

7th Sunday of Easter  
John 17: 20-26

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon this morning is the Gospel we heard before from John 17:20-26.

**20 "I am not praying for these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their Word, 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. Let them also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me! 22 I have given them the glory that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one. 23 I am in them, and You are in Me. Let them be brought to complete unity so that the world may know that You have sent Me, and that You have loved them as You have loved Me! 24 Father, I desire that those also whom You have given to Me may be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory, which You have given to Me, because You have loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 Righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have come to know that You have sent Me. 26 I have made Your name known to them, and I shall make it known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and that I may be in them."**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen

Dear friends of Christ,

Peace be with you.

Today's Gospel brings us to the last words of Jesus in the Upper Room on the night that He was betrayed. He has been teaching many things to the disciples in order to prepare them for the events of the next few days, - His suffering, death and resurrection. He has also been teaching them about their lives after His ascension, how the Holy Spirit will inspire them and teach them all things. Finally, our Lord finished His teaching with prayer.

The Gospel accounts tell us that Jesus prayed frequently, but they do not often record the actual words of His prayers. Nevertheless, we do have the words of Jesus' prayers on this night, not only His prayer in the Upper room, but also His prayer in Gethsemane.

His prayer in the Upper Room had three parts. First of all, He prayed for Himself, "**Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify You!**" [John 17:1.] He prayed that He would remain faithful to the task which His Father in Heaven had given to Him, the task of suffering and dying for the sins of the World.

When He finished praying for himself, He prayed for the Apostles "**I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those whom You have given Me. For they are Yours. 10 All that are Mine are Yours, and what are Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one!**" [John 17:9-11.] Jesus prayed for their faith that they would remain faithful to God the Father.

Then there are the words that we heard in today's Gospel. Here Jesus prayed for us "**I am not praying for these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their Word,**" We are the ones who have heard the words of the Apostles and believe.

Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers. Three times, Jesus asked that the Father would make us one. "**21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. Let them also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me! 22 I have given them the glory that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one. 23 I am in them, and You are in Me. Let them be brought to complete unity so that the world may know that You have sent Me, and that You have loved them as You have loved Me!**" Three times means that this is very important. Jesus truly desires our unity.

But that unity cannot be just any unity. Many in the current culture want to unite humanity at any cost, but their idea of unity is very different from the unity for which Jesus prayed. They might say, "Well, let's just agree to disagree." OR they might say, "Well, you have your truth and I have mine." Such phrases and others like them are NOT statements of unity. The true meaning of such statements is that there are real disagreements, but everyone is going to ignore the disagreements and act as though there are no disagreements.

In reality, this is hypocrisy, not unity. We used to call this sweeping things under the rug. So, we now have people who say silly things like, "Well, Moslems and Christians both worship the same god! just under a different name. We should be able to find a way for them to get along." Such people demonstrate a profound ignorance of the difference between the teachings of Islam and Christianity. Allah, the Moslem god, asks you to sacrifice your sons and your daughters for him. On the other hand, God the Father has already sacrificed His Son for us! and for our sons and our daughters. The difference is profound. True unity can only be found in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We human beings cannot produce the unity for which Jesus prays. Instead, Jesus prays for the unity among Christians that He Himself has with God the Father. Jesus prays for the unity among Christians that is in God and from God. Such unity can only happen because people are already united to Christ. As we are united into Christ, we are united into the body of Christ, the One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church. True unity can only be found in Christ, the Son of God who became man and gave Himself up for us on the cross. This is the unity for which Jesus prayed in that Upper Room.

This unity isn't a dead stagnant unity, but it's an active living thing. As Jesus prayed, He prayed that this unity would have a specific effect. He Prayed, **"So that the world may know that You have sent Me, and that You have loved them as You have loved Me!"** Once again, Jesus prayed for this three times. This indicates that this is very important.

The Greek for the word "sent" is the root for the word "apostle." When Jesus prayed that the world may know that You sent Me, He prayed that the world would hear that He is the Apostle sent from God the Father.

As the Apostle from God the Father, Jesus came to the earth on a very specific mission. God the Father sent Him to take up our human flesh into Himself and work the redemption that we could not work for ourselves. That work included His perfect life, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, and His ascension. By accomplishing this mission, Jesus earned forgiveness for the sins of the world, forgiveness that offers eternal life with Him.

