

- ¹ The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!
² Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
 righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
³ Fire goes before him and consumes his adversaries on every side.
⁴ His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.
⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.
⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples behold his glory.
⁷ All servants of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols;
 all gods bow down before him.
⁸ Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice because of your judgments, O God.
⁹ For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.
¹⁰ You who love the LORD, hate evil; he guards the lives of his faithful;
 he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.
¹¹ Light dawns for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart.
¹² Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

John 17:20-26

Today's reading comes from Jesus' final prayer at the Last Supper. He begins in prayer for himself, that as he glorifies God (in the cross) that God will also glorify him. He then prays for his current disciples, that God will protect them and consecrate them for service, since Jesus will no longer be with them. Lastly, he prays for the generations to come, who will believe in him through the stories passed on, that they too may be fully made 'one with God'.

²⁰ "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³ 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.

²⁴ Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵ "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them."

Sermon

One

What do you want for this church? I have heard the desires of many of you over the last few years, and what you seem to want is more people and more money. Those are very practical desires. But have you ever asked God what they want for this church? That is, by the way, the core question of discernment – a process you have been working through for several years now. So, what does God want for us?

Well, today in Scripture we hear clearly what Jesus desperately wants for his followers, his church. It is the very end of his last moments with his disciples. From here he leaves the upper room and enters the Garden of Gethsemane. And what does he do with those last few, precious hours? He prays. He prays for us and for our purpose. What is so important for him to pray in that moment? “That we may be one as we are one” (John 20:23).

Doesn't that seem like a very tall order? After all, it doesn't take much to realize that the church of Jesus Christ is anything but 'one'. Oh, we can name the 'big rifts' of the church – western theology vs eastern orthodoxy, Catholicism vs Protestantism, progressive vs conservative doctrine. And even within each congregation there are wide gaps in faith, values, practices and preferences that get in the way of 'being one'. So, has God said 'no' to Jesus' prayer? I doubt it. Have we failed to live up to Jesus' prayer? Well, in some ways yeah, but this is a request to God, not a demand to us.

So, what did Jesus mean when he prayed “that they may be one?” Well, first of all, 'one' is not a mindless uniformity or conformity, nor is it a monolithic sameness. The idea behind the word 'one' is the image of being one family; and we all know family. In my life, there is a whole crew of Dawsons; we are one family, and we have the crazy uncle and the annoying niece. And we do not all hold the same values, or faith, or ideals or preferences. But we are one family. I imagine the same goes for you and your family.

So then, what did Jesus seek for this messy, crazy family called 'church'? He wants us to be 'one' as God is one with Christ and Christ is one with God. Jesus Christ wants the church, together, to be like them (Father and Son) – one in character and one in purpose. Together, we are to be a reflection of God in our life as a community and in our labors for community. That is how Jesus, the man, and the Father, God, were one. Jesus was the very expression of God – in faithfulness, in righteousness and in love. And Jesus and the Father were one in purpose, as he said 'I have come to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work'. (John 4:28) And that work was the salvation of the world “That all might have eternal life.”

It is this oneness Jesus wants to find expression in us, that our lives as individuals and as a church, to live out the character of God and labor for the restoration of the world – the reign of God's peace on earth. Yet this is not so much a task for us as it is a gift for us. That 'oneness' was, after all, a plea, a prayer for God to achieve in and through us. And God never denied Jesus' prayer.

So, how do we receive, or experience that prayer? In and through Christ, as he said in John 15 “Abide in me as I abide in you... apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4,5) In other words, 'live in relationship with me if you would know the fruit of God.' Our relationship with God, that 'oneness' is the life-blood of this church and any church. Our relationship with God is the source, power, and center of our 'oneness', our relationship with each other and our service and witness to the world.

Offertory Music “America, the Beautiful”, Samuel A. Ward, Arr. Christos Tsitsaros

Doxology (choose the one that is best for your faith)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below,
praise him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God for all that Love has done; Creator, Christ and Spirit One. Amen

Prayer: O God, with gratitude and joy we dedicate our gifts to ministry in Christ’s name. May they be used with wisdom and courage to build up the whole human family in a unity of love. May all who give and all who receive rejoice together in your goodness and grace, to the glory of Christ. Amen.

Memorial Day Remembrance

The Story

Memorial Day was born out of the terrible conflict of the Civil War, which claimed more lives than all other conflicts in our history. By the late 1860’s people in various towns and cities throughout the U.S. began holding tributes to the fallen soldiers. Waterloo NY receive federal recognition as the ‘birthplace of Memorial Day’ and General John Logan is credited with establishing a national holiday of remembrance. But the first recorded act of remembrance was held just three weeks after the Confederacy surrendered. More than 1000 people, recently freed slaves, the US Colored Troops and a handful of white people gathered at a POW camp outside Charleston, South Carolina, to consecrate a proper burial site for the Union dead. The group sang hymns, gave readings and distributed flowers around the cemetery, which they dedicated to the ‘Martyrs of the Race Course’.

After World War One, another conflict of terrible losses, the day of remembrance was expanded to include all those who died in wars for this country; and since then the date, traditions and honors have expanded and been re-shaped to give expression to our continuing gratitude to all those who gave their lives for us.

The Names: Bill McGee will now give a roll-call of those we remember today.

Hymn: This is Our Song NCH 591

Blessing: May God bless the souls of those who gave themselves in fidelity to this country for the welfare of others. May we be encouraged and strengthened to live in a way that honors their commitment.

***Hymn** Sent Forth by God’s Blessing NCH 76

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak,

helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*** Benediction**

Go now into the world

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6 adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

“The Oneness of Everything”, Jim Scott

music provided by Chris Harris and Lynne Walker