

# The Rescue of Love

*Love the Way Jesus Taught It*

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**Bible Text:** John 17:1-26

**Preached On:** Thursday, March 20, 2014

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One of the most intriguing stories of 2014 has been the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370. This wasn't a small, outdated plane, that was a Boeing 777 equipped with all the latest technology to ensure that the passengers would be transported safely to their destination yet this plane disappeared over a month ago with 239 people on board. It's amazing how this story has gripped the attention of men and women all over the world. You can hardly access a news story without hearing something else about this plane and perhaps that's because something deep inside of man resonates with the thought and the importance of a rescue, even if in this case it's only the rescue of the remains of the plane or the black boxes or the bodies of the passengers and crew if, in fact, they perished in the crash. But that's enough to keep this effort going at an incredible scale. For example, the amount of money being spent. An estimate came out earlier this week that already 44 million dollars had been expended. The likelihood is, this effort will eventually cost hundreds of millions of dollars. I actually heard an estimate yesterday just for the Blue Fin alone, the eventual cost of that will be a quarter billion dollars with a "b." A billion dollars, making it by far the most expensive search in all of aviation history.

The breadth of those involved is also extraordinary. There are now 26 different countries contributing planes and ships and submarines and satellites to the search. That's noteworthy because countries generally don't want others to know their technological capabilities because of the military secrets involved. Yet the importance of this rescue is leading countries that often compete with and even threaten one another to actually work side-by-side.

It's also interesting to listen to some of the men and women who have been involved in hour after hour sitting in a plane seat scouring the water for even a trace of debris. They say things like, "I just want to give the families of this disaster answers and closure. I want my efforts and hope that my efforts could result in those persons having peace." The principle is pretty clear, I think: human beings will sacrifice just about anything if there is the possibility of a rescue.

Well, here's my question for you this morning: where did that come from? Who put such a passion for rescue in the hearts of men and women all over this planet? With that in

mind, please open your Bible this morning to John 17. That's on page 87 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. So, John 17 or page 87 of the back section of the New Testament of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

You know, we certainly enjoy gathering together every Lord's day but there is no question that the most important day on the calendar for the Christian is today. It's Easter Sunday. The substitutionary death of the perfect Lamb of God was essential for the rescue. It was essential for the reconciliation of sinful man to a holy God. The writer of Hebrews said it like this, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." The repetitive drumbeat in the Old Testament was: sin demands a sacrifice. Sin demands a sacrifice along with the corresponding promise that some day God would provide a flawless and a final payment for our sin in the person of his dear Son, the promised Messiah of Israel.

Christ's death on the cross was designed by wicked men to create the worst pain and suffering imaginable. But far worse than the physical torment was Jesus' separation from his holy Father as Jesus bore the weight and the penalty of our sin. You could summarize all of that with the words "promises fulfilled." That's what the New Testament is. That's what the New Covenant is. For example: the prophet Isaiah had said 700 years before, if this does not take your breath away spiritually on Easter Sunday, I would check my pulse. Isaiah, 700 years before Christ was born, "But he was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our wellbeing fell upon him and by his scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him."

Friend, you and I could not predict what's going to happen seven days from now. The one in charge of this rescue, to prove that it was true, prophesied it 700 years before it was fulfilled in precise detail and that is what happened on Good Friday, a way was made possible for our rescue. Well, that was Friday. We celebrate Easter because three days later he rose from the dead proving that the price he had paid on the cross was accepted by the Father and proving that sin and even death could be conquered and proving that new life and abundant life and eternal life was available to all who would repent and believe in him. And Paul in the great resurrection chapter in the Bible and if you've not reviewed this chapter recently, I would encourage you to do so today or soon. It's 1 Corinthians 15:20, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man," Adam, "came death, by a man," Jesus, "also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." Friends, Christ is risen. He's risen indeed. Let the rescue begin in earnest.

