That they may behold my glory

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[0:00] is the greatest book ever written. And within this book, this 17th chapter has itself a kind of preeminence.

An outstanding chapter within an outstanding book. And then within this chapter itself, I would argue that this verse 24 has its own preeminence as the most outstanding single unit in this outstanding chapter, in this outstanding book.
The language here is tremendous. The concepts are awesome. And they expose for us, as God's children, a destiny which is well nigh incredible.
And I want for a moment tonight, as we come to the close of our time of fellowship, to meditate with you a little on these words.
and to try to identify some of their most remarkable features. I want to notice, first of all, a peculiarity in the language with which the verse begins.
[1:41] It reads in our version and in most English versions, Father, I will that they also. But in the original, the language is, I will that that which.

Because the Lord is contemplating his church in its singleness, seeing it as a unity. And he's asking the blessing for the church from that point of view.
Father, I will that that which you have given me be with me what I am. And those words are a powerful reminder to us of the oneness of the church of God.
And that is the oneness which embraces all of those who are born again by God's grace. The basis of the unity of God's church is not a common creed.
It's not a common form of worship. Not a common form of church government. It is the great mystery of the new birth.
[3:01] And the great attending mystery of adoption. All those who are born again are one. All those adopted by God into his own family are one.

All who have God as Father have every other believer in the world for brother or for sister. and that is both a remarkably inspiring truth and also a challenging one because God's church is not found in any one tradition or denomination.
It encompasses all of the born again across every barrier of geography, of history, language, of language, culture, and also of denomination.
And every Lord's Day we gather we ought to remind ourselves in the opening sentiments of our worship that we ourselves are only a tiny fraction of the whole church of God.
Part of it on earth and part of it in heaven. it's remarkable too that in this particular context Jesus refers to a certain model for that unity or a certain pattern that they may be one as we are one.
[4:32] And he expects to find in the church of God and among the people of God a unity which is an exact parallel of that between God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And surely that again is an inspiring vision that relationships between all of God's people should be like those between the three persons of the God.
Let me pause over that just for a moment. That means that it is a unity within which there is variety because in the God head there is variety as well as unity because although each of the persons shares fully and equally in a common nature and in fact are numerically one and the same being in the mystery of God's triuneness yet each other persons has his own distinct attribute the father is the father the son is the son the spirit is the spirit and at the level of personhood none is an exact replica of the other in each there is the fullness of
God's nature and each has that nature in his own distinctive way and each person is God in his own way the father is God as father the son is God as the spirit as the son and the spirit is God as the spirit and in the same way within God's family there is variety there are no two believers the same

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any more than any two leaves in the forest are identical and each one of us is God's child God's son or daughter in his own way it's all whispered home to us very powerfully on Friday mornings or question meetings the different routes by which all of God's children came to faith and the different roads that they have walked since and the differences in personality and aptitude and gift and temperament and that's a very precious thing in fact there is no unity except where there is variety where all the parts are compacted together and one of the great challenges to us is to dare to be ourselves to be
God's people in our own way to be God's sons and God's daughters in his own way just as God the son was God in his own way and was not God in the father's way or in the spirit's way so you are God's son in your own way and you are God's daughter in your own way and it's also important to remind ourselves of this I think that within the unity of the Godhead each person gives space to the other person to be himself the father gives space to the son to be himself and the father and son give space to the holy spirit to be themselves and it's a very interesting vision I think this whole idea of space it's not God's way to crowd out when
[8:32] God created this universe God gave that universe a space to be itself and it operates largely through natural law God controlling it and governing it without compelling it and when God made man in his own image God gave man space to be himself and God gave him free will to make his own choices and the wonder is that God preserves and governs not by compelling or forcing the will of man but by working through man's own freedom of choice and this fact of space goes right back into the depths of what God himself is the relation between God and his creation reflects relations between father son and holy spirit and the relation between God and his children reflects again relation between

