

Good morning.

I have a sign. I always have signs. Not really. Sign for the day. Maybe you've seen this when you've texted.

Maybe you've seen it on Facebook. It's officially called the folded hands emoji. All right, designed in 1999 by a Japanese designer because in those days you were limited in how many characters you could text, so they thought they'd come up with some images that would say more than words, right? 176 images in the original set. The original set is now in a museum in New York City, but this is meant to convey what?

Okay, I heard 'em all. It was originally kinda, you know, by a Japanese designer, this gesture initially was meant to be please, thank you, or gratitude, right? It kind of morphed, 2008 Apple adopted it, became more universal in the late 2010s, and then it became, because Western, it became praise. It became blessing. And you see these a lot.

You know, my mom passed away 6 weeks ago and people were posting this on text or on Facebook or Instagram. But you know, I just did this today actually this morning 'cause I wanted to see. You start texting pray, this comes up as one of the options. You start texting thanks, this comes up as one of the options. You start texting please, it comes up as one of the options.

And typically, What we're told, what I've read at least, and I don't know if it's true, if you're over 45 and you use this emoji, it means, usually means pray or blessing. Now if you're 30 to 45, it might mean something more like thank you or please or hope so. And it did come in the 2010s, some people thought it was a high five. And then it had like light flashes out of it. High five, right?

And then you talk about, this is typical, I don't like using generational, you know, Alpha A, you know, Generation A, B, C, D, Alpha, whatever it is people might use it now for. Please, please do this for me. But whatever it means, we all know to some degree it has that sense of I'm praying for you. But often, I was talking to somebody between services, when we say that, I'm praying for you, What are you praying for? We say that often, and I'm just— just an aside here— instead of telling somebody you're praying for them, actually pray for them.

God, give this person supernatural peace in this hard time in their life. And then tell them, I prayed for you. This is what I prayed for you. Sometimes saying, I'm praying for you, can almost be sometimes a lazy way of communicating care, when instead of saying, I'm praying for you, just pray for them. And tell them, I prayed for you, all right?

But so, you know, we want people to pray for us, but here's the question. Does Jesus send these emojis our way at times? I don't get any texts from Jesus, and if you do, you probably need to go get some help, right? But does Jesus pray for us? And we're looking today at a passage where he does.

He prays for us, but he prays specifically for us. And that's what we're looking at today. And we typically think of Jesus in prayer, we think of the Lord's Prayer, but that's Jesus teaching us how to pray. We're gonna look at a passage today, it's the longest prayer in the Bible where Jesus prays for us. And what can we learn from that?

So the series is called Built. Been doing this for a number of weeks now, talking about the church. You know, it's built with a purpose, it's built different, it's built with people in mind. And in this case, we're gonna see it's built by Jesus and his prayers for us as a church is what undergirds what we do. So we're gonna look at a passage, Matthew— John 17.

Beth just read part of it. And John 17, let me set the context for this. 'Cause, so John 13, 14, 15 is the Last Supper. Jesus is with his disciples. He knows the next couple days are gonna be traumatic for him.

They don't know that yet. They know he was washing their feet, which was unusual. They probably knew there was an unusual emotional heaviness in the room as they're doing Passover. They know Judas got up and left. They don't know all that's going on, but there was an emotional thickness to the moment.

And then we don't know if John 17 happened in the room when they were eating or on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus stopped and maybe sat down and prayed for them. But John 17, in that emotional context narrative, he prays for his disciples. So you can imagine if this is what he's praying literally hours before he's gonna be arrested and then tortured and then killed, maybe what he's praying really matters to him. It's really important to him. And that's what he wants us to know about what he cares about for us and how he does specifically pray for us.

He doesn't just pray for us, he prays very specifically for us. So John 17, I'm gonna read part of it first and I just want you to listen and then we're gonna read part of it together, but I want you to listen as if you're one of those disciples in the room or on the road, wherever they were, and you're listening and you know what he's praying is something This is a big deal to Jesus, right? And he's praying for you, he's praying for them, but I'm gonna start with verse 13 of John 17. Just listen as if you were one of those around the table or around the rock, wherever they were. So this is where Jesus

had already prayed a number of statements.

