Reading Ahead of November 1 Service

Series Vision:

In a world that has always been badly torn by division, ethnic cleansing and racism, Jesus came and gave his life to create one new people, who would be unprecedented in unity and values (Eph 2:15). In John 17, Jesus gives us a window into what's on his heart by praying for himself, the disciples and us. He prays that we be one (John 17:23). The reason this is so important is because the one-ness of the church is directly correlated to its witness in the world – Jesus says that we are brought to complete unity, then the world will know that Jesus was sent by God.

This isn't what we're experiencing today. We've allowed the church to be defined by divisive constructs (for example, as Christians - red or blue). The first thrust of this series will be helping us to step out of the current mess we're in to hear what the Scriptures says about the church. The second will be to lay out a groundwork for the posture and practices that will help us to step into being one.

**Join us!! Prayer and Fasting for Our Nation as a great tie-in to this series on unity in the body of Christ. Here are the details:

> *With Election Day coming up on November 3, we too as the people of God have an opportunity to pray and fast for this important process and day of our nation's governance. Between October 30 and November 8, we invite the whole church to participate in 10 days of prayer & fasting, as we cover and bring our nation before the Lord, before and after the election. We want to see the Kingdom of God come on earth in our nation as it is in heaven and ask God to protect us from the enemy's attempts to create chaos. More details about this fast can be found at epicentre.org/election.*

Reading Ahead of November 1 Service: John 17:20-23

*Context to the passage:

Right before Jesus dies, he prays. While this is something Jesus did all the time, what's notable here is that John tells us the content of his prayers in ch 17. Here, Jesus prays for (a) himself and the impact of his life (vv. 1-4), for the protection from the enemy for the disciples (vv. 6-19), and then for us (vv. 20-23). We know this is the case because he prays for all those "who will believe in me" (that's us!). Jesus also awaits the coming of those who will be with Him forever in glory (v. 26)!

Before you jump in:

> We want to encourage everyone to invite Holy Spirit's presence to meet you right where you are as you sit in this week's passage before Pastor John shares what he feels is God's heart for our church family this Sunday. As you engage with Holy Spirit in this passage, be asking this question - "Holy Spirit, what is one word or phrase from this passage that you want to impress on my heart for this week? Then, when you're ready, jump into the passage here below....

John 17:20-23

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me
through their message, 21 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. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they
may be one as we are one— 23 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.

Seek to Engage God’s Heart after Reading:

1. Go ahead and first write down the word or phrase you felt Holy Spirit was highlighting to you. Be encouraged to continue praying and asking throughout your week for revelation on He was highlighting this specific thing to you.
2. Jesus, help me to get the vision for unity that's in your heart. Will you reveal to my heart where I’m missing it? **Take time to write down any shortcomings, faults and failures that come up in your heart and ask Him for instruction.
3. Lord, are there specific kinds of people (on a political, racial or other level) that are hard for me to engage with? **Think of a specific person that you're in relationship with (that's difficult for you to feel unified with) and ask God to reveal things in your heart. Also, ask Him how to pray for their heart.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace!