

# Looking Inwards, Outwards and Onwards

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[ 0 : 00 ] But now we're going to turn to our Bibles, and if you've been with us the last couple of weeks, you'll know that we've been in John's Gospel, chapter 17. And Stephen Ballingall is in the third of three studies on this chapter, looking particularly this evening at the last section, beginning at verse 20.

But I think we'll read once again the whole chapter, because it is all of a piece, and it is a majestic prayer of the Son of God, God the Son, to God the Father on the eve of his crucifixion.

Jesus had spoken all these words, that's all that goes before in the previous three chapters, to his disciples in the upper room. He lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life, that they know you and the only true God, Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

[ 1 : 24 ] And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I've manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

Yours they were, and you gave them to me. And they have kept your word. And now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

For I've given them the words that you gave me. And they have received them, and have come to know in truth that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me.

I'm praying for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me. For they are yours.

All mine are yours, and yours are mine. And I'm glorified in them. And I'm no longer in the world. But they are in the world.

[ 2 : 25 ] And I'm coming to you. The Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you've given to me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you've given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I'm coming to you. And these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word.

And the world has hated them. Because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

- [ 3 : 28 ] 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- So that they may become perfectly one. So that the world may know that you sent me. And love them, even as you love me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given to me, may be with me where I am.
- [ 4 : 36 ] To see my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Oh, 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. Amen.
- And may God indeed bless to us this his word. I love weddings.
- Which is good, because it's a bit of an occupational hazard, or a joy, at the Tron. Because you're going to be at three or four pretty much every year. And it's always such a genuine pleasure to see young couples commit to each other and to the Lord in service of him together.
- [ 5 : 40 ] And there's one point in the service when once the vows have been made, the minister will join the new husband and wife's hands and he'll hold them together. And he says, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder.
- Or let not man separate. And the whole congregation of family and friends stands with them, committed to ensuring that that bond is not broken. The couple is committed to living their new life together, joined as one new family.
- Now it would be awfully strange if they didn't live like it. If after the wedding ceremony, the couple who had just got married said to each other, well that was nice, but I'll see you around.
- I'm off to play Scrabble at my place. Today in our passage, we see that we have been joined to Christ himself. And through him, we share in the divine love that eternally exists within God.
- And it would be very strange indeed if once we were joined to him, we didn't love his people. We lived as though our brothers and sisters in Christ weren't that important to us.
- [ 6 : 51 ] We just turn up on Sundays, say a couple of polite hellos, hold people at arm's length and then get home as quickly as we can because the football's on. But what we'll see today is that God's love is made known in us.
- As we as a church present a walking, talking proclamation of the gospel to the watching world. Remember in this chapter, Jesus is approaching his death.
- This prayer brings to a close the Last Supper as Jesus knows that he's about to be betrayed and crucified. In the first few verses, Jesus prays that he would be glorified through his death, resurrection and ascension.
- And last week, we saw how his disciples share in the glory of belonging to a crucified Savior. Since they belong to Jesus, it changed their relationship with the world they lived in.

They were about to step out into a world which hated them. But they were to remain faithful and distinctive to Christ through all of it. And this week, Jesus zooms out again.

[ 7 : 58 ] He's not praying for himself or his disciples, but his church as a whole. He sees a future where his disciples' witness is enormously successful. And since all Christians are joined to him, it changes their relationship with one another.

And Christ says that we will bring him glory by the way we treat our brothers and sisters in him. We are to glorify him in the way we live as his church.

Giving people a picture of the gospel in real life. A walking, talking, collective vision of what God's doing in the world. And that will bring even more glory by drawing people into the church.

So that as we preach the gospel in word and adorn it in action. Jesus uses us to call the people to himself. Who are united in God's mission.

And will glorify him forever. We're going to look at our passage under three headings which form one sentence together. Firstly, you are united in Christ.

[ 9 : 06 ] Secondly, so live as a united people now. Thirdly, for you will be united in Christ forever. So firstly, you are united in Christ.

And here we see that the basis for the unity we share as Christians is the apostolic witness. Jesus was sending his disciples out into the world on mission proclaiming that Jesus is Lord.

And it's that gospel that is the grounding for our united front. As Christians. Verse 20. I do not ask for these only as in the disciples 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.

