figured that, because he said all the words I wasn't supposed to say. Grandpa was a farmer in Nebraska and Grandpa used the theologically loaded phrase, "God-damn" more than any man I've ever known. He used it on old trucks and irrigation equipment. I have this theory that hell is full of broken irrigation equipment because my Grandpa sent it there.



Well, Grandpa was visiting and staying in my sister's room. He'd sit there smoking White Owl New Yorkers with his dentures in the front pocket of his overalls. He'd sit there for hours on the side of the bed playing solitaire. So, I rehearsed my philosophical arguments and the stuff I'd learned in books like *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

I was kind of a science and philosophy geek so truth was something you arrived at through powers of deduction. If you wanted to know a frog, you captured it and cut it up in pieces. If you wanted to know God . . . Well, it was a similar sort of procedure. I was a modern scientific theologian that dissected life and Grandpa was a farmer . . . that *grew* life. So I rehearsed my arguments, went in and sat next to grandpa. I fumbled through some casual conversation on the way to a reasoned gospel presentation.

I can't remember what exactly I said to Grandpa, but I've never forgotten what he said to me. He said, "Oh Peter, hell . . . I don't know. They all say different things. The Methodists say one damn thing, the Baptists say another damn thing, the Presbyterians say some other damn thing. They all say different things and then they fight about it." That's what he said. And I didn't know what to say to that in response. And I didn't understand what that had to do with my arguments and why it mattered. And yet, I felt like I'd been trumped – game over.

It wasn't long after that that Grandpa passed away.

Well, in John 17, Jesus prays for you me, the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and even my worldly Grandpa. And He seems to think Grandpa's objection really matters. We pick up where we left off last time.

John 17: 17-21 (ESV)

Sanctify them in the truth your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth (consecrated, it means "set apart" in truth.) I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 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.

Did you catch that? I think Jesus agrees with Grandpa. "Father make them one so the world may believe" – so Grandpa may believe. And He prayed, "consecrate them – in the truth" not with truth, but in truth. Jesus is the truth . . . the truth is God. Scripture says, "In him we live and move and have our being" so proving the existence of God is like: a fish trying to prove the existence of water or the ocean, like a bird trying to prove the existence of air or wind.

I can't catch the wind in a jar and if I do, it's not the wind.

I can't catch the wind – but the wind can catch me.

I can't contain the ocean – but the ocean can contain me.

I can't prove God – But maybe God can prove me, or us.

I mean, if there was a God, He'd be bigger than just my head, but how would Grandpa know that God wasn't just an idea in my head? See? The ocean is bigger than just one fish, the sky is bigger than just one bird, and God is bigger than just one argument in my head.

What if Grandpa saw several fish swept along in the same direction?

It might indicate a current in an ocean.

What if Grandpa saw several strange birds blown in the same direction?

That might indicate some wind.

What if Grandpa saw a bunch of strange and different people (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians) worshipping the same Lord as if caught in the same invisible wind?

Well, I'm just saying, Jesus seems to take Grandpa's objection rather seriously. He prays, "Make them (the ones you gave me out of the world – the elect) one that the world may believe."

Did you realize you are "elect" so that others would believe? Abraham was "blessed to be a blessing to all the nations of the world." We think God makes us one because others won't believe. We define ourselves as "in" by defining others as out. But God makes us one in order that others would believe and be one.

He defines us as in, in order to bring others in. Jesus prays, "Father make them one so that the world may believe."

Do you think God answers Jesus' prayer? "That the world may believe . . ." what? An argument? A list?

No! A Person. "That the world may trust that Jesus is from God."

That the world may trust the character of God and the character of Jesus.

John 17: 22-23

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. 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.

Do you know how God the Father feels about you? The same way He feels about Jesus.

John 17: 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.

Literally, the "foundation of the Cosmos," out of and before space and time. Jesus is not simply a created being. Jesus and the Father are one, yet two, or two, yet one, two persons and one substance and I think that's love. God is Love.

There is no way I could love Grandpa more than God. God didn't send Jesus so He could finally love Grandpa. God sent Jesus so Grandpa could love Him, for God had always loved Grandpa. God is Love.

John 17: 25-26

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

So, Jesus prays that we'd be one that the world might believe.

