

Payson United Methodist Church
Rev. Michael J. Eaton
Sermon Series "Living the Resurrection"
We Are Yours
John 17:6-19
May 16, 2021

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⁶ "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. 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 they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

We are now at the end of supper. At the beginning of chapter 17, Jesus begins a prayer which will conclude his farewell speech to his friends. There was another important farewell speech given by Moses in Deuteronomy 31:30 - 32:47. This is also referred to as the Song of Moses. In Deuteronomy 33 Moses gives a blessing to the Israelites.

Jesus is offering a prayer on behalf of those God initially gave to Jesus, namely the disciples who Jesus now calls friends. Jesus nurtured his friends throughout his time in the world. The friends have witnessed a lot about God through Jesus. They have come to believe that Jesus has indeed come from God.

This prayer of Jesus' has been referred to as Jesus' "high priestly prayer." Jesus is interceding on behalf of his followers. We get to overhear this prayer. This prayer also may be the true Lord's Prayer because Jesus is praying it.

One day, Joe, Bob and Dave were hiking in a wilderness area when they came upon a large, raging, violent river. They needed to get to the other side, but had no idea of how to do so.

Joe prayed to God, saying, "Please God, give me the strength to cross this river."

Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he was able to swim across the river in about two hours, although he almost drowned a couple of times.

Seeing this, Dave prayed to God, saying, "Please God, give me the strength and the tools to cross this river."

Poof! God gave him a rowboat and he was able to row across the river in about an hour, after almost capsizing the boat a couple of times.

Bob had seen how this worked out for the other two, so he also prayed to God saying, "Please God, give me the strength and the tools, and the intelligence, to cross this river."

Poof! God turned him into a woman. She looked at the map, hiked upstream a couple of hundred yards, then walked across the bridge

Jesus isn't praying for himself, He is praying for his followers, then and for us now -- today. The intercession on our behalf is for the followers of Jesus to recognize the connection between God, Jesus, and Jesus' followers. By belonging to Jesus we belong to God. In his book, *The Heart of Christianity*, Marcus Borg says of Jesus:

Christianity finds the primary revelation of God in a person.
This does not make Christianity superior, but it does make it

different. For Christians, to use language from John's Gospel, in Jesus "the Word became flesh and lived among us." This is the central meaning of the incarnation: Jesus is what can be seen of God embodied in a human life. He is the revelation, the incarnation, of God's character and passion - of what God is like and of what God is most passionate about. He shows us the heart of God.

And because Christians find the ultimate disclosure of God in a person and not in a book, Jesus is more central than the Bible. Jesus trumps the Bible; when they disagree, Jesus wins. Yet, of course, we know about him primarily through the Bible, and in particular through the New Testament.

The first thing that Jesus asks for is our understanding of who Jesus is, and that we are connected to him, and to God.

Jesus asks next that as followers we may be filled with joy like Jesus has. That has come up before. To be stated again in a prayer is wonderful. Jesus wants us to experience joy in the way Jesus has experienced joy. The joy in finding people to sign up in the Jesus plan. I mentioned last Sunday that Jesus picked his followers because they are gifts from God. As they traveled together Jesus would be filled with joy as his followers experience the power of God displayed through Jesus. Jesus wants this joy to be present in those who follow him. This means we need to smile and laugh a lot. People need to experience that Christians can be joyous people.

The next thing that Jesus asks is for God's protection to be upon his followers. The world is anti-Jesus. That means the world is against Jesus' followers too. The world, in this context, means those people who are against the Jesus agenda. God has created a beautiful world but not everyone cooperates with God's grace. We need to live in the world and not be of it. The world is about works of righteousness, not getting even with people who do bad things to you. Living in the world provides us opportunities to witness God's grace in our lives and share acts of compassion and mercy with those who need it.

Finally, Jesus asks for his followers to be sanctified. Sanctification means to be set apart. Followers of Jesus are to be set apart for further work in the world after Jesus is gone. Rev. Dr. Derek Weber comments on this Scripture,

But instead of all of that, the words that jumped out were those in verse ten: “All mine are yours and yours are mine and I have been glorified in them.” I know that really says more about who Jesus is than it does about us. But it also speaks deeply of relationship and of community. Eugene Peterson (The Message) translates the last part of the verse like this: “my life is on display in them.” How we live and love in this world is the presentation of Christ to those who don’t know him yet. How we share and give does not just reflect on us, but it reflects on Jesus. How we treat one another, how we honor one another, how we celebrate one another and the commitments we have made are parts of our faith. And Christ is glorified by the way we live in community.

Isn’t that something to ponder, “my life is on display in them.” How we live our lives reflects on Jesus. We need to be at our best at all times. Here is an example that shows a great reflection on Jesus.

The story is told of two elderly men, roommates in a nursing home. One had recently gone blind and was living in quiet despair. He felt that life held little for him. He wanted only to die.

His roommate could see just fine, but he had trouble getting around. He rarely left his bed, which was next to the window of their room.

Neither one could remember how it happened, but one day the man who could see began describing to his roommate what was going on in the world outside their window. He told him of the mail carrier making his rounds; of neighbors walking their dogs; of the teenage boy and girl who passed the window every day after school — who first held hands, then embraced, then had an argument, then reconciled once again.

As the days went on, the blind man came to live for these updates from the outside world. His friend seemed to take such joy in it and had a real gift for describing what everything looked like.

Then one day his friend — who was much sicker than he had imagined — died. A new patient was wheeled in.

The blind man asked his new roommate if he would let him know what was happening outside the window.

“I’d be glad to,” said the roommate, “but I don’t know how I could do that. There’s nothing outside our window but a solid brick wall.”

The blind man was bewildered for a moment. He felt betrayed by his former friend. Had he been playing him for a fool? But then he realized, in a flash, what a precious gift his friend had given. He had spun, out of nothing but the stuff of his imagination, an entire world. He had dreamt up the mail carrier, and the neighbors, and the pair of teenage lovers — and he’d made those characters as real as if they’d lived outside that window, every day.

In that moment of revelation, the man realized there are things worse than having no sight. It is far worse to have no imagination, no inner vision.

I believe Jesus wants us to be, in our sanctified lives, a people of imagination and vision. The world needs to see what we can do as a church. We are God’s beloved. We need to share that every One belongs to God, and -- that God loves every One. Amen