Well, that's why we could legitimately adopt as our church's theme this year "Loving Our Neighbors." And just to be sure that we understand specifically what we mean by that from time-to-time I've been reminding you of the five ways we're trying to do that this year. One is implementing our soul care initiatives to achieve deeper friendships within our church family. We recognize and I hope you do too, that the Christian life biblically

is lived out in community. It's lived out in the context of meaningful relationships of fellow rescuees. So, we want to cultivate the kind of loving friendships that help us grow together.

Secondly, loving our neighbors as church members, growing in our ability to build stronger relationships with those who live right around our church, believing that when Jesus said we're to love our neighbors, he may have actually meant our literal neighbors.

Third, developing our parish mentality to especially serve those who live near our two ministry campuses. God placed us in West Lafayette and in East Lafayette for a reason and we want to think strategically and proactively about what it means to especially serve and minister to those who live all around us, loving our church's neighbors.

Fourth, launching our Faith Community Development Corporation to serve urban neighborhoods with excellence. If the city of Lafayette is asking us to help revitalize urban neighborhoods with some of the highest concentrations of poverty in our entire community, we want to show Christ's love to every last street in this town in as many ways as possible.

Then, constructing the first phase of our Senior Living Community. That was one of the 186 strategic initiatives that this church family adopted last year to cover the next five years together and, by God's grace, we hope to accomplish loving senior citizens at a higher level than ever this year. Well, think about all that. It's going to take the power of the resurrected Christ, the rescuing one, to help us accomplish all of that.

These last several weeks we've been working our way verse-by-verse through the Upper Room Discourse found in the gospel of John chapters 13-17, talking about loving the way Jesus taught it. Today brings us to the final section when the Lord now turns his attention to the Father. He's been talking to his disciples and now he's going to talk to the Father and he utters a marvelous prayer for himself and for his disciples and you'll see it. He even prays for people like you and me. As I read, I would encourage you to imagine the Lord praying this just prior to going to the cross. Be looking for the emphasis on this promised rescue and especially be looking for the repetitive themes that certainly were on the Lord's heart as he cried out to the heavenly Father.

I'm in John 17 beginning in verse 1,

“1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the

world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

“13 'But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. 20 I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me.

“22 'The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

We're talking this morning about the rescue of love and with the time we have remaining, let's look for three themes dominant on Jesus' mind before dying on the cross in our place. The rescue of love.

Friends, first of all, we were being rescued for a new purpose. I'm sure that you noticed that one of the words that was repeated throughout this prayer of our Lord was the word

“glorified.” He used it over and over in these verses. Well, what does that mean? It means “to explain.” When somebody glorifies someone or something else, that person or thing is better explained by their actions or their words. It means “to explain” or “to clarify” or “to praise” or “to honor” or “to clothe in splendor.” Jesus said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.” And the juxtaposition of those ideas is critical to understanding what the Lord is saying here. It's certainly not I want to draw attention or honor to myself, it's a matter of the death that he was about to die and the resurrection that he's about to experience will reveal things about God's divine character and nature that could be explained in no better way.

You see, it's one thing to talk about God's love, it's something else to see it glorified. It's something else to see it revealed, to magnify it on a cruel cross. God will be glorified more because of what was about to occur. It's one thing to talk about God's power, it's something else to see it on display. At the entrance to the empty tomb and all of the post-resurrections appearances of Christ to literally hundreds of people, those are historical facts. According to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, “Father, glorify your Son. Allow my character to be more clearly seen through what is about to occur so that I may in turn glorify you.”

Now, it should probably come as no surprise to us that that was on the mind of Jesus just prior to going to the cross because that was the focus of his entire life. In his commentary on the gospel of John, John MacArthur lists far more passages on this part of the subject than we could ever review this morning but it's fascinating how frequently Jesus spoke about how he wanted his life to glorify the Father, to give others a better understanding of who God was and what he was like. That's even true at his birth. You remember this aspect of the Christmas story, don't you? What did the angel say? “Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God.” There it is, at the birth, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.”