Now he says this, I'm coming to you now, Father, but I say these things while I'm still in the world so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. Jesus cares about your joy, like big time. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of this world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Make them holy by your truth. Teach them your word, which is truth. And just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so that they can be made holy by your truth. Now this next part's gonna be on the screen here.

We're gonna read it together and I wanna highlight something. Put that up there if you would, the passage that has the highlighted. I'm looking at either screen. It's not gonna be on one and not the other. What am I thinking, right?

There it is, all right. So I want you to notice, I have the words so that highlighted in yellow. All right, it's an important, it's a 3-letter Greek word, but Jesus repeats that phrase, that word, probably 10 times in this passage. So that, so, and it's used like this, you know, I set an alarm so that I won't oversleep. I bring an umbrella so that I won't get wet.

I'm studying for this test so that I can do well. I speak slowly so that everyone could understand me. All right, so so that kind of implies a purpose, a vision, a mission. So when we're gonna read this all together, but when we get to the so that, just read it a little more with oomph, 'cause I want you to know that Jesus is very specific and he has a very clear purpose for how he prays for us, all right? So join me out loud, here we go.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. So that 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me so that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me— so that they may be brought to complete unity.

Then the world will know that you sent me, and have loved them even as you have loved me. So that phrase appears, I think, 8, 9, 10 times just in this prayer alone. Very purposeful. He's very clear about, very specific how he's praying for us. Now I wanna flip to the next slide, same passage, we're not gonna read it again.

This time you'll notice in yellow, 3 different times he says, may they

be one, may they be one, and may they be brought to complete unity. So he's very purposeful, but at the telescope of his purpose is, I want them to be one, to be unified. And it's a relational thing. I want them to be one. And the phrase being one or being unified happens numerous times throughout the rest of the chapter.

So this is what matters to Jesus. So point number 1 is this, Jesus is praying for you. Now you might think, well, Again, I said we always think of the Lord's Prayer, you know, that's how he's showing us how to pray. This is an example where he actually is praying for us. The Bible tells us in the book of Romans, Paul says Jesus now is sitting at the place of honor at God's right hand and he's pleading for us.

Think about that for a second. I don't know exactly how that dynamics of it, but Jesus asking God the Father to answer prayer on our behalf. There's some kind of supernatural power happening there. He's praying for us. He's praying for you.

Hebrews says Jesus lives forever to intercede with God on our behalf. So if nothing else you hear this morning, understand that Jesus is for you. He's praying for you and he's praying very specifically for you. He's praying so that certain things happen. The passage I read before we got on the screen, it was so that they would be filled with my joy.

Jesus is praying that you'd be filled with his joy, a deep, deep joy. He's praying that you'll be made holy. Some of the versions talk, it says he's praying for them to be sanctified, but it's holy is the word. And to be clear on that one, holiness, when he's praying for you to be holy, he's praying that you would be distinct, pure, and powerful. That's what holy means.

Sometimes we get the word holiness and think it means holier than thou and arrogant and puffy and stuffy. But when he's praying for you and me to be holy, he's asking God that we would be distinct, pure, and powerful. So he's praying for our joy, he's praying for us to be holy. He actually prays, keep them safe from the evil one. Jesus, of course, believed that there was satanic forces against the kingdom of God, and he was praying, he is praying that you would be guarded against any of the lies and the accusations from Satan.

In your life, and those happen, it does happen. We need Jesus to pray for us in those ways. He says, teach them your word, Father. He wants us to understand how God speaks to us through the Bible. He's praying for you for that.

But the thing he prays the most for that comes up a lot, he's praying that, he says, may they be one. May they be brought to complete unity. And by that he doesn't mean everybody sitting in the same room at the same time, but he's talking about a relational unity that is hard to get to. If you're married, you know that. If you have kids or parents,

you know that.

