

John 17 1-11

What to make of all this today? John's gospel seems filled with wordy tongue twisting theological ideas sometimes and this prayer is quintessential John.

This is the Lord's prayer according to John. It might not sound like it but the Our Father is not in John's Gospel... this instead is the prayer that is offered...It's a prayer for unity, for oneness. It has been called the real Lord's Prayer by some because it's the one that Jesus prayed for His disciples just before he is taken away.

On the last night of his life, Jesus didn't pray to save himself, he didn't pray for the health, happiness, and success of His disciples. Instead He prayed that they would get along with each other. It is Jesus' prayer for His friends and for the community. That we all may be one!

Unity...among His disciples and among the Church...how's that been working out for us? How well have we followers done with Jesus' last wish for us? Do we seek unity or do we just remain divided?

And of course there is something else going on here as well. So let's dive in!

John speaks about encompassing a new reality expressed in Jesus.

It's hinted at in the words Glory and Eternal Life ...and this isn't about God and the afterlife. That is not what the Gospel is pointing to. It points to us. I want to talk about Eternal Life and Glory in the context of this prayer...and it's not about getting a one size fits all robe, picking up a harp and worshipping a God sitting on a throne, being told how great God is for all eternity...doesn't sound much like heaven to me...I think I'd would decline the invitation.

This is not the idea of eternal life that John is pointing us to.

It's not often that we get a straight forward definition of eternal life, but it's right here, "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

How many times have we heard this view of eternal life? I would bet not too much... On this last Sunday of Easter, in the season of the resurrection, here is an idea about eternal life that just might mean something beyond the empty tomb and the lilies and "Jesus Christ is Risen Today."

Eternal life is to know God and Jesus. That's it! Can it be that simple? If that's Eternal life how would that change how you live right now! How would that change your perspective about how you see God?

Now of course, what it means to "know" God is key, and to know God in John's Gospel has nothing to do with your head, or your traditional views about God. Rather, knowing God is synonymous with being in a relationship with God. A relationship with God!

So what would that look like for us today?

Now Jesus had a relationship with God so we might ask what would Jesus do? A better question would be what DID Jesus actually do?

And one thing He DID in relationship with the Father was pray! He prayed a lot. Here he prays just before He is to be taken away to His suffering and death.

In Jesus' prayer He surrenders and trusts God fully, and He displays empathy when talking about those HE was in relationship with...His disciples.

Prayer...beginning with love (being open to someone) and talking with someone you trust...isn't that the basis for any good relationship.

Love, Trust and communication, without these NO healthy relationship can exist. And from this foundation, a relationship can grow to its

fullness and potential... With those in relationship even transcending their individual natures.

It's Synergy... when two things together become greater than the sum of each part individually. It's where One plus One equals three!

Can we live in unity even with all our diversity... can we become one with ourselves and with our creator? God, the source and ground of all our being is sometimes just too big for us to comprehend.

So as Christians we look to Jesus to model the very heart of God... and what Jesus models most is love...and when Jesus leaves this world physically, he opens the way for the Spirit of God to be born within us.

Father, Son and Spirit (one plus one equals three) in an eternal cosmic dance! And now we too are invited into the heart of that relationship. It is life eternal NOW with deaths and resurrections all along the journey. Its life then ...and life now... and life forever in this flow of light and love that John points us to in his gospel.

This relationship can be seen in the beauty OR in the suffering in the world all around us...when our hearts leap with joy or when our hearts break with compassion.

You can hear it in children's cries, feel it in the summer breeze caressing your face, smell it in the scents of the flowers bursting forth with new life, and you can taste it in your next meal... in the food that gave its life so that we may live.

This is an intimate relationship deeply felt at our center with our creator, it is expressed through the life of Jesus... and born inside each one of us in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' closing words are fitting. "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."

Next week is Pentecost! The fulfillment of God's promise made manifest first in the disciples then and now through us.

It is, perhaps, one of the most relevant definitions of what Pentecost is supposed to be as Disciples of Christ. Jesus is not here anymore.

Jesus has been resurrected. He ascended to the Father from where He came. But WE are still in THIS world, Jesus' works are now in our hands, and we are now to be HIS presence in the world...and we are not alone in this are we? We have an advocate, the Holy Spirit with us... and in us... and through us.

Did you think that the resurrection was the end of the Easter story?

The resurrection of Jesus was not the conclusion of the Gospel but just the beginning, the new creation of God birthed into the world through Jesus and now made manifest through us in the Spirit!

The promises of the resurrection are now ours to fulfill? How would a life of discipleship, of witness, of love, be different if we were to trust what Jesus meant when he said earlier in John's gospel, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."

We are in the world now, the world that God loves.

When we are in right relationship with God and with others we reveal this unity, this relationship, this oneness of creation.

See Jesus was not resuscitated (that would be Zombie Jesus) He was resurrected...He was made into something entirely new.

See resuscitation just restores ordinary, earthly life, at the physical or the container level; resurrection, however involves eternal life, a

transformation of what is contained within that earthly or physical container (our spirit and energy). The spirit born into the world a new!

Now for the word "glory" *Doxa*, it means honor or more like brightness, yet the key to its role in John's gospel is that it has to do with the way God is made known to human beings...it's relational.

John's gospel assumes that people were created by God... for a relationship WITH God.

Eternal life comes from a relationship with the eternal source of all being...and Jesus glorified God on earth by doing God's will and by finishing the work God gave him to do... and by fulfilling His purpose Jesus revealed s God's power for us to witness. He shined a bright spotlight on God.

Biblical writers sometimes use the term "glory" for the way that the power of God is brought within the realm of our human experience.

According to John's gospel, Jesus made divine power visible by the miraculous signs he performed. Seven signs starting with the wedding feast of Cana by turning water into wine and ending with calling His friend Lazarus back to life.

...and this prayer concerns the glory Jesus will resume once his ministry on earth is over. This heavenly glory expresses the relationship of Father and Son before the world began. The Sharing of God-self! It was out of love that the Father gave the Son glory before the foundation of the world, so that sharing in God's glory means sharing in God's love.

Jesus concludes his prayer by asking that those whom God has given him may one day be with him in God's presence and experience unity, oneness and love!

This prayer traces a movement from glory on earth to glory in heaven, and it follows through John's account of Jesus' life and death.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing it to be the end of His earthly ministry, he says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified," and he compares himself to a seed that must fall to the earth and die. When Judas leaves to carry out his betrayal, Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him".

John's gospel links "glorify" to the process that culminates in the crucifixion...so that Jesus may finish the work that God gave him to do.

The Greek word for "finish" is *teleioō*, meaning for something to mature or to make perfect...like a seed dying in the earth and maturing...and the word Jesus will utter at the time of his death will also be from the same word, "it is finished." ...it is now matured and made perfect, the seed dies and then gives birth to something new which will bear unlimited fruit in us...thus glorifying God in all things...through God's love for all creation. Jesus shining a light "brightness" in order to SEE God in all things...heaven revealed.

It's also very interesting that in a Gospel full of miracles, that the crucifixion, the crucial fulcrum where Jesus completes these works...unlike the other Gospels ...here there are no miracles or signs of divine power...here Jesus' work is fulfilled by love...just love...and by laying down his life wholly and completely, Jesus now reflects love for God and God's love for the world.

By his resurrection and ascension Jesus returns to heavenly glory, and Jesus prays that we, His followers, You and I, will one day join him to share in His glory and love with God. Where one plus one equals three!

May we all, as Jesus' followers, join with God in unity as ONE...May we all join in that everlasting Divine Dance... in love and in relationship with all of humanity and all of creation...now and always!

Your faithful servant,

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