

“That They May Be One”

Texts: Acts 16:16-34

Revelations 22:12-14. 16-17, 20-12 (Series C, 7th Sunday in Easter) Ps.97

John 17:20-26

Let us pray:

Today we wrap up Easter season 2022, it is an excellent time for us to examine the state of our faith and, particularly, how we pray. Do we simply repeat familiar liturgical rituals and memorized formal prayers, is prayer only when we want something? How do we thoughtfully, and intentionally make time to truly and sincerely *pray in faith* to build my relationship with God and with one another.

Here is a true story....

During the Depression, a man living in the Appalachian area went to Knoxville for the first time to conduct some business. While there he saw a refrigerator that made ice. Since it was summertime, he thought it was a miracle of God. When he returned to his home town in the mountains, his church was in the midst of a revival worship service. He arrived to the service during the time when people were giving testimonies. He told of the miracle of seeing ice made in the midst of the summer.

Well, a disagreement broke out. Many claimed that there was not such thing. Others wanted to believe him. It resulted in a rift within the church. Many left the church to form a new church. It's name, to this very day, is "*No Ice in The Summer Southern Baptist Church.*"

In our gospel reading today, we see Jesus is in the Upper Room with his disciples. It's the last night of his earthly life. And what's on his mind, on his heart? It is that you and I, and all who follow him, "*May be one.*"

That his disciples then, and his disciples today, be as close to one another as he was to the Father." As you, Father", Jesus prayed, "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. "That the world may believe.

One of my seminary professors told us of how he ministered in a church that had a major fight over wood piles. This church had a wood stove in the centre of the sanctuary that heated the building.

Two groups that didn't get along with each other took turns stoking the fire and keeping it lit. However, one group claimed that they were working harder than the other group to provide the wood.

As a result, both groups provided the wood but in separate piles. A child reading the scripture one Sunday used his own version of the well know text from Ephesians 4:5: "there is *one faith, one Lord, one baptism, and two wood piles.*"

And it seems appropriate, because it looks like their one God and Father of all was their own view of themselves - as made manifest in the wood piles that they created. Whose glory do we serve? --- What witness do we make?

As you, Father, are in me", Jesus prayed, "and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that world may believe you have sent me." You know, it seems that God has been leading me these past few weeks to a lot of thinking about "letting go and letting God" and of how this relates ultimately to the witness we make, and the glory that we both serve and experience.

"Letting go and letting God" as this pertains to change in our midst; when I speak about how we need to let go and let God as it pertains to the peace that we seek, it seems that the Scripture texts and the events around us have led us to some consideration of the theme of letting go and letting God:

- letting go and letting God as this applies to how we treat one another,
- letting go and letting God as this applies to how we understand ourselves,
- letting go and letting God as this applies to how we understand others, even those, who do things to try to confuse us - like turning last failure of our community of faith and for the things we are trying to do in obedience to our vision of what God is asking.

It is in letting go and letting God - you see - where love is given space to grow - where the unity that Christ speaks of arises within us where our witness becomes one of power - one of light - for it is no longer simply us - as individuals - or as a group - that makes witness - but it is God himself working through us.

God is moving and doing things. I want you all to know that today - and to delight in it and to think about just what it is that he is doing and how God is shining in and through us this these last few years.

One of the things that struck me from the beginning of our ministry in St. Ansgar, is the very real warmth, the very real love, that is the love this parish showed me and my family, even when the assistant to the bishop thought less of me, you believed in us, when others thought we ain't last past two years in this parish you believed in us. The love you showed to strangers who come through our door is a great testimony and witness.

Even more there is a willingness here to look beyond denominational barriers, a willingness that extends beyond our traditional "openness" as Lutheran Christians, which is an openness of heart and mind, to an openness of Spirit a Spirit that sees a vision of all our brothers and sisters working together.

In prayer and in activities, in worship and in service, to shed light upon this community. When we were in a severe financial draught several years ago, with leaky roof and bounced cheques you did not abandon the ship, namely St. Ansgar.

