

# 'May They All Be One'

A Reflection on Matthew 6:4-33

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Let us listen to scripture taken from the Gospel of John 17:20-23

THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Holy Father, I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. (Jn 17:20-23)*

Dear friends, a very good evening to all of you. And we thank God for giving us this beautiful Word from the Farewell Discourse of Jesus in John 17:20-23, which I think is intrinsically linked to the First Letter of St John 1:1-4 which we heard earlier this evening. The Farewell Discourse has a genre of its own when you study scripture, and the Farewell Discourse actually has the intention of a teacher, master, patriarch or matriarch, a great one who is now coming to the end of their physical life and is preparing the disciples or the family or those who will continue the business of the master in the way that the master has shown. So, in this part of the Farewell Discourse, Jesus is praying to the Father and we see the intimate connection of Jesus to the Father. Look at the words 'Jesus *raised* his eyes to heaven'. Raising his eyes is not just a physical stance or disposition; he is focusing on the Father, is intimate with the Father. That's what we do in meditation and that's why meditation is so important to us.

In this Farewell Discourse, Jesus is not just saying some words off the top of his head. Jesus is saying to the people what he is speaking to the Father, and Jesus is saying to the people what the Father is revealing to him. And that's the beauty of meditation, that we can be connected to the Father. The insistence on repeating the mantra is so that we don't get distracted with anything but are focused on the Father.

In this particular moment of his Farewell Discourse, Jesus is saying to his Father, 'I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me (Jn 17:20)'. Jesus is praying for all his disciples, for all people of good will, for all people who are connected to God In one way or another. That is the meaning of 'believe in me': people who are connected to God in faith. Jesus prays, 'May they all be one (Jn 17:21)'. This is the great prayer of unity, of oneness of harmony. And that is what our teaching is all about.

Why is this important for Jesus, 'May they all be one'? Because, if you look at the Book of Genesis, and if you look at the whole purpose and meaning of creation, and if you look at the whole deeper meaning of human life, it becomes very clear that the reason why God made man and woman is so that every man and woman, all men and women can be in harmony with God, in harmony with one another, and in harmony with creation. This really is why God made man and woman. This is the story in Genesis chapter 1, this is the story in Genesis chapter 2. And it is this harmony that gives man and woman the deepest joy and peace and meaning and fulfilment in life because all through his life, man and woman are called to build up this state of harmony and to be in this state of harmony at the triple dimension of God, fellow man and woman, and creation.

In Genesis chapter 3 we find the introduction of sin. Man and woman got distracted. Man and woman got tempted. Man and woman got attracted to something else that seemed to be better than what God had created man and woman for. And from that moment, that moment of sin, discord, broken harmony, broken relationships, we see misery, pain, suffering, evil of all kinds come into the world. And therefore it is not surprising that God who made man and woman for this harmony didn't want to desert man and woman in their sin. God made a promise – I will break this discord, I will crush the head of the one who causes this discord, I will bring back harmony, I will bring back that oneness, that unity of all man and woman with me, with one another, and with creation. And so he sent Jesus, his Son.

The whole purpose and mission of Jesus was to restore this harmony, was to bring man and woman back into proper relationship with God, with each other, and with creation. And therefore Jesus says, 'May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us as you are in me and I am in you (Jn 17:21)'. That's the kind of unity, that's the kind of harmony: as Jesus and the Father are one, so you and I are called to be one with God, with each other, and with nature. That same way, Father, that you and I are one, make them to be one, because there is a purpose in that oneness: 'the world may believe'. Listen to this: 'the world may believe it was you who sent me (Jn 17:21)'.

So my dear sisters and brothers, it's very important that you and I build up this harmony all the time by the way we live at home, at work, in the community, in society, wherever we may be, whatever we may be doing. This is the great work we have to do, so that the world may believe Jesus was sent by God his Father to restore harmony to a very broken and divided world, a world so materialistic and so self-centred that it bothers about nothing else but itself, and in the process causes pain and misery of every kind to people. So Jesus says in verse 22, 'I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one as we are one.'

Jesus has given us that glory. This is what we see in the First Letter of John 1:1 and the following, something that existed, something that we have heard, something that we have seen, something that may have touched: the Word of life. John says in his gospel,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
... And the Word became flesh and lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory  
that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:1-15)*

*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn 1:1-3)*

He is talking about the Incarnation. This is the wonder of Christmas: ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us so that we can see his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).’ That’s why Jesus can say in his great Priestly Prayer, ‘I have given them the glory (Jn 17:22)’, meaning, he has given them himself, he has given them the Father. He has shown them the way he has given them everything they need so that they may be able to be in harmony with the Father, with one another, and with creation. And we are able to do this, as he concludes his prayer, ‘with me in them and you in me (Jn 17:23)’.

So this is our intimacy with Jesus, this is our intimacy with the Father. And in meditation we deepen our intimacy with God. We want nothing to interrupt or come in the way of our intimacy with God, not only when we are praying, when we are meditating, but all the time as we live our life. So the solution is not *just* meditation. The solution is to link the meditation with our way of being. After the half-hour meditation is over what happens then? The building takes place, the doing takes place, the living in the way of Jesus takes place. Meditation develops harmonious living. Because of their deep intimacy with God and their deep listening to God, meditators are able to grasp what God wants, what God sent his Son Jesus to do. And so Jesus in his resurrection appearance says:

*As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (Jn 20:21-23)*

So he gives us his spirit, the Holy Spirit, his harmony. That’s your work my dear sisters and brothers, that’s my work, that’s our work.

So we need to reflect on Jesus’ heartfelt prayer, ‘With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one.’ We need to ask ourselves : are we so completely one with God, so completely one with people around us, so completely one with creation? This is not an easy question, I don’t expect a yes or no answer now. It’s a question that takes a way of life to answer fully. Because our meditation puts us in that state of harmony with God, our meditation must also put us in harmony with our fellow men and women and with creation. Otherwise, the words of Jesus in his great prayer don’t make sense. And that’s why Jesus says, ‘May they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.’ This love of God makes us one. If we don’t have the experience of God’s love and harmony in our life, we cannot express his love and harmony. Our life remains empty without that love which moves us into oneness with the Father, and so into oneness with our fellow men and women, and with creation.

Let’s conclude with these beautiful words of Jesus, let them resound in us, and let us make it our purpose in life to make this great desire of Jesus happen today:

*May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us as you are in me and I am in you.  
Father, may they all be one.*