

John 17:20-26

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:20-26

Let us pray. O God, your word is a light making bright our way to you. Open our ears to hear, our minds to understand, our hearts and souls to receive and our life to show forth your blessed word born to us this day through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our gospel lesson is a prayer, or part of one anyway.

It is a part of a prayer prayed by Jesus that we now call His High Priestly Prayer.

Jesus prayed this prayer to the Father after he finished saying his final good-bye to the disciples and before going off to be crucified.

He looked up to heaven and said, “Father...”

We only hear the end of the prayer today, although the entire prayer is important for us to read.

Jesus prays for the disciples’ protection, their holiness, and in our passage now for their unity;

He prays that they may be one so that the world may believe...”

As you heard this prayer read this morning you heard the powerful and continuous prayer for unity,

particularly among the disciples;

a unity that is like the unity of the Father and the Son themselves.

John 17:20 "I ask not only on behalf of these (referring to those disciples who have gathered with Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one...

Jesus prays for the unity of the disciples before they begin the task of going out to preach Christ crucified and risen.

But He prays,

“also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word.” Through the original disciples preaching and teaching.

All preaching today is to be an extension of the word given by Jesus and preached by the apostles,

all teaching today is to be an extension of what was given by Jesus and taught by the apostles,

belief even today comes from the word that was preached and taught by the apostles appointed by Jesus that is continued today.

You are those on whose behalf Jesus prays that they may all be one in Him.

This unity is for one purpose; that the world may believe that Jesus was sent by the Father, and that the Father has loved them as He loves Jesus himself.

Unity; oneness:

What does it mean to live in this kind of unity,

to be one as God's people, and one as the Father and the Son are one?

This unity that Jesus describes places you smack dab in the middle of the relationship of the Father and the Son?

The world has uncountable rallying causes, reasons for people to unite. Each one has the purpose of creating as loud a voice as possible in the world so that their message can be heard over the roar of the many voices trying to get our attention today.

You have all seen footage of the chaos on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, and maybe some of you have been there.

There you hear a collection of voices competing with one another.

There is not one unified collection of voices among the mass of shouting humanity.

This is how the world sounds today.

There are causes today that unite people around the world and here in this community.

The national day of prayer observance just a few days ago.

On that day a lady from the community came here to the church while I was away asking to be prayed for.

Liz prayed for her and the long list of others the lady gave her.

This day of prayer is a point of unity for some.

Relay for life was a call to unify for the good of those whose lives have been touched by cancer.

Halifax Urban Ministries has to raise their voice in order to make their goals for feeding the hungry in this community a reality,

so they enlist the voice of the churches and we gather around a worthy cause, united for the good of the community

In May DCF raised a unified voice against child abuse that we got to participate in.

Conservation groups unify people. People get together to raise a unified voice to protect animals.

We always hear about unity in the sports teams we like to follow, and we all vicariously gather around the cause of winning.

But is this the point of unity Jesus calls you to?

We know that people and nations who would normally be enemies will get together to unite against a common enemy.

Strange things go on in the world.

Times of conflict and trouble in the world, or even in the church, can unite people.

But is this the unity that Jesus desires His disciples to come together around?

Each of these is a point of unity.

These groups have united people in a common cause and some of those causes are very worthwhile, noble, and maybe even God's work in the world.

But which of these is this the point of unity Jesus calls you to?

Lets think a moment what it is brings unity to this gathering of God's people.

Community is a point of unity here. Community is important. Close friendships and living together as neighbors is important.

This is a valuable part of life, but is this the unity that Jesus calls us to?

Enjoying your retirement years can be a point of unity among you, it can enrich life and can be a lot of fun,

but is that the unity that Jesus calls his disciples to?

Times of renewing faith and mission and ministry in a congregation can unite people.

The causes that are given voice in the world are given voice because they inspire a unity of purpose that can change people's lives and even the world forever.

Jesus prays to His Father in heaven for the unity that inspires His followers gathered around one purpose:

“...so that the world may know that you sent me and that you have loved them even as you have loved me.”

How else will the world ever know that God loves them outside the unity and love of Christ's church?

What is the source of your unity as God's people?

What is the focal point, the one thing that Jesus says brings us together as one?

Jesus is praying to the Father about a particular kind of unity;

a unity that has its source, its value, its uniting power in one particular event, one particular reality,

one particular dimension of God that Jesus makes real clear for us.

Praying to the Father He says:

17:22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

It is the glory of the Father, given to the Son and then to the disciples who are with Him that evening,

and all who will believe in Him through their word that is our unity.

This glory given by the Father is not the glory of worldly power.

It is not the glory of worldly a ruler, or a worldly king,

but the glory of the messiah,

hands and feet nailed to a cross erected on Calvary where he hung until he was dead.

I talked about this a couple of weeks ago.

The Father's glory is the glory of the Son.

Jesus' glory is the glory of His cross on which He saved us from our sin and death and gives us everlasting life.

It is at the cross where we come together as one, and we find the cross at the baptismal font.

It is at the baptismal font that we receive the glory of the Father and the Son and are unified in the glory of God's work.

It is also at the table of Holy Communion that we encounter the glory given, sacrificed for us.

The cross is the unity of the church.

It is the unity of every congregation, including this one.

Jesus' desire is that you be unified around His cross,

the cross He bore for you,

and the good News that we receive because he did what His Father sent Him to do.

Then, and only then, can we be united with the one who is not family
but comes here to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ;

Then, and only then, can we be united with the one who has not been a
neighbor or in this community for long,

but comes here to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ;

who is here only part of the year, but yet comes to hear the word
that brings belief;

with the one who is different from us in appearance, lifestyle,
ethnicity cultural background, or any number of other
ways,

but comes to see and receive the glory of the Father
and the Son given in Word and Sacrament;

one who has focused their point of unity on the glory of God in the
crucified and risen Christ Jesus.

This prayer of Jesus is a prayer for you. Listen;

20 "I ask not only on behalf of these disciples who have been with
me, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through
their word, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church, 21 that
they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,
may your people at All Saints also be in us, so that the world may
believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given
me I have given the people of All Saints, so that they may be one,
as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that your people at All
Saints may become completely one, so that the world may know
that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved
me. 24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me,
may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have
given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these your people at All Saints know because you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Jesus prayed for you even 2,000 years ago.

He prayed for your unity in His glory; the glory of His cross.

We have a common purpose for our life together that has inspired the followers of Jesus throughout the centuries,

does today, and will tomorrow and Tuesday and every day that follows:

“so that the world will know Jesus.” That purpose will never change.

Jesus closes with this:

Righteous Father...I will make your name known so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

May God's love, may Jesus be in you.

Amen