In other words, I am suggesting to you today, as I unfold the word of God to you, and speak of our unity and witness - a unity that the world may see and believe - that we are on the right course, on a Godly course and that what God wants us to grab hold of this day is the encouragement of the word that Jesus speaks in prayer for us in today's scripture.

Now I know that we all can think of hurts, disappointments, and of pains that have been done in our midst, of efforts not appreciated, and persons not remembered when perhaps they ought to have been, but I want to think past that stuff to what else has been going on, and think of the good stuff such as the fruit of the Spirit that Paul speaks of in (Galatians 5: 22) *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control"*

Just think on the lives that are being touched for good and not for ill. *"The glory that you have given me"*, Jesus prayed, "I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.

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." Think of the verb tenses in this prayer.

The glory that you have given me, I Have Given them. So that the world may know that you *Have* sent me and *Have* Loved them. These verb tenses describe a reality that is already with us.

A reality that Jesus prays that you and I may answer it, when he asks the Father that we may be one. What is this glory that Jesus has given us that the father first gave him?

Jesus gives those who believe in him this glory - his glory - the glory of the Father. As we turn to him and live in him, he lives in us his obedience becomes our obedience his cross - his burden - becomes our burden, and his ability to reflect and show God to others, becomes ours as well.

As we turn to him and live in him,

- as we allow his glory to settle upon us
- as we take up our crosses and follow him
- as we exercise his holy obedience to the Father, we become one.

It is a mystical thing this union we have with one another. It is grounded in what God has in mind for us and our acceptance of that mind our letting go of ourselves and our worries and our agenda, and of letting God set our agenda of letting God inhabit our thoughts and actions, letting God shine through our words and deeds.

Hold fast the vision that Jesus gives of the path of glory, hold fast the prayer that Jesus utters for you and for me and delight us in the fact that as we push the stones as we have been asked to do, the Lord will smile upon us and make us strong and in the end, push the rock aside himself.

Think of the prayer that Jesus expressed, my friends, read it over when you go home, mediate on it this week. Think not only of what it promises to us, but think as well of it's ultimate focus, the focus on the world.

Make them *one*, that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them my glory, that they may be *one*, that the world may know you have sent me. What we do here at St. Ansgar's:

- *our gathering together, our caring, our loving, our worship, our council meeting, Our concert, our teaching, our spring cleaning, our Bazaar, our Rummage and bake sale, our Spring Lunch, as we do these things together, each as God has called, each in the way that Christ has showed us, they make a difference in our community and the world.*

The more together we are, the more united in Christ we are,

- the more who will believe in him,
- the more who will be healed by him,
- the more who will become one with him, and he with them.

We are the testimony to the truth of what we proclaim, mainly the gospel. Continue to strive to be true to that truth that our witness may shine forth as a welcoming beacon to those who so need light in their lives.

Finally, Prayer is the opportunity to place our *cares, fears, woes, hopes, dreams, thanksgivings, remorse*, into the Heart of God. Let us *pray without ceasing* (1 *Thessalonians* 5:17) to our Lord Jesus Christ, drinking deeply from *the water of life*. In prayer we are complete, we are known by our name, we are with and in God Who is with and in us. Together, We are One.

God will use us if we but let him. Christ has prayed that it might be so. And his word is not an empty word for those who take it into their *hearts* and then share it by *word* and *deed* with the *hearts* of others. May the glory of God fill our heart, day by day. Amen.

May 29, 2022

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abazio, Wilhelmina Tiemersma, Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Soo Young, Shirley Walker, Pastor Timothy, Sharon Nielson (in Herbert, Sask.) the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

Prayer: Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, as the Word made Flesh You are in God, with God, and of God. Quench our spiritual thirst with the water of eternal life that we may see Your glory, and live forever in You as You live within us. We ask through the Holy Spirit, the Mother of Wisdom; and the Almighty Creator who together with You are One God, now and through eternity. **Amen.**

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor # 475**
- **The King of Love, My Shepherd # 502**
- **How Great Thou Art # 856**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Matilda Molyneaux-Piper

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Peter and Ruth Blair