

**Pastor Mollie's Sermon**  
**Easter 7: June 2, 2019**  
**John 17:20-26: Power of being prayed for**

The first verse in this week's passage is one of my favorites in John's Gospel. I know, I know, there are so many other great verses from John's remarkable story: "In the beginning was the Word...", "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," "For God so loved the world...", "In my house are many mansions...", and more.

Why, then, do I love this verse?

Simply because in it we hear Jesus praying for us. Yes. Jesus...nearly two thousand years ago...is praying...for us!!

Let's set the scene.

It's Thursday evening, the night on which Jesus will be betrayed, handed over to his enemies, deserted by his friends, tried, convicted, and ultimately crucified.

And knowing all that is to come, he gathers his closest friends, offers them parting words of encouragement and hope, and then prays for them.

He prays that they may endure the challenges that come their way.

He prays that they may discover strength in their unity.

He prays that they will be drawn together as one as Jesus and the heavenly Father are one.

And then he prays not only for them, but for all for who will believe in Jesus because of their testimony

Some like to call this the "high priestly prayer" because it is not only intense, but also at portions – including in this reading – rather theologically dense.

In some ways, in fact, it sounds more like a commandment – to be one;

or even more promises – that they will one day be where Jesus is going and share his glory.

But at heart it's none of these things.

It's a prayer. It's the prayer of one person praying for others, others whom he loves.

And that's important.

If you've ever had someone pray for you – not in general, but really just for you – you know what I mean.

About a year ago I was with a group of pastors for a conference and at one point we split up into groups of three,

shared some of what was going on in our lives –

the highs and lows and all – and then prayed for one another.

To be perfectly honest,

I was most comfortable when I was doing the praying.

I don't count myself a great prayer, by any stretch,

but at least I had something to do.

Being prayed *for*, on the other hand, left me vulnerable, exposed, with nothing to do but to receive the prayers of another.

That was uncomfortable. But it was also ultimately quite powerful.

It was a reminder that I don't have to do everything,

that others are there to support me, that I am not alone but am valued and cared for by another.

That's what Jesus does here.

He prays for his disciples.

He senses their anxiety, confusion, and fear, and so he prays for them.

He knows they can bear no more, and so he prays for them.

He knows he will soon leave them, and so he prays for them.

And as he does, and whether or not they understand everything he says, he tells them that they do not have to do everything or even understand everything.

He tells them that he is there to support them, that they are not alone, and that they are valued and loved.

Jesus is praying like a mother who has adopted these children.

They belonged to God, but God gave them to Jesus to care for,

to teach, to nurture.

Soon Jesus will go away and he prays for these children.

It's a powerful moment.

Professor and pastor David Lose tells us that...

*Jesus' prayer hangs in the space between earth and heaven,  
between time past and time present and time yet to come.*

As Jesus prays, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word..."

And that includes us!

We are the latest in a long line of people who have been inspired and encouraged to believe because of the words and lives of those original disciples.

And what does Jesus pray for?

"That they may be one."

That we may be one – one with each other, one with Jesus and the Father, one with ourselves.

And that being one, we may have peace.

So I ask you today...

For a moment....To imagine – that Jesus was praying for us all those years ago and continues to care for us, support us, and love and value us today...

and then ask yourself, how does that make you feel?

To know that Jesus prayed for you, and for all those who came before you and will come after you.

Jesus reminds us today, 1. That we come together in prayer, to pray for others in what they need, but also to be held in prayer ourselves, regardless of the vulnerability or awkward feelings that come with it.

And 2. We can't do this alone. We are called to be united with one another, to work together, pray together, do life together, so that the story of Jesus continues.

If you think about it, you are here because of someone who shared the story of Jesus with you- though prayer, conversation, story telling, teaching... and that person was told the story of Jesus by someone, who was told by someone, who was told by someone else...

leading us all the way back to the original disciples who walked alongside Jesus and heard his stories through prayer, teaching, and leading by example.

We are called to be United together as the body of Christ- sharing the love we first are given, so that we can love one another.

Today you each have a notecard... I am going to give you a minute to think of an answer to the question "How can I pray for you, with you today?"

Think of how you can be lifted up in prayer, and write that down on your notecard.

You can write your name on the card, but you do not have to!

When the offering plate comes around, please drop your notecard in the plate.

The ushers will gather the cards and put them in a basket up on the altar....

When you come up for communion, following the wine, the basket of prayer requests will be offered to you.

Please take a card (hopefully it is not your own) and I ask that you pray for the person and what they wrote down on the card.

If you don't know who wrote it, that's ok... God knows!

Each of us will leave here today, knowing someone is intentionally praying for you this week!

This is who we are called to be as disciples of Jesus.

This is unity.

This is the body of Christ here at St. Mark.

Amen.