How fitting that the entire story of his life on earth started with God being glorified. In his teaching, right out of the blocks in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and,” what? “Glorify your Father who is in heaven.” It happened over and over during the miracles like this: the healing of the paralytic. “He got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone so that they were all amazed and were,” what? Bam, on task, “glorifying God and saying, We've never seen anything like this.” We understand God the Father more because of what we have just seen in the life of his Son.

We spoke about that regarding his death and resurrection in the verses just prior to the Upper Room Discourse. “Now my soul has become troubled,” Jesus said, “and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” In fact, we could say that Jesus sought to glorify the Father in everything. He said in John 6, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

Friends, that is a really quick overview of how frequently Jesus explained what he was doing at that moment was because of his conscious and foremost desire to always glorify the Father so that men and women would walk away from their interactions with him with a better understanding of the nature and the character of God. So, it shouldn't surprise us that just prior to his death, he had returned to this great theme and imprinted it all over the prayer to the Father. However, what ought to surprise us, what ought to really catch our attention, is that Jesus transferred that possibility to people like you and me. This can be a focus for us because of the power of the rescue. I hope you notice that development in the argument that a couple of key points in the text like in verse 10 where Jesus said, "All things that are mine are yours and yours are mine and I have been glorified." Boom. "In them." Or verse 22, "The glory which you have given me, I have," here it is, "given to them."

I would suggest to you that totally changes the nature of this discussion. You see, it's one thing to talk about Jesus glorifying the Father but people like you and me, that's going to take a rescue. That's going to take a rescue. Why? Because if you're following this logic then you realize I did not compliment you just now. Why? Well, go all the way back to the beginning and I realize you might say, "Well, I don't believe in that Adam and Eve stuff. I don't believe in that Garden of Eden stuff." Well, Jesus did and the Apostle Paul did so we're going to side with them. Remember earlier we quoted from 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul spoke about the first man, Adam. Well, let's have a little quiz: Scripture teaches that when we were created, we were made in the image of God. What does that mean? We were made like him. We were made to glorify him. We were made to represent him. And unlike animals, unlike any other aspect of creation, we possess the capacity to think, to reason, to choose to live in submission to God, to subdue the environment around us in order to bring him greatest glory, that theologically we were dominion-havers if we would choose to follow his word. We would be images; we would be representatives. What an incredible privilege: representatives of him.

Which is why our adversary chose to attack on that very issue: the goodness of God's character and the reliability of his counsel. The first words out of our adversary's mouth, "Hath God said?" He wanted you to abdicate your image. He wanted you to abdicate your purpose. He wanted you to abandon your design. When human beings choose to rebel against the commands of God that that image was not lost but it was severely marred which is why, friends, we're not simply in need of reformation, we're not simply in need of improvement. It's not like your already wonderful character just needs a little bit of Jesus tweak. We were in need of rescue. We had to be born again, given a new heart and a new spirit and a new capacity to live in a way that is consistent with the image in which we were made.

That's how significant this rescue had to be because sin made you and me spiritually dead which is why Romans 8:29 is so crucial to that part of our understanding, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be," what? "Changed, conformed to," what? "To the image of his Son and he would be the firstborn among many brethren." What that means is that if you have admitted and repented of your sin, I hope you have, and placed

your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, think about this resurrection possibility, you can begin living progressively in a way that, what did Jesus pray? In a way that progressively glorifies your God. Being a flesh and blood answer to the very prayer that Jesus made in the Upper Room. That's the point of 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Well, I think that leads us to a couple of questions, wouldn't you think? One question would be: have you been rescued? Has there been a definite time in your life where you admitted your sin? And I understand for we proud Americans, we want to think that we can do it on our own, we don't need anyone to die for us. Really? If that were the case, why didn't Jesus stay in heaven and shout down to you and me, "Be really good." We all know the answer to that, huh? We all know the answer to that and I would just ask you: has there ever been a definite time in your life where you have bowed your knee in repentance and faith, trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? And if you've never done that, we would urge you to do that today. God is a rescuing God and Scripture teaches us that without faith it's impossible to please him. It starts with believing in him.