There is no other way to belong to Jesus than faith in him through hearing and responding to the apostolic word. Which invites you into our relationship and fellowship with God himself.

[ 10 : 09 ] As Jesus ascended to reign to sit at the right hand of his father. He passed on his gospel to his disciples. They were custodians of the message.

Entrusted to keep on proclaiming the gospel. And for the first Christians it was the disciples themselves who they heard the gospel through. But of course they died. And instead of getting them in the flesh.

I mean well we don't have a 2,000 year old Paul walking around with us. Although that would be fun. But we have his truth. The apostolic truth. Written in the word. The Bible. Inspired by the Holy Spirit himself.

Kept and guarded through the generations for us. And faith comes from the pattern of hearing the apostolic witness. And receiving it by trusting in Christ. Confessing him as Lord and obeying him in your life.

And it's everyone within that category that we are united to. Everyone who belongs to Christ and the obedience of faith. This is a unity which is both narrow and wide.

[ 11 : 12 ] It's narrow in that he's praying for unity exclusively in those who have heard the apostles' words. Exclusively those who have bowed the knee to Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And because of this there are a list of things that Christian unity is not based on. It's not based on a group of people calling themselves a church. Or meeting inside a church building.

But it's exclusively grounded in union with Jesus through believing his gospel. It's not only found in ecumenical groups. Which seek to draw together all forms of people who use the term Christian.

And often try to find the lowest common denominator they can that they can believe in together. These groups often proclaim unity by diluting the gospel. Because they think that anything with the word Christian in it must be united with.

That's the most important thing in the world. With the actual... ..to it. And when they do that...

[ 12 : 14 ] ...they reveal themselves to be people who don't confess Christ as Lord. They might say things like... ..well this is a broad church. And by that...

...mean that it includes people and views that don't belong to Jesus at all. A unity like that is false. It's unbelief. Those we seek to be united with...

...are only those who believe the gospel... ..and have fellowship with God himself. That's how it's narrow. A unity is also wide. And that this unity is to be seen in...

...everyone who has heard... ..and received the apostolic word. So Christians from every race... ..every country... ..every social class... ..every age and stage...

...every walk of life. Who Jesus is describing... ..is that person... ..sitting in the row in front of you right now. Or that neighbour you have... ..that goes to the Baptist church.

[ 13 : 13 ] Or that person in Singapore... ..or Peru... ..who believes the gospel. Or that person in this church... ..who you find... ..really difficult to get on with. The one who really...

...pushes your buttons. But they confess Christ as Lord... ..and belong to him. Those are the people... ..we are to seek unity with. We can lose sight of that...

...very easily... ..in the humdrum... ..of normal Christian life. And these Christians... ..are frustratingly creative... ..at finding ways... ..in which we can divide... ..what Christ has joined together.

In your own head... ..I'd like you to go through... ..this checklist with me... ..and ponder all the ways... ..in which we've been responsible... ..for dividing... ..the church in our own hearts. So in which of these ways...

...have you put another Christian... ..on a lesser footing than you? Here we go. The style of music... ..Christians sing to. The way in which...

[ 14 : 08 ] ...a church is governed. How people dress at church. What mode of baptism... ..they practice. How people's kids act...

...during a service. How people understand... ..the gifts of the Spirit. I very much doubt... ..that any of us... ..could honestly say...

...we've not mentally created... ..a second class... ..of Christian citizen... ..because of how they've... ..responded to these matters. We'll say they're Christians... ..but... ..they think or do that.

I should say... ..it really does matter... ..what you think about these things... ..and what a church thinks... ..about these things. But mature Christians... ..know how to put these issues... ..where they belong. As a secondary part... ..of the gospel of Christ.

A secondary part... ..of the apostolic witness. There's a unity... ..which is far more deep... ..and profound... ..than church government... ..or liturgical practice...

[ 15 : 05 ] ...or musical style... ..or dress code. Because the main point... ..is that we've been brought... ..into relationship... ..with God himself... ..through being united...

...to his Son... ..through his Spirit. Each one of us... ..belongs to him. So we ought to cherish... ..the fundamental things... ..that have been revealed to us... ..rather than the secondary issues...

...which we hold so dearly... ..and feel like... ..they make us what we are. Your union with Christ... ..defines you... ..far more as a person... ..than anything else.