See? Unity bears witness to the thing that unifies. Diversity in unity is a well-oiled machine (rather than a pile of nuts and bolts) and it bears witness to its maker. Diversity in unity is a city, nation, or army bearing witness to a common idea. Jesus prays for unity.

And that's why we've decided to order uniforms like this...

[series of images depicting different religious vestments from different eras, denominations, and religions]

People complain, but everybody loves uniforms, everybody. Nobody is wearing lederhosen or a kilt today and that's because they're not in fashion. Fashion is a uniform. You all wear uniforms.

[image: four young men with brightly colored mohawks]

Even when we look different, we are different together. And even our differences we wear as a uniform. With uniforms, we derive our identity from a group, the collective, the crowd.

We need uniforms and rules. People complain, but I've discovered that rules are exactly what people want and leaders like to make. In Galatians 4: 17, Paul writes to the Galatians, "They (these leaders) want to exclude you, so you would be zealous for them." See? The Galatians wanted laws so they could work and judge themselves in, and judge others out—inclusion through exclusion.

We need uniforms rules and creeds. We need to dress the same act the same, and believe the same stuff. This blue notebook contains a bunch of rules and most of it is a confession—The Westminster Confession of Faith. I love the Westminster Confession. And when I joined my old denomination, I agreed to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession. But then, for unity's sake, they changed the rule and said we all had to agree with every word. But to confess that you agree is to confess that you haven't read, for the confession has been amended numerous times for three hundred fifty years. And it doesn't even agree with itself. It's many "words," not one word.

Well, you see that unity is dis-unity, for it's not a unity in truth (we are to confess one Word and the Word is a name). And unity based on rules is just an act by definition, for nobody obeys rules in their heart, or we wouldn't call them rules, but desires. And uniforms? They don't unite differences. They hide differences. Do you remember who invented the very first uniform? Adam and Eve - to hide their differences and act the same.

In October of 1917, the church suffered perhaps its greatest loss, at least in the last one hundred years. The Bolsheviks – a communist collective took over Russia – it's said that that very month, the Russian Orthodox Church was assembled in council, passionately debating "the appropriate color of the surplices in liturgical function."

Our unity cannot be an act – for an act is a lie, and a lie can't bear testimony to the truth. Unity is not just dressing the same, acting the same, or talking the same. Perhaps, it's thinking the same, or being . . . exactly – just – the same. And that's why we're all just so grateful for Frances Forgione (Frances would you stand up?) Isn't she lovely?

Frances is our "Pastor of Community Life." In the past, we've met as house churches the last weekend of each month. But in the fall, we're changing our structure and Frances will be working to assimilate you into the collective community through one of three types of Community groups. Frances doesn't know, and we actually have footage of Frances assimilating a new member and I think you'll see why she's so effective.

Clip from Star Trek

A female head and spine-the Borg Queen descends to connect to a body begins talking

Borg Queen: I am the beginning, the end, the one who is many. (The Face of Data is shown laying on a table watching the queen.)

Borg Queen: (moving towards Data) I am the Borg.

Data: I am curious. Do you control the Borg collective?

Borg Queen: You imply disparity where none exists. I am the collective. (She walks around the head of the bed as Data watches.) I bring order to chaos. By assimilating other beings into our collective, (she

leans in close to Data) we are bringing them closer to perfection.

<u>Data</u>: Somehow, I question your motives.

Robotic collective voice: We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender to our ships. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile. Resistance is futile. Resistance is futile.

Wow! That is some serious community life, or death! Actually, Frances isn't the Borg Queen, but the Anti-Borg Queen. But, have you ever felt that way at church? Like you want to belong, but you're scared that if you do belong, you will no longer exist and never exist again?

You know the Borg is a well-oiled machine. The Borg is a city, nation, and army of sorts. The Borg looks like a unity. They always say the same thing and never fight like Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. But I'm pretty sure Grandpa wouldn't want to join the Borg.

If you're cultured at all, you know that the Borg on *Star Trek* is a giant cybernetic organism that "possesses" other organisms, dissolving all individual personality and freedom into itself. Americans tend to think that everyone has this thing called free will. And they're terrified of God because they think He's the Borg, and that He'll take our freedom away. But God is not the Borg. Actually, He's the Anti-Borg. However, sometimes what people call "church" is the Borg and what John calls "the world" is definitely the Borg.