Christian friend, think about this: think about your last week, how much focus do you place on a moment-by-moment basis on being an answer to Jesus' prayer of living in a way that glorifies him? Because here's the opposite bookend to what we're studying thus far: it's Psalm 10:4, it is pride, "The wicked does not seek him. In all his thoughts, there is no room for God." You see, this particular provision of the rescue only comes to fruition if you choose to consciously allow it to. You say, "What does that look like in real time? Make this practical." Let's do this: let's compare a 1 Corinthians 10:31 kind of person, someone who sincerely wants to glorify God with a Psalm 10:4 person who practically, God is not in all of his or her thoughts. And I would encourage you to think about the last week on the basis of: to what degree you were a flesh and blood answer to this particular aspect of the Upper Room prayer of our Lord.

You say, "What does it look like?" Well, let's say one of your children is misbehaving and obviously I'm not talking about you, I'm talking to the person sitting next to you. Let's say that's happening. Well, the Psalm 10:4 parent responds in sinful anger because the children are frustrating or inconveniencing him or her. Listen, be assured of this: when that interaction is over, the children will certainly have no reason to say, "Now I understand more of what God is like." Or "Mom and dad just glorified God." Whereas the 1 Corinthians 10:31 parent slows down and looks for opportunities to teach God's truth to that child and to model Christ's character in that difficult situation recognizing it as a divine opportunity to glorify God and be an answer to the prayer that Jesus made.

Let's say somebody mistreated you at work. The Psalm 10:4 person is scheming and fuming and strategizing and gossiping. Let's face it, if that's the way you're going to live, maybe you will get even in that moment, maybe you will get your pound of flesh and maybe that person will never dare mess with your bad self ever again but was God in any of your thoughts? Was there any attempt or desire to glorify him? The 1 Corinthians 10:31 person is on the look-out for how the character of God can be on display in that

crucial moment and, therefore, become a flesh and blood answer to the prayer of our Lord.

Now, you might say, "I can't possibly live that way, moment-by-moment. Seriously? I can't possibly live that way." Well, not by yourself but you understand, this was the soon to be resurrected Savior praying like this for you and remember what he said earlier in this discourse, "Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine so neither can you unless you abide in me." Thank the Lord that we were rescued for the purpose and the possibility of living in a way that actually glorified God.

Now, the second theme that was dominant on Jesus' mind during this prayer was how we were also being rescued to a new authority. You undoubtedly saw this as we were working our way through the text, this emphasis on the truth of God's word in this prayer and it's impossible, to understand the logical connection, it's impossible to live in a way that is progressively glorifying God unless we're also not consciously seeking to understand and then walk out the truth of his word. But you saw it in the text like in verse 6 where Jesus said to the Father, "I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours and you gave them to me and they have," what? "Kept your word." Or verse 8, "For the words which you gave me, I have given to them and they received them and understood them." Or verse 14, "I have given them your word which is why the world has hated them." Or that crucial verse, John 17:17, "Sanctify," change them, "in the truth. Your word is truth." Or verse 19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." Or verse 20, "I don't ask on behalf of these alone but for those also who will believe in me through their word."

Well, if the question before the house is: what was Jesus thinking about before he went to the cross? A definite part of the answer to that question is the power and the efficacy of his word, how this rescue process could be accomplished in and through the truth that he has given us.

Why is that so important? Fidelity to the word? That you on Easter Sunday would be wise to consider over the last 12 months how much focus you've placed on the word? And how much you've allowed yourself to be an answer to this prayer. Why is that so important? Well, remember the nature and the effect of the initial crash. We may never know what brought down Malaysian Flight 370 but we certainly know what brought down the human race. We saw it a moment ago: our adversary's initial and immediate attack was on the word. It always will be. "Hath God said?" Which is why the Apostle Paul said, "But I'm afraid," and listen, if a guy like the Apostle Paul says he's afraid, it's time for the people of God to listen up, "I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness," by the way, Paul believed in a literal interpretation of the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis apparently. So, don't confuse, "I don't believe that," with it not being true. "But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness your minds," whose? People like us, "your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."