More than your music preference... ..or your preferred mode of baptism. You are a Christian... ..called to belong to Jesus...

...before anything else. So Christian unity... ..is grounded in the apostolic word... ..the gospel itself. Anyone who trusts in Christ... ..and seeks to obey him...

[ 15 : 58 ] ...that is someone... ..you share something... ..fundamental with... ..since you are both united... ..to Christ... ..and him together. Well you are united in Christ... ..so secondly... ..live as united people... ..now. What does Jesus want... ..his united people to look like? Well here we see... ..the unity we are to express...

...in our Christian life... ..is mirroring... ..the perfect unity... ..shared by the Father... ..and the Son. Jesus uses the image of family... ..and that's what we are to strive for... ..in our churches.

Jesus prays for us... ..in verse 21... ..that they may all be one... ..just as you Father... ..are in me... ..and I in you... ..that they also may be in us...

...and in 22 to 23... ..that they may be one... ..even as we are one... ..I in them... ..and you in me... ..that they may become... ..perfectly one. You as a Christian...

[ 16 : 56 ] ...are both... ..invited to... ..and commanded... ..to share... ..in the love of God. We are welcomed... ..into the Trinity... ..through union with Christ.

And because of that... ..Jesus prays... ..that we would live up... ..to that calling... ..that we would reflect... ..the same love... ..that always has... ..and always will... ..perfectly exist... ..within the Godhead.

Jesus in his human nature... ..depended on the Father... ..for all things... ..and obediently loved him... ..with every breath... ..to the cost of his own life. And that's what we are to mirror... ..in our churches...

...that perfect... ..submissive love... ..for the Father... ..that Jesus displayed... ..as he obediently loved... ..to people who didn't deserve it... ..and died a death... ..that he didn't deserve... ..for the sake of others.

But Jesus knows... ..that we're not going to achieve... ..that perfectly now. That's why he prays... ..that we would... ..become perfectly one... ..in verse 23. Because he knows...

[ 17 : 55 ] ...that we as sinful creatures... ..will always be in a state... ..of needing to become... ..more united. On this side of death... ..we'll never have arrived... ..at having achieved...

...perfect unity... ..and be able to give ourselves... ..a pat on the back... ..for doing ever so well. As a church... ..which proclaims that gospel... ..and confesses Christ as Lord...

...we need to recognize... ..the fundamental truth... ..that we all are one... ..in the Son... ..that all of us... ..every one of us... ..is united to him. And we might see that...

...as a very personal matter... ..but having faith... ..and being united to Christ... ..is a deeply... ..corporate... ..experience. We as Christians...

...believe in Jesus... ..and are joined to him... ..in faith... ..and there's only one of them. So we're all joined... ..to him... ..together... ..as one... ..in faith. He's not split into parts...

[ 18 : 52 ] ...with people who like... ..this kind of music... ..joined to that Jesus... ..to people who have... ..deacons and bishops... ..over with that Jesus... ..and the people who have... ..read Bavinck... ..over with the Jesus... ..with a really big reformed... ..beard over here. There's only one of him...

...and we're all united... ..to him alone. It's a corporate... ..altogether experience... ..which means... ..well there's no escaping it.

We're kind of stuck... ..with each other. ...which is why our actions... ..are to be that... ..of Christ-like sacrifice. There's a clue to that... ..in verse 23... ..Jesus says...

...the glory you've given me... ...I have given to them. And his glory... ...as we've already seen... ...is the glory of the cross. Remember...

...we belong to a crucified... ...saviour. That's who we're joined to. It's the glory of dying...  
...to yourself... ...of putting your comfort... ...your preferences... ...your wants...

[ 19 : 48 ] ...your needs... ...your political opinions... ...below that of others... ...for the glory of God.  
Doing that may cause you... ...to feel like you've lost arguments...

...or looked like the weak one... ...but whatever you perceive... ...to have lost yourself... ...if  
you've won that person... ...and preserved the unity... ...of Christ's bride... ...then you are  
bringing...

...your Father in heaven glory. That's how we can... ...discourage disunity. But on the  
other side of the coin... ...there are many things we can do... ...proactively to encourage  
unity.

