

John 17:6 – 21a, 2015

Today I would like for you to sit while I read the Gospel lesson.

Today's gospel lesson is taken from what is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer. The setting, again, is the upper room where Jesus shares that last Passover meal with his disciples.

Every Gospel lesson we have heard for the last six weeks has been from the story of this one night.

I don't know if you noticed that or not. It is that important to us.

Jesus has had a long conversation with his disciples in which he has foretold his betrayal, he has predicted Peter's denial, he has given the disciples the new commandment to love one another and to love neighbor.

Jesus has washed their feet, and told them that the world will hate them because they believed in him.

In the other gospels besides John Jesus shares the meal with them that becomes the new interpretation of the Passover.

Jesus' body becomes bread, and His blood becomes wine.

Now Jesus prays for them, his disciples, his friends.

I am struck by the intimacy of the evening and particularly of this prayer,

and what it may have meant to the disciples to hear Jesus praying this prayer for them.

Can you remember a time when someone prayed for you personally? What was that experience like? How did it make you feel?

Was that an intimate moment, one of those times when God felt so close,
and perhaps that person who was praying may have seemed closer to you than you ever experienced before?

You remember from last week's gospel lesson that these disciples are not just disciples anymore.

These disciples are now Jesus' friends, and it is in that context that Jesus prays for them.

Now, as you will hear Jesus doesn't **just** pray for these disciples who are gathered in the upper room with him.

He prays for all disciples everywhere and through all the years through all the centuries who come to believe in him because of their words

Jesus said, "...on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word."

You have received the word and believed, and you pass that word along so others believe.

Yes, that means He prays for you.

What I would like for you to do is sit back and relax, maybe close your eyes, and just imagine that this prayer is being prayed for you by Jesus himself.

Imagine you are the one who is lounging there at the table with Jesus, having shared meal, he's washed your feet, and he's been talking to you for quite some time.

Now Jesus prays for you:

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, The hour has come...and⁶I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. These people at All Saints were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you;⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and these people gathered here have believed that you sent me.

Father,⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect these people in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Father,¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them

was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶The people of All Saints do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Make them Holy in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I make myself Holy, so that they also may be made Holy in truth.

I ask not only on behalf of these here at All Saints, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through the word taught and preached here at All Saints, that they may all be one.

The Gospel of the Lord...

When I was in seminary the most frequently asked theological question asked was “who and whose are you?”

Who are you as a person and who do you belong to?

Of course the answer is “I am a baptized child of God!”

In your baptism you find your identity, “who you are,” and you also discover to whom it is you belong, “God.”

These are the questions Jesus deals with in the first part of this prayer; “Who are you and to whom do you belong?”

He makes it clear that these disciples, these friends of His, belong to God the Father, and it was He who gave them to Jesus.

Jesus prayed to His Father, “all mine are yours and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.”

Not only do these disciples belong to God, given to Jesus by God, but Jesus has been glorified in them.

Now remember that this prayer is also for you.

Disciples given to Jesus; called out of the boats, away from the nets, out of the tax collectors booth, and you belong to Jesus; from what were you called?

Do you remember?

What did God call you out of to believe in Him, to follow Him,

to have a relationship with Him, to do the ministry you do?

SITE SOME EXAMPLES

He called you away from something to be Council members, volunteers around the church, care givers for a loved one or neighbor,

teachers, accountants, nurses,

disaster recovery workers, utility workers, engineers technicians.

Now how is Jesus glorified in what you do?

How are you a witness to what Jesus teaches His friends and prays for His friends?

“...and they have believed that you sent me...I have been glorified in them.”

Would anyone know that it makes a difference to you that you have been chosen by Jesus, that you belong to Him, that you believe in Him?

Jesus has established the Who and whose you are and then prays for three other things on behalf of His friends, on your behalf.

Protection

Joy

sanctification, or to be made holy or set apart.

Jesus knows that his disciples must and will live in a world that by and large does not believe what they believe.

There will be hostility and danger.

He doesn't ask that God take you out of the world, save you from all the hardship, but to protect you, to be with you.

Have you ever experienced the resistance to your witness to the relationship you have with Jesus?

That may be one of the measures of whether or not anyone can tell that your relationship with Jesus makes a difference to you. It would show.

Jesus knows you will need protection if not from the world then at least from the evil one.

Temptation will come, the difficulties, pain, sorrow, grief, and fears of this life will come,
and Jesus prays that the Father will be with you there in the middle of all that.

Jesus is concerned about your protection for your safety, but also because He wants His joy to be alive in you;

He prays, "...so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves."

Jesus does not want or expect you to live a life that is not filled with joy; and I don't mean the superficial happiness you get out of the things you have or the fun activities you enjoy.

I am talking about a joy that is rooted in peace of mind and heart that none of those things can fulfill.

Peace beyond our human understanding

A part of the experience of that joy comes in the reality that Jesus has set his disciples, his friends, you, apart in holiness.

That is the essence of this word "sanctification."

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

Through Jesus you are set aside for a particular relationship with God.

In that relationship you come to know God, you come to know Jesus through the word given to you;

Some of you have received that word all your lives.

You receive it here when we gather around the scriptures, when you come here to receive this meal of bread and wine

and when you set aside time to spend in the presence of God in your life between the times you come here.

This setting aside brings you back to our original question about who and whose you are.

How does that change your life?

This prayer Jesus prays is a prayer for you personally, and yet it is also a prayer for us together as community.

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.”

This is a prayer that should speak to us as a congregation gathered around our common love of God and ministry.

It strengthens us, unites us, helps us to see a common vision for God's work done in our community and the world through us.

Jesus' prayer for us as a community helps us to envision a future in which Jesus is proclaimed Savior and Lord of all,

Helps us to carry each other's burden and provide the encouragement and protection each of us needs.

This is a prayer passed down through the ages, for the people of all the ages to know that Jesus has loves you, has prayed for your

Protection

Joy

Your holy relationship with Him and the Father.

Amen