Well, what affect did that have on mankind? Abdicating the truth? What effect did that have on mankind? Pick a verse. It was the worst crash, the worst spiritual disaster imaginable. So, we read in places like Genesis 6, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Or this verse I came across this week in my own Bible study, "In those days," Judges 21:25, the last verse in the book, "there was no king in Israel. Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes." Welcome to our culture, huh? Peter predicted this. It actually gets worse because there's a religious, in this case a false religious connotation to this, "False prophets also arose among the people just as there will also be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality." Because it's always about that. "Many will follow their sensuality and because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned." No wonder Jesus would pray so fervently that his children would remain committed to believing and acting on the truth.

Paul told young Timothy in this marvelous passage, one of the pastoral epistles, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is the judge of the living and the dead and by his appearing at his kingdom do," what? "Preach the word." You say, "What are you doing this morning?" Trying to obey this command. "Preach the word and be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." Can you imagine that? "But wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths but you be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Now, you might say, "Well, based on what is happening in our culture, is biblical truth in season or out of season?" Well, that becomes more obvious every day but it's certainly not a surprise. The Bible is clear about two simultaneous and opposing forces: 1. the risen Savior who will rescue men and women and build his church and make no doubt about this, the gates of hell will never prevail against it and at the same time, our world moving further and further away from biblical truth. That will only harm us as a church if we cave in to the relentless pressure to abandon certain aspects of biblical truth in order to gain the approval of man. That's what the theological liberals do and that approach is always organizationally suicidal. Or to spend the majority of our time and attention criticizing the world for their abandonment of biblical truth instead of focusing on how we can use God's truth to sanctify ourselves.

I agree with those who have recently observed that we may be in a cleansing period for the church of Jesus Christ in this sense: being part of a Bible believing church is less culturally acceptable all the time. I didn't say going to church, I said being part of a Bible believing church is less culturally acceptable all the time. And that could mean that our size decreases as those who are never really committed to the gospel in the first place are unwilling to accept the cultural pressure and rejection that sometimes comes from being associated with people who believe and practice the word of God. Well, if we have to

choose between so-called numerical success or fidelity to the word of God, friends, that's a choice we've already made. And this text suggests that just before Jesus went to the cross, he actually prayed that we would come out on the right side of that equation.

Can I ask you this morning: can you point to ways that you are trying to learn more of the word? And ways you're trying to more practically and faithfully apply the word that you already know? One day this week, I was over at McDonald's getting my morning cup of coffee. You say, "What day was that?" That would be every day. What do you think they're serving in heaven? So, all these movies about going to heaven, go to McDonald's for coffee. But anyway, I walked in and here are three ladies from our church sitting down and starting their day with their Bibles laid out, encouraging one another in the things of God. Those are flesh and blood results of the divine rescue resulting in people who now have a new authority in their life, the sufficient life giving truth of the word of God and because they believe their Savior is risen and alive, they know they can be sanctified in his truth because they believe his word is truth. I would just ask you as you think about it, it's a great time of year to think past the last 12 months and just ask, "Have I become a more faithful answer to this particular aspect of the prayer of my Lord?"

Thirdly, we're rescued to a new potential. You undoubtedly also saw this theme in the text of unity. These disciples have been a disjointed group of people for a lot of reasons. Just recently, they've spent time arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. They refused to take the position of servant and wash one another's feet. But Jesus prays for them. He says in verse 11, "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may," here it is, "that they may be one." Look around the room, "that they may be one." Again, in verses 20 and 21, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." Who would that be? That would be us, "That they may all be one." Again, in verses 22 and 23, "The glory which you have given me I have given to them that they may be one."

The Apostle Paul would later pick up on that theme in the book of Ephesians. "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called with all humility and gentleness. With patience, showing tolerance for one another and love." Why? "Being diligent, work at this to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." I can't tell you this morning how thankful I am for the essential unity of our church family which is fundamentally an answer to the prayer of Jesus and absolute proof of his power. Absolute proof that he is alive. You could never bring such a diverse group of people together and accomplish anything were it not for a really powerful Lord, huh?