Do you know one of the most... ...significant influences... ...on your church unity... ...lives  
in your house... ...in the form of your dining table? Having people around for a meal...

...is always going to be... ...one of the best ways... ...to show love to someone... ...to give  
them time... ...bring them into your home... ...eat together... ...and share your life with  
them. So let me ask you...

[ 20 : 43 ] ...without making any awkward eye contact... ...with anyone in the room... ...who from this  
church... ...would you be... ...least likely... ...to invite over... ...for Sunday lunch? Trying not  
to feel self-conscious...

...at how many of you are looking at me right now... ...but I'd love you to ponder that... ...for  
a moment. Who would you find most difficult... ...to spend a whole afternoon with?

I'd like to remind you... ...that the person or people you're thinking of... ...is someone you  
are joined to... ...in Christ. By you showing love to them...

...you're mirroring the truth... ...that you're united together in Him. Don't deny that truth with  
your actions... ...but instead show that God's love... ...is in you... ...and as you as a church  
look more and more...

...like a family doing that... ...the more it will be reflecting the love... ...that the Father and  
the Son share... ...and that we share in through Christ. And Jesus makes clear...

[ 21 : 44 ] ...that as His church is united together... ...they're going to have a huge evangelistic  
impact... ...on the world around them. Look at verse 21 with me. They are to be united...

...so that... ...the world may believe that you have sent me. And then verse 23... ...Jesus  
prays that... ...they may become perfectly one... ...so that... ...the world may know that you  
sent me...

...and loved them... ...even as you loved me. Jesus wants His church to live as a united  
family... ...mirroring that perfect relationship... ...they share in with the Father and the  
Son...

...so that it paints a picture... ...to outsiders of just what God's doing in the world. God is  
uniting a people to Himself... ...through His Son...

...to be in real relationship with Him... ...reigning together in eternity. So... ...surely the  
church... ...ought to look at least in part like that today. Jesus wants His church to  
become...

[ 22 : 42 ] ...a living embodiment of the message... ...that God is uniting Himself... ...with men and  
women... ...who have trusted in His Son. As we live alongside one another...

...loving each other... ...and displaying the love that the Father has for the Son... ...we're  
given the best platform... ...to go on and share the gospel... ...that has transformed us...  
...into a group of people who love one another...

...preaching in both word and action. So when Christians gather together as the church...  
...God's presence is made known...

...and proclaimed to the outside world. And if people who aren't Christians... ...are going to find out what God is like... ...well they're going to come and have a look... ...aren't they? They're going to come into your church...

...take a look around... ...and what they think about God... ...is going to be shaped by all of us. I'd like you to picture one of your friends... ...or neighbours who you've had opportunities...

[ 23 : 38 ] ...to share the gospel with. Maybe you've got someone in particular... ...in mind right now. Maybe one of your 311 people... ...you've been plugging away at and praying for... ...for quite some time. Well if you were to invite that person to this church...

...they said yes... ...and they actually came here next Sunday... ...if they did come...  
...what would they see? Will they be met...

...with the love of God himself... ...as soon as they walk through the door... ...sensing that there's something... ...different about this place? Or is it just like everywhere else in the world...

...with factions and divisions... ...and smiley faces... ...that very quickly... ...go away? Are they very warmly... ...greeted at the door... ...but then finding out about disagreements...

...the week after? Or are they told to give so-and-so a wide berth... ...because... ...well we're not really keen on them... ...they're a bit difficult? If outsiders see us acting like that...

[ 24 : 38 ] ...then the gospel loses credibility... ...because it doesn't seem to affect our lives... ...if we're not living the gospel-shaped life ourselves... ...then why would our neighbours...

...believe the gospel we preach... ...and claim to love? Our church welcome... ...isn't just the responsibility... ...of the welcome team... ...the people who are on duty...

...every one of us... ...is responsible for it. The love of God... ...can't just be at the front door... ...but must be seasoned... ...in every conversation...

...every relationship... ...as we learn to love those... ...Christ has united us to. The Lord Jesus... ...as he was approaching the cross... ...he prayed that our churches...

...wouldn't be like that. That his people who belong to him... ...wouldn't act like that. He prayed instead... ...that we would be becoming... ...ever more perfect... ...in our unity now...