Unity is hard, but it matters to Jesus. Because, and he's praying for the disciples. Now understand, the disciples, they probably got along, but they probably had some conflict, right? You have on one side, you have Matthew, who worked for the Roman government. He was pro-tax.

All right, then over here you have Simon the Zealot who was like MIGA, Make Israel Great Again. He was on the other side of the political spectrum. And they were on the same team following Jesus. So you can imagine they probably had some conflict at times, but they understand, no, we have to be centered on Jesus. It's not about our politics.

It's not about other things. But there's also other kind of interpersonal offenses we have with each other. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, so that's kinda some tension. So when Jesus is praying for you to be one, he's praying for your marriage, he's praying for your relationship with your kids, with your parents, with your coworkers, with people you do not like. But specifically in this case, people that have the Spirit of Jesus.

And please be honest with me 'cause I'll be honest with you. There are people who have the Spirit of Jesus in them that I have a hard time sometimes getting along with, and I have in my history. You do too, please be honest, right? I'm not gonna ask you to name names or anything, but you know what I'm talking about, it's hard. Unity is hard.

I don't mean uniformity, but unity where you're on the same spirit, the same spirit of Jesus. So Jesus is praying for you right now. Every one of you has the Spirit of Christ in him, in you, he's praying for you. And he wants your joy, he wants your holiness, he wants you to have healthy, harmonious, Spirit-centered relationships with everybody in your life. These are important to him.

It's the night before he gets killed. So he's not only praying for you, he's praying for them. Who's them? Them, he calls it the world. I'm praying for the world, but it's your family, it's your friends, it's your neighbors who don't know Jesus.

That's the them. When he's praying for the world, he's not just praying for the universe and the atmosphere, he's praying for the people that don't have the Spirit of Christ in them. He actually says what we read earlier. He says, my prayer is not for them alone, you. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that they may be one, Father, as you are in me and I am in you.

So he's saying, I'm praying also for those people. Think of somebody right now in your life or people in your life that don't know Jesus. Family, friends, neighbors, coworkers. Jesus is praying for them that

they might believe through our message. I don't mean just the message like a really nice outline printed on paper, but the message he's talking about is the message of holiness and joy and our unity.

But he's praying for those who don't yet know Jesus. But here's what's interesting about this passage. He says, I pray that they will all be one, us, so that, so that the world will believe and know that I am sent by God. So wait a minute, so somehow our unity, our relational harmony in marriages, in churches, between churches, has some kind of effect on them believing that Jesus was sent by God. Then he says too, may they all be one so that they, the world, those people you know that don't follow Jesus, so that they would know that you love them, Father, as much as you love me.

Jesus is saying, I'm praying for people that don't know me, who are far from God right now, but I'm praying that their unity, our unity as followers of Jesus, has some kind of impact on a nonbeliever actually beginning to understand the love of God in their lives. And it's like, how does that, it's not like this, so that if you're unified, these people, those people you love who don't know Jesus, will know that Jesus was sent by God and they'll know they're loved by God. And it's like, why does that happen? I mean, we're not saying anything. We're just living in relational unity around the Holy Spirit.

But Jesus is clearly saying there's a connection there. And it's not because we have a really good sounding evangelistic outline, it's because we're unified and we don't trumpet that. But so how does that happen? It seems to me like Paul in the book of Corinthians, he writes to the church in Corinth and he says Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the eyes of those who don't believe. He's blinded their eyes so they cannot see the glory of Jesus.

Jesus is praying, I'm praying for these people, God, because when they're unified, they have my joy and my glory in them, and somehow then these people who are blinded by Satan start to see. Our actions, our interrelational unity, has an unblinding effect. That's not a word I'm just making up. It's an unblinding effect on those who don't believe in a way that we don't fully understand. It's the invisible world.

If Satan blinds the eyes of people you know and I know that don't know Jesus, then the only thing that can open the eyes then would be an equal or superior force, the Holy Spirit, and that happens when we live out the gospel message, not simply the message of Jesus died for your sins, but the message of forgiveness and hope and relational harmony with one another. So he's praying for them, but he's praying for them and their coming to the Father has a lot to do with us.

