



## Sermon Reflection Guide; John 17:25-26

1. As Christians we have the great benefit of God as our Father, what does Jesus mean when he calls God our *righteous* Father?
2. How is it possible for God to remain just and to forgive such heinous sinners like ourselves? Consider Romans 3:26.
3. According to Jesus if we want to know God who must we know first? How can we really know Christ?
4. Have you ever heard anyone say something like this, "Doctrine divides and love unites"? Why is this Biblically erroneous and why must we understand right doctrine in order to love God and others well?
5. Throughout John 17 Jesus has prayed for our joy, holiness, sanctification, mission to the unbelieving world, unity and security. How is love the key to all these things?
6. Jesus says that our union with Christ is what makes it possible for us to love God and others well. Reflect on your union with Christ, in what ways does this enable you to love God and others well?

### Sermon Summary

As we come to the end of John 17 and Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, we realize that has prayed for lots of things for his disciples. He has prayed for our joy, for our holiness, for our sanctification by and in the truth of God's Word, for our mission to the unbelieving world, for our unity, and for our security. One theme that is weaved throughout the Gospel of John and Christ's prayer in John 17 is that of love which Jesus comes back to here at the conclusion of John 17. The two main focuses of Christ in these two verses are the knowledge of God and the love of God. We see that they are not at all at odds. Theology of God and love for God necessarily go hand in hand.

First, Jesus speaks of the knowledge of God. In verse 25 Jesus says, "O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me." It is significant that Jesus calls God *righteous* Father. Jesus is choosing his words carefully and intentionally, so we must ask ourselves what does it mean for God to be called our *righteous* Father? On the one hand it expresses the intimacy between God the Father and his adopted children. But it is also a title that expresses God the Father's righteous character. God's righteousness is essential to who he is. God is holy, transcendent, majestic and righteous. He is the righteous judge over all, and he will judge all sin in his perfect righteousness. If he didn't do this that would mean he were imperfect. However, because he is a perfect judge, he must righteously judge sin.

This is why Jesus is the savior that we need and that we must trust by faith alone. We are saved by Jesus and from God's righteous wrath by trusting in Christ or by *knowing* him as he says in verse 25, "...even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me." In this verse the *world* refers to those living in the world who do not have true and saving knowledge of Christ, while the *these* refer to those who do have a true and saving knowledge of Christ. What Jesus makes clear is that it is

impossible to know God the Father without knowing God the Son. Why is it impossible to know God without knowing Christ? The answer is because Jesus lived the perfect life we have failed to live, and he also died the atoning death on the cross as our substitute. This is why the mercy of God in Christ does not entail a miscarriage of justice. Paul makes this clear in Romans 3:26, "It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." God remains just because he punishes Jesus as our substitute, yet he is also our justifier by providing our substitute, the Lord Jesus, the lamb of God. John Stott writes, "Justification is not a synonym for amnesty, which strictly is pardon without principle, a forgiveness which overlooks—even forgets—wrongdoing and declines to bring it to justice. No, justification is an act of justice, of gracious justice. . . . When God justifies sinners, he is not declaring bad people to be good, or saying they are not sinners after all; he is pronouncing them legally righteous, free from any liability to the broken law, because he himself in his Son has borne the penalty of their lawbreaking."

Further speaking of the knowledge of God, in verse 26 Jesus mentions the name of God, he says, "I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known." God's name refers to his person, his character, his attributes. His name refers to who he is and what he is. True knowledge of the true God comes through true knowledge of the person and work of Jesus. This is what Jesus teaches us in John 1:18, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." We must ask ourselves, "Do you want to know God?" The good news is we don't have to speculate about who God is or what he is like, if you want to know what God is like then look at Jesus. Speaking of Jesus Paul writes in Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

In the remainder of verse 26 Jesus now connects theology with love, "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." Theology is not at odds with love, don't ever believe the lie that you have to choose between love or doctrine. We cannot understand and experience true Christian love without true Christian doctrine. The more we study and understand true doctrine it is not merely that our heads explode with ideas, but our hearts should also explode with love. John would later write in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Jesus is saying that we are not only the objects of God's love, but he prays that we would so be transformed by God's love that it would be in us and flow out from us. Love is the key to all the things Jesus has been praying about. We must have love as we pursue, joy, holiness, sanctification, mission, unity and our security in Christ. Without love these things all become something less than they were intended to be and often even sinful.

As we consider the love of God we may ask ourselves if it really possible for us to love one another well? And the answer is, yes, it is possible because of our union with Christ. This is what Christ means in verse 26 when he says, "That the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Matthew Henry comments, "There is no getting in the love of God but through Christ, nor can we keep ourselves in that love but by abiding in Christ. . . . nor can we have the sense and apprehension of that love but by our experience of the indwelling of Christ, that is, the Spirit of Christ in our hearts." It is through our union with Christ, which is a benefit of our faith in Christ alone, that we learn of and know and experience the love of God. This is where our Christian hope found. It is in the love of God that comes to us through our union with Christ. The picture the Apostle Paul gives us is that of God's love being poured into us, Romans 5:5,

“and hope does not put us that shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”