According to Scripture, we're all born into the Borg. John writes that the "entire world is under the power of the Evil One." That means people think they're free because the Borg tells them they're free, and people think they love because the Borg tells them they love, and that controlling and consuming others is love.

C. S. Lewis writes

On Earth, this desire is often called "love." In hell I feign that they recognize it as hunger. . . . There I suggest the stronger spirit . . can . . . permanently gorge its own being on the weaker's outraged individuality . . . It is for this that Satan desires all his own followers and all the sons of Eve and all the host of Heaven. His dream is of the day when all shall be inside him and all that says, "I" can say it only through him. This, I surmise, is . . . the only imitation he can understand, of that unfathomed bounty whereby God turns tools into servants and servants into sons, so that they may be at last reunited to Him in the perfect freedom of a love offered from the height of the utter individualities which he has liberated them to be.

(Let me read that last part again!)

God turns tools into servants and servants into sons, so that they may be at last reunited to Him in the perfect freedom of a love offered from the height of the utter individualities, which liberated them to be.

According to Scripture, none of us are truly individual persons and none of us are free until God in Christ makes us free. Until then, we're dead in sin, under the dominion of the Borg, trapped in an illusion of life that is really death. And so God will "sanctify you in truth," "set you apart in truth." God your Father will find a way to separate you from the Borg, from the world.

The church is often tempted by and conscripted by the Borg; especially when it relies on uniforms, writes rules, and formulates Confessions trying to control people through shame, manipulation, and fear; especially when, absolutely when, the Church thinks she is an institution of this world.

God your Father will separate you from the Borg. Jesus said it, "Aposynogogos" remember? "You will be cast out of the synagogues." God your Father will separate and consecrate you in truth in order to tell you who you are and set you free. He does that with his Word—the Truth, who is Jesus. The Borg doesn't know who you are and can't tell you who you are.

Only your Father in Heaven knows who you truly are.

Only His Word can make you who you truly are.

You must be who you truly are, a person, a unique individual, truly free

You see, there's something that you must do, that no one else can do – except you and Jesus – your Fathers' Word. And that thing is be you – the true you – unique individual and free – a person.

So God will separate you for a time,

Like He separated Joseph from his brothers.

Like He separated Moses from Israel,

Like He separated David from the kingdom,

Like He separated Jesus from humanity.

He will separate you; then He'll send you back to bless your brothers – not the Borg, but the Church. He makes you an individual and He makes me an individual, so that we can be one.

So, Jesus prays,

"I'm not asking that the world would be one" (. . . that the Borg would be one) "I'm asking that **these** would be one, for I've given them the glory that you gave me. Make them one, not as the world is one, but as we are one."

How are Jesus and God one? How is God one? Well, theologians debate this endlessly, but it seems the best we've been able to describe it is: God is three persons and one substance. Three persons and not a Borg, for each person honors the other and glorifies the other.

The Spirit emanates from the Father and glorifies the Son.

The Son glorifies the Father, laying down his life and surrendering the Spirit.

The Father glorifies the Son and gives all judgment to the Son, But the Son only does what the Father is doing in the power of the Spirit.

See, God is not one enormous self-centered person – a Borg.

God is three persons, and each is not about conquest, but sacrifice.

God is not a collective of taking, but a community of giving, self-giving in freedom.

In the words of Karl Barth, God is the one who loves in freedom.

God is Love in freedom.

So, in the community that is God, there is sameness and difference.

You know, if everything is the same without difference, then I am you and you are me, and we are God, just one enormous self-centered person with nothing left to love.

You know, if everything was difference, with no communion, we'd each just bite and devour the other till only one was left with nothing left to love. Satan tempts unity to uniformity and diversity to division so there'd be nothing left to love (no one left to bleed for . . . no one left to love.)

But when we love, uniformity is not a temptation and diversity is no longer a threat, for our differences are no longer liabilities, but invitations to love. It's our differences that allow us to give and receive.

God makes you an individual so that you can give your self away, so that you can love, and we can only love in freedom.

God is three persons and one substance and the substance is Love – a diversity in unity and the Unity is Love.