Third point is this, your relationship with others matter to Jesus. They do matter. And I'm specifically talking about your relationship

with others who are followers of Jesus. Followers of Jesus, who have the Spirit of Jesus. Not just people who go to church, but people who have the Spirit of Jesus.

And that's true at this church, that's true in multiple churches in Bloomington where they have the Spirit of Christ in them. Jesus even said earlier in the Last Supper evening, I'm giving you a new command. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have really good doctrine.

Oh, he didn't say that. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you go to church every Sunday. He didn't say that. By this everyone, your neighbors, your friends, your family, your coworkers, will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

Sounds pretty easy, but it's actually quite hard. You said it's hard in marriage, it's hard in families, it's hard It's hard in your small group. It's hard between churches. We have better doctrine than that church, or they have better than this. It's not about doctrine.

Doctrine matters, but Jesus, what matters way more to Jesus at this night where hours from now he's gonna be arrested and tortured, what matters to him really, really, really deeply is our relational unity with one another around the Holy Spirit. Doctrine matters, going to church matters. Being in a small group matters, volunteering in church matters, none of that matters if we don't love one another. And you know and I know that's hard. I'm sure right now you can think of somebody that is hard for you to love who's a follower of Jesus.

Maybe they've hurt you.

Maybe they've hurt you and it's hard for you. It's hard for you to forgive. But he said, May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them. May they experience unity so them will know, they will know that God, you love them. You love those people who don't know you yet.

So there's a so that effect there. So if you go to, let's break it down to be more practical though because Ephesians 4, Paul kind of talks about unity again. He says there's one faith, there's one hope, there's one baptism, there's one Father, there's one Spirit. He's using that word one, one, one. And I think about that when we think about other churches in our town or other places that may have different doctrine, but if they have the Spirit of Jesus in them, they trust Jesus, then we're one with them.

But then Paul gives some very specific things, very specific tools. In our toolbox that will go to building unity. So I want you to think of

somebody right now that you might have a hard time with. Maybe they're a follower of Jesus. Actually, I wanna ask you if they are a follower of Jesus, have a hard time with them, you're at odds with them for whatever reason, they've hurt you, they disagree with you, but you know if you're honest they have the Spirit of Jesus.

And here's some things Paul says to do to the Ephesian church. Be humble.

Maybe God's asking you to be humble in a situation where there's conflict. Paul also says in Ephesians 4, be gentle.

Maybe your style of argumentation, which I tend toward, can be harsh, loud, not gentle. And maybe Jesus is asking you To be gentle in that situation. And it might be a situation that comes up this week you don't even think about, but it might happen all of a sudden and you're like, I need to be gentle here. So be humble, be gentle. Paul tells them to be patient.

Be patient with the people in your lives that are maybe rubbing you the wrong way. It's the way to unity.

Make every effort, Paul says, to keep unity by the bond of peace. Are you, am I making every effort to find a place of relational peace with those we know and love in the body of Jesus? And then Paul even says later to the Philippian church, consider their interests above your own. But God, I think I'm right. Consider their interests above your own.

But God, you know what they said about me, they hurt me. Consider their interests above your own. But God, but God, but God, but God. Consider their interests above your own. Doesn't mean we become doormats, we don't get to walk on us, it's not at all.

When Jesus said turn the other cheek, it wasn't like being like a doormat. It was more of a, it was an act of courage to turn the other cheek, an act of strength to be humble, to be gentle, to look for ways to build peace with someone when you think it's impossible.

And then Paul says in Philippians, then you'll be mature. If you live that way toward others in the body of Christ, family members, marriage, whatever, then you'll be mature. And then he says this, you will have the fullness of Jesus in you. And if you have the fullness of Jesus in you, then you have the fullness of joy, fullness of peace, There's nobody here that wouldn't die for that kind of fullness. We want that, but the pathway Jesus says is through our relationships, through being peaceful and humble, patient, and we can be filled with the fullness of Jesus.