[ 25 : 33 ] ...so that the watching world... ...sees the love of God... ...displayed at a bunch of normal folk... ...who live in Glasgow... ...who are united to the living God... ...and totally transformed by him.

Faithful living... ...gives the gospel credibility... ...to outsiders. So are you loving one another? Are you going out of your way...

...to display the love of God... ...to the people God has called you... ...to brotherhood and sisterhood with? Are you forgiving those... ...who offend you? Are you making amends...

...when you wrong... ...your brother or sister in Christ? Are you seeking to love... ...your church family... ...even when it hurts the most... ...and when it makes you...

...deeply uncomfortable? Are you putting the good... ...of your church family... ...and the good of the gospel witness... ...of this church... ...above yourself... ...and your own opinions?

[ 26 : 34 ] The truth of the gospel... ...must be both declared... ...and demonstrated... ...if we are to win... ...the world around us for Christ. For in us... ...God's love is made known...

...and he's glorified. Well finally we'll see... ...everything that this points to. We are united in Christ... ...so live as united people now... ...and finally...

...for you will be united... ...in Christ forever. Here Jesus looks forward... ...to the goal...  
...to us living in glory... ...with him forever. And we see...

...what we should be aiming towards... ...as we look onwards... ...to his mission being  
completed. Jesus only asked the Father... ...for two things in this section. He asked that...  
...those who belonged to him... ...would be united...

...and also that they would come... ...to be with him in glory. And they're not  
disconnected... ...parts of the prayer. They're linked because one... ...is a sign of the other.  
Union with each other on earth...

[ 27 : 31 ] ...is a sign of the union... ...we will share with Christ... ...in the new creation... ...when we  
see him... ...in all his glory. Look at verse 24 with me. Father I desire that they also...

...whom you've given me... ...may be with me... ...where I am... ...to see my glory... ...that  
you've given me... ...because you loved me... ...before the foundation... ...of the world.  
What you experience...

...in your church... ...week by week... ...doesn't only proclaim... ...something to the  
outsider... ...but it proclaims... ...something to the insider too. As we meet together... ...we  
are a foretaste...

...of what's to come... ...and we encourage one another... ...to keep going towards that  
goal. Sunday by Sunday... ...as you all learn... ...to graciously love...

...forgive... ...and show patience... ...to your brothers and sisters... ...with those you  
share... ...union in Christ with... ...you will have a little foretaste... ...of what is to come...  
...in eternity. Since Christ lives in us...

[ 28 : 33 ] ...we do experience his presence... ...as we all mirror... ...the family likeness together. And  
that's a great witness... ...to one another. And a great foretaste... ...for something to look  
forward to... ...for us. So how are you feeling...

...about church right now? When you're getting ready... ...to come out on a Sunday...  
...how do you feel and think... ...about gathering with your church family? Do you look  
forward to coming?

Or are you dreading... ...facing that person... ...and hoping you don't bump into them? Are  
you thinking... ...let's just get through this... ...as you get the family out the door... ...and  
crammed into the car?

If we're trusting... ...what Jesus reveals... ...about his church... ...then even in the midst...  
...of living among real disagreements... ...in the church family... ...difficult people... ...we  
find hard to get on with...

...and frustrations... ...with any number of issues... ...we should be far more passionate...  
...about coming to meet together... ...to worship Christ. Because as we meet together...  
...we see God's grand plan...

[ 29 : 36 ] ...for the world coming together... ...we by the grace of God... ...are welcomed into the  
family... ...that's setting the agenda... ...for the rest of eternity... ...and we get to see... ...in  
imperfect...

...fallen form... ...what shape... ...eternity is going to take. We are welcomed... ...into the  
love of God himself... ...particularly made known...

...in his gathering... ...as we are warmly greeted... ...at the door of our church... ...every  
Sunday. Have you ever thought about that? As you arrive to meet... ...with your church  
family...

...as the welcome team says hello... ...as you sit down... ...next to your brother and  
sisters... ...you praise God in your songs... ...and you hear God's word... ...preach to you...  
...you are meeting... ...the manifestation... ...of God's love...

...here on earth. That's why our church... ..when it's at its absolute best... ..is pointing forwards... ..to what we will be experiencing...

[ 30 : 30 ] ...in eternity with Jesus... ..in his presence. But even at its best... ..it's still a shadow... ..a faint glimmer...