God the father God the son and God the holy spirit and I'm going to be so bold as to say to you that within the church of God we must reflect that space in exactly the same way as there is space within the Godhead and space between the persons of the God so that you give to your fellow believer the space to be himself or herself that doesn't mean withdrawing it doesn't mean not caring but it means that love is non-invasive and love is non-coercive and love is non-regimental and love gives space within every relationship marriage friendship whatever it is within the church of God to love must give space because the love of God gave space within the God who is love himself there was space for each person to be himself and so in this unity there is variety within this unity there is space within this unity there is sharing there is this tremendous community this having in common between all the persons of the
God they share the same nature and they share the same blessings and they share the same love for each other and they share the same love for the world and the same commitment to its redemption and within the church of God too there is the same community this sharing there is a shared bond with God there is a shared experience of being born again of being assimilated into God's family there is a shared experience of God's love and God's shepherding and God's caring and surely too there is a shared commitment to the harrowing of God's name and the expansion of God's kingdom to this great chief end of man's which is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever and the greater the area of community the more things we have in common so much the better and I've said before there is space but although there is space there is also this great sharing this sharing of experiences this sharing of resources this sharing of gifts because none of us is sufficient to himself and it's only as each of us contributes to and draws from the common pool that there is a healthy life for the church of God and unity also means I think cooperation it means our commitment to a common enterprise you go back again into the depths of God's own action for example their cooperation in the work of creation we know that God the Father creates and God the Son creates and God the Spirit creates because all those external acts of
God are acts of the Trinity of the three persons and you know the wonderful thing is this that of which is involved in creation each is involved in his own way the Father creates in his own way and the Son creates in his own way as the Word of God and the Holy Spirit creates in his own way hovering over the waters and that's equally true of course when it comes to providence God's preserving and governing of the world in which we live each person is involved and each person pursues common objectives and yet each one is involved again in his own way and when it comes to man's redemption and man's salvation of course every person the Father the Son the Spirit is involved in many passages it's the

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[14:17] Father's love that's emphasized God so loved that he gave and even in such areas as for example effectual calling it's often the Father is pointed to as the agent in the application of our salvation and of course the Son is involved although the Father was involved it's not the Father was on the cross or the Father was crucified that is the Son's contribution and the Son's responsibility to bear the sin of the world and to go into the far country of our human accursedness and to know the black hole of abandonment by God somewhere there is communion and community between God the Father and God the Son even in the pain of the cross and even in the agony of the dereliction but the

Son's role here is unique he saves and he loves in his own way and again the Holy Spirit is involved he loves in his way and he longs in his way and he contributes in his own way as the Holy Spirit he is the form of God's presence with us between all this cooperation within the Trinity in terms of creation providence and redemption is the church of God not also a great exercise in cooperation and it's not everybody involved in the great mission of the church to preach the gospel and to bring God's compassion into the darkness of our lost world are we not all involved in witness and all involved in caring and all involved in shepherding is that not part of responsibility as members of the body of
Jesus and each of us is involved in his own way not doing what somebody else can do perhaps can do better but doing what God has given to ourselves to do involved in our own way and sometimes perhaps in our own consciousness involved very very badly nevertheless involved by God's authority in this great cooperative activity you know if you look at the persons of the Godhead one of the great things is the mutuality if I could you obey with me for just a moment you know there is a great ancient doctrine with regard to the Trinity called the philiope which means that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son and sometimes you can present that as if it meant that somehow the
Holy Spirit was dependent on the Son in a way that the Son was not dependent upon the Holy Spirit you can present it that way and yet you come down to the life of Jesus and is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and he is led by the Holy Spirit and it is by the Holy Spirit by the eternal Spirit that he offers himself without spot to God and so if at one level the Spirit owes his procession to the Son at another level the Son owes his conception and his triumphant ministry to the work of the Holy Spirit and within the family of God that is exactly replicated the greatest man in the church is at some points a dependent and may sometimes be dependent upon the very humblest member of that church it's not a case of some being self sufficient and some being dependent in the
God head I dare to say each needs the others in the church each needs the other and so in the church there is cooperation and in the church there is something which again you must bear with me for a moment on the ancient church fathers especially of the Greek church spoke of something they called periphorasis and they meant by that that the unity within the Godhead and between the persons of the Godhead was such that each person lived in and around and through the other there was what they called a co adherence or a penetration of each by the others and I'm taking this up because I spoken about space the space between the persons of the
[19:59] Godhead and the space between the members of the body of Christ that indispensable space and yet at the same time there is this marvellous corresponding truth that each believer lives in and through and around each other believer and you know modern physics as highlighted follows in a very remarkable way that every single force in the universe and every single element and every single particle is affected by every other particle if something happens away in outer space it has significance for events within our own solar system and you know in the body of Christ I believe that what's happening tonight to a church or believer in outer