I mentioned earlier this five year strategic ministry plan. We went through that process last year together, there wasn't a lick of fussing about that. There were all sorts of competing ideas, all sorts of possible ways that we could move forward together as a church but there wasn't any fussing. One of the reasons some churches would never do strategic planning is because the effect of trying to make a strategic plan would be multiple church splits. And the reason most churches are so small is because you can't get

100 of so-called God's people together and actually get along with one another. And so, the essential unity of our church was demonstrated in part by being able to put that plan together.

Or this Passion Play. I can't say enough about the men and women who serve so faithfully in this Passion Play and you could go down there and watch the performances, watch the practices, it's not like people were fussing and arguing with their creative license and blah, blah, blah. They were there to serve Christ. They were there to proclaim the message and even as they got more tired as the week moved on, they were able to do it with joy and you saw some of those same persons on our various platforms, Faith West and Faith East, doing the exact same thing even though they were so tired. Why? Because they're an answer to Jesus' prayer.

Some of these parish initiatives, meeting the needs of people around our two church campuses. Do you realize a fair amount of that has been accomplished over the winter time by teenagers and college students? Seriously, teenagers and college students serving their neighbors together in a unified way. Shall we all dive to our knees and proclaim Jesus must be alive. Jesus must be alive.

Or this, this Community Development Corporation that the city asked us to develop. Do you realize, we are now the proud owner of two of the ugliest houses in Lafayette. That's right. Congratulations for buying that hot mess right there. Wow! That was a great investment, huh? Absolutely. There it is. It's a beauty. You say, "Is there anything uglier than that?" Yeah, the second one we bought. There is that one. Beautiful house in a beautiful part of town. Look at how well maintained it has been. But, friends, listen, because Jesus is alive, we're going to fix those places up and we're going to make them available to someone who would not be able to afford a home otherwise and we're going to hope that those neighborhoods are going to be enhanced and improved as a result of that. And you have people doing that in a unified way because Jesus is alive.

We're going to be meeting with our senior citizens on Thursday. We've been dreaming about this for years and I'm so glad for Joe Blake, I'm so glad for Paul R. They have carried the mountain's share of this task along with the committee that's been working with us to select the actual builder for the homes and it's all coming together. We're going to be able to talk to our seniors this week about that and, Lord willing, this summer we're going to begin the process of building those homes together. Why? Because God helps his people function in a unified way.

I wish I had more time to talk about what's happening among the other Bible believing churches in our town but there's all sorts of initiatives about seeking to serve Christ in this community together. For example, there's a meeting coming up where our various Bible believing churches are working together for how we can meet the needs of area public schools and we want to do that in a unified way. Why? Because we want to be a flesh and blood answer to this prayer of our Lord.

What a marvelous prayer, huh? You know, a number of people I think have rightly commented over the years that this is really the Lord's prayer. We typically when we talk about the Lord's prayer, we talk about what he taught earlier recorded in places like Matthew 6, "Our Father who art in heaven." We call that the Lord's prayer. It's really not. Those were just instructions about how to pray. This, John 17, is the Lord's prayer. It's by far the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in all the Bible and it tells us the themes that were most dominant on his heart before he died.

Well, think about this: if it was that dominant, do you think that because he lives to give intercession for us he has ever prayed those same things for us since? F. B. Meyer said this about the prayer: its primary characteristic is timelessness. "Though uttered within a few hours of Calvary, it contains thoughts and expressions which must have been familiar to our Lord. At any moment during the centuries which followed, as we study it, therefore, we are listening to words which have been uttered," here it is, "many times on our behalf and will be uttered until we are with him." Perhaps Jesus is interceding on our behalf about these very things right now.

What a rescue. What a rescue the resurrection began. It rescued for a new purpose: glorifying him. It rescued to a new authority: his sufficient word. It rescued for a new potential: a group of people who seek to glorify him and honor his word in a unified way together.