

## Sermon Easter 7 Year B 2021

John 17:6-19

Jesus prayed for his disciples, “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 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 they have believed that you sent me.

I 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While 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.

But 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. I 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.

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

## **Prayer:**

Let us pray:

God, help us to build *your* kingdom, and not our own.

Give us they eyes to see what you have called us to do, and the heart and strength to follow your call.

--Amen

## **Sermon:**

When I studied with the Mennonites,

We focused a lot on reading and understanding the Bible.

Two Greek words were key: *exegesis and eisegesis*.

**Exegesis** is what people do to pull the original author's message out of an ancient text.

**Eisegesis**, on the other hand, is when the reader inserts his or her own message, into the text.<sup>i</sup>

Eisegesis happens when the reader makes sure he finds what he's looking for! <sup>ii</sup>

John's Gospel and Letters are particularly tough to sort out, because they are less focused on Jesus' biography and way more focused on John's theology.<sup>iii</sup>

Scholars often ask whether the Jesus, that John describes, is the flesh and blood Jesus of ancient history.

Did John really write the Gospel and those letters? <sup>iv</sup>

We don't know for sure.

Based on the Greek and other clues,

Some scholars think that John's Gospel

may have had as many as five ancient editors.

And that was 1500 years

before they were first translated into English,

by order of King James. <sup>v</sup>

But one thing we do know for sure:

God speaks to us, through St. John.

We can learn a lot about how God works, from John's Gospel.

In John's Gospel<sup>vi</sup>, Jesus calls God his "Father"<sup>vii</sup>.

Many folks think that this word choice says something about God's gender or nature. *But it really doesn't.*

What it does kind of reveal is how folks, in Jesus' day,

spoke and thought about a close, family relationship.<sup>viii</sup>

Today's reading from John's Gospel is part of the story

which began with the Last Supper<sup>ix</sup> and

ends up in the Garden of Gethsemane.

*All 4 Gospels tell the Passion story, but each one is a bit different.*

In Luke when Jesus went off to pray, he said,

“Stay awake, and watch!”. But the disciples didn’t stay awake.  
Jesus found Peter, James and John sound asleep.

In Matthew, Jesus says, to them,

“What, you guys couldn’t watch with me for one hour?”<sup>x</sup>

In Luke, Jesus was so anxious that he sweated blood.<sup>xi</sup>

As Jesus sweated blood in the Garden,

he knew the stuff was about to hit the fan.

The Garden was a VERY big deal ...

both for Jesus as a real human being, and  
for Jesus, as the Son of God.

Even though he was bummed, and preoccupied,

Jesus still prayed for his disciples.<sup>xii</sup>

He said:

All mine are yours, and yours are mine...

Holy Father, protect them ...

*so that they may be one, as we are one and .*

*so that my joy will be complete in them.*

**Jesus prayed that the Church would have unity, and  
that his people would gather in joy.**

Jesus wanted us to have *Unity and Joy* ---

He thought that this rocky, crazy old world really matters.

And so do I.

Some bumper stickers say the owner is just “passing through”.

Is getting to heaven the only purpose, in this life?

Did Jesus, who cure the sick and raised the dead,

Think that this life here doesn't matter?<sup>xiii</sup> *Of course not!*

The Bible says that:

“God saw everything He had made, and it was very good.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Creation mattered to Jesus's Dad, and it mattered to Jesus too.

People matter to Jesus! He wants us to live in Joy and in Unity.

Everyone here claims Jesus, one way or the other!

And because we do, we are called to celebrate this life:

A long love and a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary,

Or a new love, and a child's birth.

A first communion, or a confirmation,

or a graduation, or a bumper crop,

A fine steak, crisp vegetables and cool clear water.

God's Kingdom is right here. Right under our noses!

But God's Kingdom is also *every place*.

*Everyday people. Everyday life.*

Life is complex. And it can be rally hard.

**BUT** *God says life is also good! And it is.*

Yes, there are persons and forces and powers which  
oppose the miracle of God, in Jesus?

But that's easy. We can see them coming, and we can prepare.<sup>xv</sup>

They aren't our big problem. Our *big problem is indifference.*

As God's people we must oppose indifference!!

We must never close our hearts. We must never close our fists.

We must always open our heart and our hands, in love.

We must not live for ourselves,

caught up in our cell phones, or TV, or our jobs.

Instead, we must live, caught up in the pure joy

of Bringing God's light to the world!

We must declare by our words and our actions, that Our God reigns!

**We must focus on the Kingdom work at hand.**

1. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus turned things upside down!  
He not only turned water into wine ... he also made the worst wine go first and the best go second.  
*In Jesus Kingdom, the first will be last and the last shall be first.*  
**We must be Bold!**

2. How many times shall we forgive, Peter asked Jesus?  
70 times 7.<sup>xvi</sup>  
**We must freely forgive others, even when we're really upset.**

3. St. Paul wrote to Philemon, asking him to help Onesimus, a runaway slave.  
**We must use our connections to help someone else.**

When you leave Church today, don't let your first thought be about how you will spend the rest of this day!

Instead, think about what you can do  
to build God's Kingdom, *right here!*  
And then, JUST DO IT!

**-AMEN**

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<sup>i</sup> ... whether on purpose or by accident.

<sup>ii</sup> Eisegesis is not as obvious as it sounds. We all know that it's easy to mis-read an email today. Imagine how hard it would be if that email were 2,000 years old!

<sup>iii</sup> At least as John understood it!

<sup>iv</sup> Or did someone just use his name to give those ancient writings credibility? What we call plagiarism today might've been a compliment, back then. Was it an authentic John letter or merely written in School of John?

<sup>v</sup> In 1611! Scholar, R.E. Brown suggests as many as five stages in the composition of the Fourth Gospel, and that John inherited a tradition which had already been revised at least once, and that John's work was further revised by a member of his "school". See, [http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus?utm\\_source=scholars.wlu.ca%2Fconsensus%2Fvol7%2Fiss2%2F3&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus?utm_source=scholars.wlu.ca%2Fconsensus%2Fvol7%2Fiss2%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages)

<sup>vi</sup> especially in John 17.

<sup>vii</sup> John 17:1 ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶπεν *πάτερ*. When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "*Father*".

<sup>viii</sup> Today's reading can be hard to sort out. Jesus' culture embraced a form of gender bias; perhaps an early sort of sexism. But try not to get lost in the polemics.

The text is a little unusual. It repeats itself, like it was a meditation. It doesn't read like a story meant to be read aloud to others, as was the custom in those days.

Jesus mostly spoke of his disciples. The Greek origin word for "disciples" means "students"; the word "apostles" means "message carriers". At this point Jesus' followers were still students; their preparation for God's apostolic work was as yet, incomplete. The disciples would remain in the world (17:11) (where they would be hated (17:14) ) but in the end were not of the world (17: 14, 16). They, like each of us, needed protection from Satan, who *was and still is* at work in the world, while they did their work. The Father sent Jesus into the world, and Jesus sent his disciples --- and us! -- to continue his work.

<sup>ix</sup> At the Last Supper he'd revealed Judas's plan. They had a big argument and Jesus tossed him out!

<sup>x</sup> .... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>xi</sup> Luke 22:44. Hematohidrosis.

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<sup>xii</sup> ... whose feet he had just washed.

<sup>xiii</sup> If our focus here is simply getting to heaven, we've misunderstood the gift of life and we've missed Jesus' point!

<sup>xiv</sup> Gen. 1:31

<sup>xv</sup> God has our back! We've got our soldiers, our Airmen and Women, and our prayer warriors.

<sup>xvi</sup> i.e., eternity times eternity.