The unity of the church also proclaims the love that God has for the world. The greatest expression of love is the body of the son of God hanging on a cross for you and me. His love endured the punishment of hell for us as He hung there. Jesus prayed that every believer would know that God loves them even as God the Father loves God the Son. The love that God has for us is the same as the love that God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have for one another.

Jesus described this love as the love that He received from the Father before the foundation of the world. From these words we learn that the Son of God is eternal with the Father. Even in eternity, the love between the Father and the Son is perfect and that is the love with which the father loves you and me.

So what's the result of this unity, this sending, and this love? **"Father, I desire that those also whom You have given to Me may be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory, which You have given to Me, because You have loved Me before the foundation of the world"** Jesus prayed that all of this will have one effect, that those who are unified in Him would have eternal life with Him in His glory. Jesus' prayer for us is that we will live with Him forever in His glory.

Jesus prayed at a real time in a real upper room and He prayed for us as well. He prayed that we would be united with Him just as He is united with God the Father. He prayed that we would know that He is the Apostle sent from God the Father to redeem us from our sins with His holy life and His innocent suffering and death. He prayed that we would know that God the Father loves us, His adopted child, just as He loves Jesus, His only begotten Child. He prayed that we would spend eternity sharing in His glory, the glory that He shared with the Father from eternity.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to record the actual words of Jesus' prayer for our comfort and for our confidence. We can take comfort in the love that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has for us. We can have confidence in the eternal salvation that is ours in the glory of Christ. We can know that God the Father, in His love, sent His Son as a sacrifice to make us truly one with Him.

In his epistle, the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, "**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**" [1 John2:1.] These words teach us that Jesus is our advocate with the Father. That is, He still prays for us. Even as we heard the prayer that He prayed in that Upper Room, so He still prays for us today and every day until we join Him in His eternal glory. **Amen**

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

### **Prayer of the Church 7th Sunday of Easter.**

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.  
*Brief Silence,*

P Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, You call Your Holy people to faith in You through the gospel of redemption that is in Christ Jesus. By His incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection, You have made known the height and depth and breadth of Your love for our fallen race. Bring us who hope in You into the unity that You have with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, that the world may know that You have loved us even as You have loved Your Son, Jesus Christ, our true and only Saviour. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Kind and loving Father, Your Son has called Your Holy people to be labourers in Your vineyard, and given His Word and Spirit to sustain us. Open our eyes to see all who do not know the Word of Christ and grant us faith and courage to speak His Word in faithfulness. Further the work of our Pastors in the AELC and the ULMA, and all Your children as together we proclaim Christ and His saving work in the places where we live and labour, that we may boldly confess His name and be protected from the foes who would silence us. Grant that the wholesome Word of Christ may reach eager ears here and throughout our land. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Good and gracious God, in Your fatherly kindness and compassion, You generously and daily provide for all our physical needs, pouring forth the blessings of creation upon the just and the unjust, without any merit or worthiness in us. Bless those who work the land, cause the wholesome fruits of the earth to spring forth in abundance. Bless their growth with abundant sunshine and seasonal rains. Protect them from disease and pestilence, hail and drought, and every kind of danger, that with thankful hearts we may enjoy them to the health of our bodies and be strengthened for Your service. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Merciful Father, You created us and still preserve us in body and soul. Graciously give Your aid to those who are sick and who have requested our prayers [especially  
.], that they may be helped in their time of trouble, preserved in faith and brought to rejoice in Your

compassion. Assist and support the members of their families who care for them, watch over them, and wait in vigil with them, that they, together with their loved ones who suffer, may ever take comfort in You as their refuge and strength, their hope and help in every time of trouble. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Gracious and Merciful Creator You have given us both bread for the body, and Christ, the bread of life. Prepare us now to receive with faith and thanksgiving His flesh for the life of the world and His blood that cleanses us from all sin. Unite us that we may believe and confess one faith, and bring us to that day when we shall be one people together at the table of our Lord. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Christ our Lord, for He is the Root of Jesse, the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, our heavenly Bridegroom who has promised to gather us to Himself. He is the hope of Israel and the Desire of Nations, who loves us and gave Himself for us, that we may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom of grace and glory, where He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**