Mongolia has significance for the church of God in the island of Lewis and in the same way what's happening in the life of any single member of this audience tonight has significance for every other single member of this audience and for the church of God as an aggregate because we live in and through each other at one level it's an emphasis on mutual concern another is to remind you that there are bonds between you that are profoundly mysterious that are beyond our power to father and that your feelings and your aspirations and your pain and your jaw and your shortcomings that these in a very to say that where one person of the
Godhead was all three were there they occupied the same time and the same space and you know it's true too that where one believer is as I hinted earlier on where one believer is the church of God is but you know it's beyond that where one believer is every other believer is because you're all

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bound together in the body of Christ because that's the way it is in God and we are one as God is one I want to move on to a second thing which is this the remarkable words that Jesus uses here in terms of his own intercession and he says father I will that they be with me for I am I will in fact he says father that's the way that I want it to be he doesn't say father I plead or father I beg or father I pray or father it would be your wish or father please grant or father may be thy will but he stands up you know in all the glory of his office as mediator and he says to his father father the way I wanted to be is this is the way that I wanted to be it is a marvelous reflection of the authoritative nature of the mediation and intercession of our Lord and Savior and where does that authority come from how can he stand in the presence of his righteous father and his holy father and say father the way I wanted to be is because of who he is because he is the son of God father glorify your son it could be that but more than that it's this his own great claim Abba I have finished the work given me to do and it's on the basis of that finished work on the basis of the obedience of his life on the basis of the suffering of his life on the basis of the climacteric sacrifice of Calvary it is on that basis that he stands in all the apparent frailty of created fragile human nature and he says Abba this is the way I wanted to be I have died for the sins of the world I have loved them to the end I have loved you to the end I have glorified you on earth and on the ground of my finished work on the ground of the glory of my obedience on that ground Abba this is how I wanted to be and I wish we could grasp that every single petition in this great prayer is assured of an answer because each petition is made to stand on this great foundation of the finished work of the saviour he prays keep them they will be kept he prays sanctify them they will be sanctified he prays make them one and they will be one and he prays glorify them and they will be glorified because everything has been done and you know it would be impossible to speak tonight too highly of the esteem in which

[26:08] God the Father holds the work of the Son and how impressed he is with the great triumph of our saviour disobedience and how there is a new pulse in God in the very depths of God's being to reciprocate and to emulate what Jesus did Jesus on that cross accomplishing so much and showing so much love and as it were the cross saying to God the Father can you follow that will you show equal love will you play your part Father and Spirit equally effectively and equally gloriously and I think it's very precious tonight that our preservation and perseverance are assured because Christ finished the work that our sanctification is guaranteed because Christ finished the work that the real unity of God's church is certain because

Christ finished the work and that there is an infallible certainty of glorification because Christ finished the work and as we pray and as you pray in public or in private remember that what you are doing is attaching your own prayers to the prayers of Jesus it's a marvellous thing that in heaven God the Father and God the Son talk about us we overhear their conversation in this marvellous prayer and how wonderful it is that it's not going to depend upon the frailty of our asking that we're asking for those things for which Christ died and asking for those things for which Jesus prays and says Father this is the way I want it to be and then there is the remarkable prayer itself Father I will that that which you have given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me because thou loved me before the foundation of the world and that's why I said that this language is stupendous and awesome and incredible because it's telling us where we're heading and telling us what's going to be the outcome of old Christian pilgrimage what's he asking for Father I want them to be with me where I am and where is that well he says himself in verse 5 glorify thou me with the glory I had with thee before the world was where is Jesus tonight he is in the glory he had beside the father before the world was and that's where every single one other beloved dead of those who have died in the Lord that's where they are at this very moment in time they are in the glory that the son had beside the father before the world was they are where Jesus himself is we ask sometimes to seven a place I don't doubt that it is but how does one define it it is being where Jesus is and where is Jesus he is beside the father and where else is he he is towards the father and where else is he he is in the father in the father and where are they where are they they sustain exactly the same relationship to God the father as Jesus himself one day we too will be beside God and one day we too will be towards God face to face we shall see him not through a glass darkly but face to face and one day we shall be in God you wouldn't have dared say that that's why