So Jesus prayed, "Father, make them one, as we are one, that the world may know." You know, a well-oiled machine is diversity in unity. Satan is fine with diversity in unity if you're part of a machine, because nuts and bolts don't love. And you know a city, a nation, or army is diversity in unity. Satan is fine with cities, nations, and armies as long as they're constrained by shame, manipulation and fear. Satan is fine with Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians as long as they don't love each other. But, what if my grandpa saw Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians (Maybe even saying different things) – (diverse things) (but not fighting) – rather, united in love, like throwing a party, having a dance and enjoying each other?

You know, diversity in unity (that is freely chosen) is a party, and Grandpa loved parties.

- Diversity in unity that is freely chosen is a great marriage (male and female: diversity in unity in ecstasy in God's image.)
- Diversity in unity that is unforced, ordered, yet free is music (diverse notes united by a melody, a logic, a logos).
- Diversity in unity that is unforced, incomprehensible, mystical and free is life (one cell serving another cell one member sacrificing for another, one body part bleeding into another part life).

My Grandpa was a farmer. He recognized life. He didn't explain it. He grew it. I can't explain life or comprehend life, but I can bear witness to life by living – and not just my life, our life,

when I bleed for a brother. I think Grandpa was saying, "I don't know about Christ because those Christians look . . . "dead."

Diversity in unity that is freely chosen is Life and the Life is Love.

God is Love: three Persons, one substance – Love.

C. S. Lewis writes:

In Christianity, God is not a static thing – not even a person – but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, . . . Almost, if you will . . . a kind of dance . . . and what does it all matter? It matters more than anything . . . The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance.

And that's quite a picture: love life and *logos*, the reason, the word, the rhythm, the music that holds all together is all around us. "In him we live, move and have our being" writes Paul. But to join the dance, we have to hear the music and individually surrender to the music. The music is greater than any one of us and all around us, like the ocean round a fish or the wind around a bird. It's greater than any one of us and yet can enter each of us, romance each of us becoming incarnate in us, not just one of us, but all of us. There's order in a dance, yet freedom in a dance as each individual person surrenders to one common song.

So...

What if Grandpa saw several fish swept along in the same direction?

That would be good evidence for a current.

A bunch of strange birds blown in one direction would be evidence for an invisible wind.

What if Grandpa saw Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians with diverse opinions all worshipping the same Lord, not because they had to, but because they freely chose to?

That might be evidence for a Holy Wind.

What if He saw them all dancing to the same tune?

Well, . . . instead of seeing the dance, I tried to explain the tune . . . "Oh, hell . . . Peter, maybe that tune's just in your head."

Hey – do you hear that music? Awesome!

[Peter starts dancing around like he hears some music playing.]

Do you hear it? What do you mean you don't hear it? Of course there's music because I'm dancing!!! Now, I know what you're thinking, "If there's music, Peter, it's only in your head." But, now what if we were at the park and everyone was walking around doing their own thing but then, all at once, you see this:

A Clip from *Grease* is shown.

There is no music playing. Two individuals grab hands and begin to dance, then all different types of people join in; more and more people join them until everyone is dancing in perfect unison at an amusement park.

All these diverse people – moving in rhythm as one and looking happy as they do it, strange birds in the same invisible wind. And then what if I said, "Hey, do you hear that music?" Well, then you might think, "Maybe there is music . . . " and then you might listen for the music – desire the music, you might seek the music, and if you seek you will find, and if you surrender, you will join the dance.

The Clip from *Grease* plays once again, this time with music in the background.

We'll always be together. Chang, chang, changity chang shoo bop. We'll always be together. Chang, chang, changity chang shoo bop. We'll always be together. (Chang, chang, changity chang shoo bop.) We'll always be together. We'll always be together. Always be together! Maybe you'd join the dance!

So Jesus prayed, "Father make them one as we are one that the world may believe and the world may know,"— that the world may join our dance.

In 1990, I got to travel through Romania just a few months after the Romanian Revolution. Romania had been a Communist collective. Romania was the Borg. People were forced to literally live in uniform cement apartments. They were forced to dress the same, act the same, talk the same, and think the same. For forty-five years, public prayer had been illegal and God was officially dead.

Well, this October night, ten months after the revolution, my Baptist pastor friend (Peter Dugulescu) took me by the home of his old Lutheran friend, Pastor Laslo Tokes. As we stood in the dark, he told me the story of how the revolution began. The morning of December 15, 1989, the communists were planning to come and take Pastor Tokes to prison for preaching the gospel, against the dictates of the State.

