

Nativity Lutheran Church
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
May 13, 2018

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Text: John 17: 6-19

Theme: "Jesus Prayer for You"

Page | 1

⁶I 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. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for 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. 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 them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 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. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them 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 sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

+ + +

This week it dawned on me that May and June are sort of a season of loss for lots of us. Graduations abound, and with each a consciousness of achievement and pending change – loss of what was for what is to come. And what’s true for student’s graduations is also true for academics on the way “up” – or so it’s described – to new and better positions in another corner of academia.

Significant people in my life and network of family and friends have died during these months. And, yes, we’ve mourned recent deaths in our families and congregation. Others have mourned a hope’s demise with the burden of miscarriage. These weeks have, for sure, become a time for farewells. Lots among us – if not all – can bring that sense of profound loss to mind and not always from distant memory.

I also thought about Erma Bombeck. She knew both the joys and sadness of having children. She once wrote,

“I see children as kites. You spend a lifetime trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you’re both breathless — they crash — they hit the rooftop — you patch and comfort, adjust and teach. You watch them lifted by the wind and assure them that someday they’ll fly. Finally they are airborne: they need more string and you keep letting it out. But with each twist of the ball of twine, there is a sadness that goes with joy. The kite becomes more distant, and you know it won’t be long before that beautiful creature will snap the lifeline that binds you together and will soar as it is meant to soar, free and alone. Only then do you know that you did your job.”

And your felt just great. But add to that the separation that is part of it and it makes us feel the loss ... like we are nobody.

I was thinking about Erma’s words, and I remembered what it was like to leave our daughter, Andrea, at college for the first time. It really felt like a huge loss for our family. Then I remembered about the tavern near the college campus, a favorite of the students. As Parents’ Weekend approached, they posted a sign that said, **“Bring your parents to lunch. We’ll pretend we don’t know you.”**

Then one of the local churches countered with a signboard that read, **“Bring your parents to church. We’ll pretend we do know you.”**

Today we’re reminded that we aren’t nobodies – we’re somebodies. We are God’s children, Jesus’ friends...and for us Jesus gave his life. In today’s Gospel we look at John 17. It’s called Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer. It occurs right after Jesus last supper with his disciples. He’s washed their feet and given them his last teaching moment. Now he prays to God.

His prayer is for four things. They all have to do with the Church...with those disciples who lived 2,000 years ago...with the Church as it exists today...you and me... we who grieve and know loss ... but also promise and joy.

So let’s take a look at Jesus’ prayer for you and for me...for the Body of Christ.

He prays that God will protect them from the evil one. Maybe we first experienced that proactive protective love from our mothers. And maybe we can’t even recall our baptism’s when we experienced it again. Next month we’ll be baptizing Charley Johanna Stone, Hedy Rossmeisl’s newest granddaughter. Their family’s home pastor will be presiding for that event. I’m excited since it’s the first baptism we’ve had at Nativity during my interim with you. In any event, before we baptize the Charley Johanna we’ll ask her parents a question — Do you renounce all evil?

I’ve pondered what we are teaching our children. I think it’s really important to note that when we baptize children we ask parents about their commitment before turning to their children.

Now I’ll admit that I don’t know may quotations from President Woodrow Wilson – I’d be you don’t either – but here’s a good one: “If you wish your children to be Christians you

must really take the trouble to be Christians yourselves. Those are the only terms upon which the home will work the gracious miracle.”

Jesus prays for us — his children.

Jesus prays that God will be with us in the world.

When I experience loss I need to remember that. Julian of Norwich wrote: “All will be well...and all will be well...and all manner of things shall be well.”

Jesus has prayed for you — that all will be well with you.

Jesus then asks that the Church show the same oneness that exists between Jesus and the Father. This, for sure, can be difficult for us to understand. All churches — congregations and denominations — seem to be filled with divisions. Yet it’s Jesus’ continuing prayer for us that we will be one.

Then Jesus asks that we will have joy! And even this may be hard for us to understand. You see, Jesus uses a kind of reasoning that turns all human reasoning upside down. It is God’s reasoning. Jesus prays that you and I have joy in the midst of all that pulls us in this world in which we live ... seeking to distance us from God.

And Jesus’ final request is that we be sanctified.

Sanctification is a word that we use too seldom. In fact, many of us may not even know what it means. It means purified or made holy. It’s a process of transformation that only happens when we walk with God on a daily basis. It only happens when we turn toward God and accept God’s love. Perhaps we can best understand sanctification from a human perspective in terms of discipline. It’s in the spiritual disciplines that we open ourselves to God. And in the process God transforms us.

Oh, we all know about discipline. If you have ever gotten good at a sport or a game it’s because of the discipline or practice. If you’ve learned a musical instrument you’ve spent hours of disciplined practice. Our military services require a lot of discipline, and in turn it transforms people in many ways.

At one time, Brigadier General Sheridan Cadoria was the highest-ranking black woman in the U.S. armed forces. She credited her success in life and in the Army to the high moral standards that she learned from her mother. She said: “My mother is a woman with strong moral values. Once my brother, sister, and I went shopping, and someone gave us a penny too much. My mother made us walk the five miles back to town to return it. She said that at least one of us should have known better, so all three were punished. You don’t forget lessons like that. I didn’t have problems in the military with discipline, because my mom really was a first sergeant.”

OK, I guess that exemplifies discipline from a human perspective. But from God's perspective sanctification is a "setting apart." Our life in God is a life apart from many of the things that tug at us as humans. It's a life set apart for being God's sons and daughters. It's a life set apart for living in God's kingdom.

Remember today, my brothers and sisters, Jesus continues to pray for us. Can you hear him? His last earthly prayers are for you and for me.

May we all be protected from evil.

May we truly love one another.

May we all have true joy!

And may we be set apart — sanctified — for service in God's kingdom.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

+ + +

Soli Deo Gloria