...of all that Christ has in store... ..for those who love him. Our Sunday gatherings... ..are a signpost... ..for the glory we will all experience... ..in Christ forever.

Jesus is praying for us... ..for his church... ..that we may be in glory... ..with him forever. That's the goal... ..so that those who belong to him...

...would be worshipping him... ..and dwelling with him... ..forever. That's our goal in our church life... ..and in our mission too. Our goal is to make... ..worshippers of God... ..who with us will glorify God...

...and enjoy him forever. Let's keep pressing on... ..towards that together... ..and keep on loving our brothers... ..and sisters in Christ today. So as we close...

[ 31 : 26 ] ...what has Jesus been doing... ..with this prayer? What's he been trying to achieve? Well Jesus has been focused... ..on completing his mission... ..of calling a people to himself.

As he was approaching the cross... ..as he was readying himself... ..for the pain and trauma... ..he was about to endure... ..he was doing so... ..for the glorious achievement... ..of winning his bride...

...his church. But he was seeing all of this... ..with the disciples in earshot... ..hanging on every one of his words. So what did he want for them?

Well I think that what Jesus... ..was wanting to do... ..was to pull back the curtain... ..to allow the disciples... ..a glimpse into the inner life... ..of the Trinity... ..the Holy of Holies...

...and be wonderfully... ..reassured by it. It's not something we get a look into... ..often in the Bible. And when we do here in John 17...

[ 32 : 22 ] ...we see a perfectly united... ..Father, Son and Spirit... ..working together as one... ..for his purpose... ..of glorifying God...

...by calling a people to himself... ..of drawing those people in... ..and bringing them... ..to be with God in glory. As the disciples... ..stepped out into the night...

...into a world which hated them... ..how reassuring would that have been? To know that Jesus himself... ..learns in our great high priest... ..who is seated at the right hand... ..of the Father...

...was interceding for them... ..in their mission to the world. They were to know that Jesus... ..who had ascended... ..to the right hand of the Father... ..and was given all authority... ..over all flesh...

...was on their side... ..still working... ..for his glory. He hadn't abandoned them. He was still working. Through the work of Christ... ..the witness of the disciples...

[ 33 : 17 ] ...and the oneness of the church... ..Jesus would be winning people... ..for himself... ..and preparing them for glory. And not only that... ..but the disciples... ..and all Christians...

...would get to experience... ..that glory now in part... ..in the foretaste of heaven... ..we share week in... ..week out... ..in our local church. And in this time...

...between Christ's ascension... ..and his return... ..while he's not here... ..in bodily form... ..isn't that an encouragement... ..for us too? That as we all navigate... ..a world which doesn't...

...welcome us... ...as we try to hold out... ...the gospel to it... ...and as we try to display...  
...the gospel in our churches... ...by imperfectly loving... ...our church family... ...isn't that  
helping us...

...to keep going? That as we seek to glorify God... ...reveal him to the world... ...and bring  
those who belong to him... ...to faith in the Son... ...doesn't knowing that Jesus...

[ 34 : 12 ] ...was praying for this... ...give us food for the journey? That's what Jesus was doing in  
this... ...and that's what he's still doing today. Christ's work...

...will be completed. He will call a people to himself. He will be glorified. And we get to  
share with him in that. We, one day...

...will finally be in his presence again. And by God's grace... ...we'll get a small glimpse of  
that... ...in our normal... ...unimpressive looking... ...church family.

As each of us... ...in everything we do here... ...lives for his glory... ...and nothing else.  
What a joy. And what an assurance for us...

...to keep pressing on. Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father...

[ 35 : 10 ] ...we praise you... ...for who you are... ...that you as Father... ...son... ...and spirit... ...are  
perfectly... ...and beautifully united... ...with one another.

Please help us... ...in our fallen nature... ...and in the mess of sin... ...to display that unity...  
...in our church life. ...to love one another... ...to serve one another...

...to bear with... ...and show patience... ...to one another... ...proclaiming to the world...  
...that you are our God... ...bringing you... ...all the glory. We thank you Father...

...for including such sinners... ...as us... ...in your plans... ...for eternity... ...and we long...  
...to be with you... ...in glory. We pray this... ...in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen.