

Sunday 20 January 2008 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

**Sermon Series: Being a Missionary People
Title: Foundation of Prayer & Unity
Nick Allan**

Reading: John 17:20-26 - Jesus Prays for All Believers

20"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Intro

We've set the scene last week as I introduced the topic of us as a 'missionary people' and what we mean when we talk about this word 'mission' anyway! Recommend – [get CD/download](#). We covered a really broad definition that mission happens when God's kingdom touches earth. We can join in with what God's doing in normal life, 24-7, its not an occasional thing 'once a year'. And I encouraged us that actually you & I, and other Christians in the UK, are living 'missionally' all the time when we facilitate or initiate God's kingdom coming around us. There's always room for more – lets hear our specific calling for this time

I want to lay another foundation today to how we can learn to live as a missionary people. That is the foundation of prayer. We're also remembering that today marks the start of the global week of prayer for Christian unity ([see here](#)). Around the world, Christians are urged to pray that as the body of Christ, we may be unified to further God's kingdom in works and word and wonders.

I'm going to show a fairly long video clip soon which I think gives a great example of what can happen to a city and a church that takes hold of both of those ideas of prayer and unity.

Brief outline of God's heart for mission to happen through unity & prayer

The passage in John I read is probably the longest recorded stretch of Jesus praying and speaking. It's a famous passage – he speaks about the vine and the branches – how we need to stay closely connected to the heart of God to be effective. He outlines likely persecution, the work of the Holy Spirit and then he prays for himself and his disciples.

- He's outlining the future of the Body of Christ – the church, the people of God on earth.

To cap it all, to round up such a large sweep of what the body of Christ is called to do and be, how does he choose to finish?

- Firstly he prays. And he prays for unity.
- He prays for unity for us in our divine task, the holy calling that you and I share with believers of every colour, creed, denomination around the world.
 - And if he knew to pray for it, he must have realised it would be needed, and sometimes lacking!

Jesus was at the end of his own earthly mission, and now he was preparing to hand-over the task of bringing his kingdom into this world – of God's kingdom touching earth – to his followers. That means.. you and me, and millions of other Christians around the world. And the foundation for how the heck we are able to live and prosper in that calling is a foundation of prayer and unity.

Now, you and I know about the importance of prayer. Personally and corporately. To Encourage you – the prayer of a righteous person has powerful effect: (James 5:15-17) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.** Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

We also need to grasp to meet our own task and calling to be a missionary people in lifestyle, in 24/7 daily life – to be missional also needs to start with an attitude of prayer and unity.

- After all, how can you reach out to others to speak, act and demonstrate the power and love of God, if you personally aren't connecting into it regularly through prayer?
- How can we expect to be an attractive community of vibrant faith which draws people towards Jesus, if under the surface there's division, arguments, people deliberately pulling in different directions?

Like I said last week – it's not our mission. It's God's mission, and we get to join in. But that makes it on his terms, his agenda. So we need the humility at times to join in with other Christians, other churches etc towards the greater goal of calling our city, calling our neighbourhoods towards God.

Marjorie and I are very clear when we run Alpha courses. The aim is to introduce people to the love, power and transformation of getting to know God the trinity. It's not to get more people to join KC. We say very clearly, that people must feel free to join any church community they are comfortable with, as long as it means they follow Jesus.

- **Jesus said pray for and build the kingdom**
- **God said *his* job to build the church**

What might Unity look like?

- **Preferring others – not in it for your own gain**
 - Eg. Simon the sorcerer Acts – sharply rebuked for trying to profit financially from the HS power which the apostles were giving away freely to see people healed, set free from spiritual oppression and brought into faith in Jesus (Acts 8:9-25)
 - The principle is – 'freely you have received, freely give'
 - So we should try to prefer others above our own gain
- **Unity can be fun too!** Unity in our missionary task can mean sharing the work of mission with others
 - Jesus taught his disciples to go out together – at least in pairs if not bigger groups.
 - Let's share this stuff! I love it when small groups have BBQ's in the summer and invite their local people of peace to share & experience what Christian community is like. You can share the praying for your people of peace too – with your small group, accountability partner etc
 - HOPE08 of course is a great chance to join with other Christians in Sheffield for the sake of the gospel in our city

We watched [Transformations DVD](#) – track 2 about the changes that Christian prayer & unity had made to the City of Cali, Columbia.

- Such dedication to what God asks us to do! The police and agencies failing to beat the drugs cartels, but the city's Christians were willing to join together for a common cause of prayer and intercession.
- It began with humility – laying down agendas and taking up the best weapon we have – faithful, determined prayer

- And the response was surprisingly quick – a couple of days later = murders stopped, soon drugs barons arrested.

Christian unity thoughts

What might Christian unity look like for us in Sheffield, Rotherham, the peaks where we live?

- **Shared action**
 - HOPE08
 - Love & service to our city & neighbourhoods
 - Poor & marginalised
 - Community and business regeneration
- **A shared voice**
 - Sanctity of life, justice issues, integrity in public life....
 - Positive not just 'anti' all the time
 - Prayer, prayer, prayer for our city and our networks and the world
- **Shared rewards**
 - Building the kingdom in Sheffield – no way we can do it alone

We closed in joint prayer for our city & our callings etc in small groups