And I guarantee you that if everybody here, including me, was filled

with the fullness of Jesus, we'd have an explosive impact on the community of Bloomington. For every church in town that says they follow Jesus, if everybody was filled with the fullness of Jesus, Revival would be like a massive thing in Bloomington. But that's what it takes. It takes for us to individually obey what Jesus is asking us to do to build toward that oneness and the unity. So my last statement is this, and this is not on the screen.

I didn't come up— I didn't have this statement till after I returned to the PowerPoint slides, but I printed it out on a big piece of paper with red, right? You can't all see it, but here's the statement. We worship Jesus best by doing What matters to him most. We worship Jesus best by doing what matters to him most. What matters to him most?

Our unity, our oneness, our complete unity with one another. We worship Jesus best by doing what matters to him most. Yes, go to church on Sunday. Yes, give money, be generous. Yes, volunteer.

Yes, read your Bible. But we worship Jesus best when we do what matters to him most. And what matters to him most is relational oneness around the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness, confession of sin to one another, saying I'm sorry, being gentle, being humble.

Listening. And just so you know, I could preach this with a mirror in front of me without even you there, 'cause it's exactly what I need to be hearing too. It's kind of a— God's funny with me. Almost every week I have to preach a sermon, or weeks before, I have to go through the very thing I'm preaching. And it's like, okay God, I get it.

You want me to understand this is for me too. It's for all of us. We worship Jesus best when we do that. What matters to him most. So why don't you close your eyes with me.

Jesus, I'm gonna pray even just in these last few songs we sang, I'm gonna pray that you bring images up to each one of us, maybe images of people that you're asking us to make every effort toward peace. Maybe we just, maybe we pray for them. Maybe we look for ways to forgive them. Maybe you're asking us to be patient or gentle or humble with them. But would you bring up those people and would you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, give us the ability to be that way toward them, to embody the life of Jesus toward them?

We want people to know your love, Jesus, and we know that it's largely dependent not only on your Holy Spirit, of course, but on how we embody that love and forgiveness toward others in our own lives. We love you.

Thanks for praying for us. And that sounds kind of small, but it's hugely, huge gratitude, Jesus, that right now you're praying for every single person in this room who has the Spirit of Christ. You know our

stories, you know our struggles, you know what's in front of us, and you're praying for us. You're for us, you're not against us, you never have been. We ask this all in Christ's name, amen.

We finish every Sunday with what's called response time, and I'm gonna – I've already prayed this, that during while we're singing, I'm hoping the Holy Spirit will bring up people in your mind that he's asking you to take a move toward peace, and that'll be one response you have a choice to make. But we also will have people on the sides with orange lanyards on there to pray for you, and you can ask them about something related to sermon, something not related to sermon, maybe just Maybe you just need somebody to pray for you that you would take the step toward peace with somebody, toward unity, toward wholeness. But we also do communion every Sunday and we don't dismiss by rows, so if you're new, you just come on up once we start singing. There's a little packet that has orange juice, grape juice. I guess orange juice would be okay.

I don't know, I was thinking breakfast, I don't know. It's grape juice. Of course Jesus had wine, but juice on the bottom. And it's indicative of when Jesus said the night he was betrayed. So all this happened the same night, but he said, this is my body broken for you.

Every time you eat this, remember me. This is my blood shed for you. Every time you drink this, you proclaim forgiveness of sins. Remember me. So when you put this into your body, down your throat, it's an invitation to Jesus for more of him in you, more of his Holy Spirit in you.

So you can be the kind of person that lives out the gospel of peace and unity with Jesus so the world can know him better and know the love of Jesus better. So, Jesus, we're grateful that you— again, I say grateful kind of trivially, but I don't mean it that way. We're grateful that you gave yourself for us. We're grateful that you're for us in this, for the erasing and the forgiveness of our sins, and we're grateful that you still pray for us So we can be full of your joy, your holiness, and just full of peace and everything about you. We want to be those kind of people.

So we love you, Jesus. We ask this all in your name. Amen.