However, the churches in the city of Timisoara got wind of it. Underground churches and state sanctioned churches, Baptist, and Lutheran, Pentecostal, Orthodox churches that had never fellowshipped together as one (if you think prejudice is bad here, you wouldn't believe Eastern Europe) all these different groups got word of it and began to congregate outside the Home of Laslo Tokes .

Tokes had bled for Jesus and he was willing to bleed for Jesus. He'd bled for them. So they risked blood for him and for Jesus. When Tokes looked out his window early on the morning of December 15th, he couldn't believe his eyes. There were hundreds of believers (Baptists, Reformists, Orthodox) all joining hands and singing hymns in public and in unison. They sang illegal Christmas carols about a baby born into a manger and also our hearts incarnate.

He thought, "I don't know where I'll be tomorrow, but I know at this moment God is with us." The singers blocked the police, and over the next few days hundreds of others joined in the singing. When the police finally stormed the house on the 17th and took Tokes away, the crowd kept singing and moved to the central square. In a few days, the authorities would gun down thousands but they couldn't keep up with the killing as thousands more joined the crowd. That really wasn't a crowd, but a body—a dance, a life, even a party.

On December 22nd, one week later, Peter stood in front of two hundred thousand people in the central square. He said, "Let us pray" and all two hundred thousand scientists, teachers, police all dropped to their knees and prayed in unison what had been illegal for forty five years: The Lord's Prayer. On Christmas day the dictator was deposed and Romania was free. And as we stood there in the dark outside Tokes's home, Peter leaned over and said to me, "Brother Peter . . . just think, this is where it all started. And it all started when we all joined hands and sang." The church had always been there; she just hadn't joined hands and started to sing.

So, I sat on the bed next to Grandpa and didn't know what to say. But, now I do. "On behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ, and on my own behalf, I'm sorry Grandpa." My mom really believes Grandpa came to peace with Jesus before he died. And one thing I really believe is Grandpa loved me. I saw it in his eyes and felt it in his hugs and kisses. Sadly, I often didn't receive it and return it because of fear because I judged him out and myself in.

John writes, "He who loves is born of God and knows God." Maybe Grandpa knew God. He just had a hard time associating that with church. Perhaps he'd been misled and somewhere along the line he'd got the Borg and the church confused.

Well, we are the church and we can resist the Borg. And this is how we do it – we gather together (we gather together here in community groups, homes – wherever). We gather together and individually listen for the music. Hear it?

Communion

On this night that He was betrayed He took bread, the *Logos* took bread. He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you and do it in remembrance of me."

This (Peter points to the elements on the communion table) is bigger than any one of us. This was in the beginning: "It was with God and is God"—The Word—The Logos.

You see, this is bigger than any one of us. This was in the beginning with God and was God, the Logos. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. It's bigger than any one of us (Peter picks up a seed), and yet it is as small as a seed that can enter us and grow in us. And so, come to the table and surrender to the glory. Surrender to the seed. Surrender to the life. Listen to the music, surrender to the music, and we'll dance.

Benediction

If you've been around church awhile, you know that sometimes church really hurts. We'll talk about that more next week. And yet, if Scripture is true—which I really think it is, and if Jesus tells the truth—and I think He really is the Truth, then what Jesus prayed is true. And that means if you really want to change the world...

Don't just become a senator and go to Washington.

Don't just become an evangelist like Andrew and travel the world.

Don't just become a preacher or a pastor like me.

The most powerful thing you can do is...

Find somebody in this room that's different than you and love them.

If they love you in return, well then I think the world will look and say, "Oh, that's what God is like? That's what He's like?" Now doing that can be incredibly hard, and personally I don't think we have the strength for it. Scripture says, "We love because He first loved us." So you see, our best shot at making that happen together is to individually listen to the music.

And when you believe the love that God has for you, the same love that He has for Jesus—the Son, well that Love begins to fill you up and then you begin to dance and that dance is that Love. And other people begin to dance. And then the world can go, "Oh, that's what He's like! I'd like in on that dance!" It's called the Kingdom of Heaven.

In Jesus' name, may you believe the Gospel.

And may you see that even that's something the Spirit does.

May you believe the Gospel.

May you live the Gospel.

May we live the Gospel. Amen.

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