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I said it's tremendous and it's awesome and it's incredible but what's the journey's end where does the journey end it ends where it ended for Jesus where did it end for Jesus where it began for Jesus in the glory he had beside the father before the world was where will it end for you it will end for you in the glory Jesus had with the father before the world was that's what he said and he didn't simply suggest it he said that's the way I want it to be and that's the way it's going to be the journey will end beside the father and why that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me Abba I want them to see my glory and he says not simply I want them to see but I want them to behold it and I want them to keep on beholding and beholding my glory and in a way it's not of course any kind of egotism in a way it's a word of compassion because
[31:53] Jesus knew that in a few short hours after this great prayer their hearts would be broken and their souls traumatized as they watched him hanging on the cross of Calvary and they would feel the force of his disgrace and the force of his humiliation and the force of his shame and the force of his pain and I sure that his heart bled for them as much as he trembled for himself but Abba I want there to be something different I want these men who will see me disfigured and battered to a pulp and flogged beyond recognition

I want these poor men one day to see something else I want them to see and to behold my glory the glory which thou hast given to me and then he adds to this for thou loved me before the foundation of the world in a way that is a definition perhaps within the confines of this verse of the glory itself what is the glory Abba I want them to see how much you love me part of the glory and part of the glory and part of the paradox is this that a point came and the economy of God and the economy of God and the glory and part of the paradox is this that a point came in the economy of God where he seemed to put love for the world before love for a son and when for when for the sake of the world he had to sacrifice his own son
Abba they know that you love them because you made such a sacrifice for them but Abba I want them too to know how much you love me and I want them to know that partly because I want them to know how much it cost you to sacrifice me and I want that to enhance their sense of your love for them that they will have some insight as they progress through eternity some ever deepening insight of the love between God the father and God the son and that they will wonder more and more and more how did the father ever manage to sacrifice him how was it possible for God to meet such a cost and to make such a sacrifice they know how much you love them
I want them to know how much you love me and how much you loved me that day when you abandoned me on the cross of Calvary and when you bruised me and when you sent me to that dark home and even then as my life was filled with the anathema due to sin and even then I was precious beyond words I was your only son you were well pleased and yet you were sacrificing me because of the love that you had for them my glory Abba is how much you love me I want them to see that glory and maybe I should say of course that your glory too is how much
God loves you there is no greater glory than that Martin Luther was commenting once on Galatians the son of God loved me and gave himself for me in Galatians 2 he breaks out in ecstasy who is this man who am I I am the man loved by the son of God that's who I am that's who you are who am I who are you you are the one loved by the son of God you are the one for whom God's son gave himself you watch your Christian friends walking along the street tomorrow morning perhaps what thought do you have who's that going by that's the one loved by the son of
[37:31] God that's the one for whom Jesus gave himself he loved me and gave himself for me that's our identity and that's our glory that's who we are that's how the angels know us that's one of those they say in the ramparts of heaven that's one of those loved by the son of God that's one of them going by loved by the son of God and I want to close by taking your eye back for a moment to the even which in verse 22 which is the final definitive commentary on this verse 24 the glory which thou gavest me I have given them that's why he said it's incredible imagine the glory that God gave to his own son

God has placed him in the very midst of the throne God has given him all authority in heaven and earth God has loved him with a love beyond imagining and what has Jesus done with that glory he has given it to you and given it to me doesn't even say the glory you gave me I will one day give to them but I have given him the glory which you gave me I've given it to them already and they have it already that's what he says I find it hard to believe and I'm even frightened to try to elucidate it and to use other words in case I go beyond the bounds of propriety but it said

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I spoke earlier on of community of what we have in common of what we share with Jesus we share in Jesus life we share in Jesus righteousness and we share in Jesus glory I have given them the glory which you give me our destiny is the midst of the throne our destiny is a share in the blessedness of God himself our destiny is to be partakers of the divine nature our destiny is to have God the father with all the tenderness of a mother who wipe away every tear from her eyes and no destiny is to reign with Christ forever and ever you people really are quite incredible
Christ has given you the glory that God the father gave to him we know the force of that truth and reflect and register it in our own lives may it comfort us in every moment of sorrow and strengthen us in every moment of weakness and every moment when we consider fleeing from the cost of our discipleship glory which you give me I have given to them may God bless this word let's join in prayer oh lord we ask that thou wouldst bless thy word to us and that the glory of our position in Christ would humble us would fill us with astonishment with a sense of our own indebtedness we bless thee lord for these days of fellowship may they remain and abide with us as a memory of privilege and may they in days to come strengthen comfort and encourage us for our saviour's sake amen

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