

John 17:20-26

## Completely One

Walking down a street one might find themselves looking into a shop window and see your reflection and that of the surrounding area. There are wonderful photographs one can find of mountains, trees, clouds, and whatever else may be around, being reflected in water, whether a big lake like Superior or a quiet smaller lake. Those photographs can be awe inspiring especially when taken at sunrise or sunset or when flowers are in full bloom making for a striking vista of purples, orange, blues, yellow, and reds.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa which sit across from the Parliament Buildings also is beside a building with many glass windows and the church is reflected in the windows. It is really a stunning site. Reflections are interesting as they do not reflect exactly what is the actual subject. There is always some distortion, it does not take away the reality, the beauty or even the not so beautiful, yet reflections can give a sense of what is. There is a resemblance of the original object or subject being reflected. As Christians we are called to reflect the love and oneness of the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

The scripture reading from John 17 is the end of a prayer that Jesus prayed over his disciples just before his betrayal and arrest. He has spent the last hours over dinner, teaching, reminding, demonstrating. He has even watched as Judas walked out the door on his way to betray Jesus to the temple authorities, and predicted Peter's denial that he even knew Jesus. And still, he prays for them. He prays for those who will continue to teach and heal, and love. Those who have followed him, been at his side for the last three years, knowing that they have much to face, that they will fail, that they will struggle, and yet he prays for their protection, for courage, for God to be with them and go with them.

And then Jesus prays for us. His words were, "I ask not only on behalf of these [those present with him at that time], but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." We are those who will believe in Jesus through the words of the disciples. And Jesus' prayer was that we "may all be one." Verses 20-23 go round and round in this prayer of desire and hope that just as God the Father was in Jesus and Jesus was in God that we would also be in Jesus and in God, "so that the world may believe that God had sent Jesus."

Today it is difficult to read the words that Jesus prayed, look at the church and the world, and begin to hope that as followers of Christ we have lived out those words. This passage is all about oneness in Christ, the glory of Christ, the glory given to Jesus and

given to us. Maybe part of the struggle we understand glory to be glorious, beautiful, powerful, and often power over others. Where the glory of Christ is most fully revealed in the power of the cross, a place of suffering and death. We don't like to think that glory can be something that comes in suffering, and not suffering for ourselves, but suffering for the sake of others.

For us today, that suffering most likely would be in giving of our time, energy, resources, power and money to help those who are most vulnerable. The glory that Jesus speaks of is manifest in servanthood, compassion, and love. This is what Jesus taught throughout his ministry and demonstrated in the feeding of multitudes, the washing of feet, and the crossing of historical boundaries between people.

Jesus prayed that we may be one, as God and Jesus are one. Jesus in us and Jesus in God, that we May become "completely one." This complete oneness is shown in love. Jesus talked about this oneness in the context that through that oneness the world may know that God had sent Jesus and God loved all, even as God loved Jesus.

But we humans are not very good at love, especially love in community. We think we are good at it, but push come to shove, protection of our power, money, resources, desires, and standing in the community often comes before loving others. We are very protective of our own, whether family, property, or even our church. Sometimes we are not very good at any of that as relationships fail because of infidelity, or financial crisis, stresses of health and work. This is not just relationships between two people but also in organizations, and certainly in the Christian church.

We fail to remember that how we live and love, how we treat others in community and in the world, how we see someone of another ethnicity, gender, or socially, is a reflection of God to others. Jesus' prayer was about the community of faith, it can be read for us as individuals and that is helpful, but it was ultimately about being in community. This is the distinction between being simply spiritual and being a Christian. Christians need community. We are called to our work in community with one another. We best reflect the relationship of Jesus in God, and God in Jesus, and both in us, when we live out our faith in the community of the church.

This does not mean that we protect the church, that we turn inwards, but rather it is a call to gather for the upbuilding and strengthening of our faith and understanding so that we can better work together in places outside the walls of a church, reflecting the oneness, glory, and love of Christ and of God.

In a world that is fractured, where families are unable to greet each other because of differences, where churches vie for members, and power dominates, where powerful think only of money and more power, more influence, more land, more resources...we are called to care. Where the lives of people different from us are not valued, we are to care for those who have no power, to love those who have no influence or resources, to reflect the love of God into the world.

We reflect inwardly as we determine if we are reflecting outwardly the power, love, and compassion of the creator, and continually correct ourselves and each other when we get off course, when our reflection is so distorted that no one can recognize God's oneness with Jesus in our behaviour.

Jesus' prayer was that we would be one, not just this community of faith, not just one with those who think just like us, but one with those whose thought and understanding are different from our own. The one thing that we are to have in common is love for all, for all of God's created world, for each person, to know the intrinsic value of each person just because they are created by a loving God who desire that they may come to know God's love for them through each of us, and as the community that reflects the oneness of God's love.

We will not do this perfectly, just as reflections in mirrors, water, and glass is not perfect, but the more closely we can resemble the God of love, and the glory of Jesus who died because of his love for us, the more people we know we are Christians by our love. May we strive to become a clearer reflection of complete oneness so others may come to know and believe that God loves them.