

Learning from Jesus' Last Message #19
"What is the Source of Fulfillment?"
Message Notes, June 19, 2022

John 17:20-26

²⁰ "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²² "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴ Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵ "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶ I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

Introduction:

- The Last Supper (13-17) begins with Jesus' expression of love, washing His disciples' feet, and ends with His promise to continue to extend His external love that has existed since before the foundation of the world. Jesus poured out His love to His disciples to the very end.
- The Last Supper ends with Jesus' prayer, which concludes with His request for Christians who come to know God's love through the work of the disciples. It is a prayer for us, that we be filled with love.

What Kind of Love? What kind of relationship is meant by "the Father and Jesus are one"?

- To connect with the love relationship of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) that existed long before the creation of the world.
- The Gospel of John has much more to say about love relationships (between both God and others) than any of the other gospels.
- The "Letter of John" is also called the "Letter of Love," and its message of "love on another" is repeated. It was spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper as a "new commandment."

1. Unity in the Motive of Love

- "As You are in me, and I am in You" (21) and "as we are one" (22) does not mean that all Christians are to be the same. When the Bible speaks of *unity*, it refers to unity of mind in diversity. Just as each organ of the body differs from the others, yet creates one whole, working in unity. This is a relationship based in mutual respect.
- The attitude of serving others by wanting the best for them is the archetype of the triune God, in whose image man was created. John of Damascus, who first verbalized this concept, referred to this relationship of love and service as *perichoresis*, which means serving next to each other. This is the root word for choreography (beautiful interaction). Serving each other in love is the highest form of our humanity.
- Fulfillment does not come from success or human praise, but rather is the outcome of personal communion (connection) between God and man.

2. Where can We Find Truly Altruistic Love?

- In our world, no concept has been more misunderstood than love. Takeo Arishima said, "Love relentlessly takes" as a riff of "Love generously gives," meaning that not even love can free humans from their baser instincts. He suffered from "the conflict between love for others and egoism," eventually coming to the conclusion that there is no such thing as pure altruism, leading him to eloping with a married woman and ultimately committing suicide.
- "As a result of Arishima's apostasy, he had a great void deep within his heart, that he struggled to fill with his own strength, without depending on God, Christ, or any other so-called man of God. This is where his anguish existed, and I believe this is where he struggled. However, no matter how great he was, Arishima could not fill this void by himself. The more he tried, the greater the void became. He attempted various means—writing and socialism. He thought that he had filled the void to some extent by winning the adoration of many people, especially young

people. However, the praise of others could not satisfy him, and he became increasingly lonely and desolate even as his fame increased. He ended up hating life.”

Kanzo Uchimura “Takeo Arishima as an Apostate” *Yoruzo Choho*

- Uchimura said that Arishima tried and failed to find fulfillment on his own, because only God could provide it. He thought that his life was his alone, forgetting to share it with God, humanity, his country, and his friends. According to Arishima, “Whoever says that he loves is a hypocrite.” While that conclusion might be true, it leads nowhere. That is why Jesus prays here, so that Christians will be aware of the poverty of their hearts, seek God, and be filled.

3. Love One Another

- The explosive growth of the early church, despite its many problems, was due to the believers’ relationships based on love and forgiveness. They did not hide their problems but faced them honestly with God and each other, creating a community of forgiveness and mutual aid.
 - a. Communal living: believers (Barnabas and others) sold their possessions and contributed to the church, which distributed it to those in need. However, Ananias and Sapphira lied, and God’s judgment fell on them as a result (Acts 4-5). In spite of this incident, the honest and earnest lives of the believers attracted the hearts of the people, who were seeking authenticity. **Acts 5:13-14** ¹³ But no one else dared to join them, even though all the people had high regard for them. ¹⁴ Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women.
 - b. When a problem arose with Greek-speaking widows feeling they were treated unfairly compared with Hebrew-speaking widows in the distribution of food, the church leaders did not downplay the problem. They appointed seven stewards to solve it, and more people joined the church (Acts 6:1-7)
- After Jesus’ prayer at the Last Supper, the disciples would not see him again until after the resurrection. At that time, Jesus entered the room saying, “Peace be with you.” What did that mean to the disciples?
 - a. No doubt they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, but what was perhaps more distressing to them was that they had abandoned their faith and betrayed the Lord in the name of self-preservation. The disciples were ashamed to meet the Lord, and they were deeply regretful. **John 20:19-23** ¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
 - How liberating these words of Jesus must have been to their hearts! Jesus’ concern for his disciples when he said twice, “Peace be with you.” Peace, in the New Testament, means the grace of forgiveness and the peace that comes with it.
 - b. Jesus emphasized forgiving and accepting his disciples with abiding love, not holding a grudge against them because of their betrayal. He offered that forgiveness not only to them, but also to their neighbors and even to foreign countries. This is how human beings, made in the image of God, should be. Through the restoration of relationships, one experiences the restoration of humanity and true fulfillment.
- The process of recovery begins with an honest and concrete admission of the problem to God and before men. C.f. Jacob at Peniel

Conclusion:

- 1) Have you received God’s forgiving love? Are you continually receiving it? When have you received it most recently?
- 2) To whom should you offer this forgiving love?