

May 13 2018

John 17:6-19

Jesus has been talking to his disciples. He is still with the disciples, but at this moment he is talking and praying to God. Jesus says:

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

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. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

For the last few weeks we have been hearing Jesus' words to his disciples on his last night with them. This week it is still Jesus' last night with his disciples. He has

already called his disciples his friends, and commanded them to serve one another, and asked them to share God's love far and wide, and to be there for each other, and he is now praying for them. He's talking to God, in front of the disciples, and praying out loud for them. He tells God how these disciples have received and embraced him and all he has had to say. In spite of not always getting it, they have recognized there is something true and right in what Jesus is teaching, and they are on board.

Jesus knows that their path is not going to be easy, so he asks God to continue to guard and protect them. Protection is not keeping them in a safe bubble, but it is keeping them rooted in the Word, able to hold on to it, able to continue to embrace it, even when it is going to cost them.

He wants them to know no matter what happens, God loves them. That may not sound earth shattering to you – maybe we even take it for granted - the idea that God is love and that God loves you. But Jesus is really making a point of this. So let's think about this for a minute.

I'm going to invite you to find a conversation partner. Talk to someone near you....

Why is it important to you that God loves you?

- *Cuz others won't always love you...*
- *Cuz won't feel lovable when do something wrong...*

Anyone want to share with the group?

Jesus wants his disciples to know they are one with God the same way he is. God treasures them. With Jesus present on earth with them, they have experienced his love and care, but Jesus is not going to be present with them anymore and his prayer is that they will still know that they are loved.

In spite of the saying that distance makes the heart grow fonder, distance can dull or dilute that sense that there is someone who truly treasures you and cares about your wellbeing. We human beings in general do better when there's someone who can actually hug us, talk to us, care for us, be gentle and tender with us. My bet is that Jesus was a hugger. No matter what, Jesus has been fully

present with the disciples. And that's going to change. But Jesus wants with all his heart for them to trust his love is still there.

What I'd like you to do now is think very concretely: What helps keep love alive and real and gives you the experience of tenderly being cared for even when the person who loves you or whom you love is far away – think about your brother or daughter or mom or someone who doesn't live close by...

None of us has the disciples' experience of Jesus' presence. But I wonder if you have experienced God's tender care for you? How have you experienced it?

One of the ways we can experience God's tender care is by being prayed for. Having someone actually say our name in prayer. Anyone have story of time they were prayed for and what it felt like? (Mike, Mom, kids at Calvert) How did it feel to pray for someone and have someone pray for you?

One of the things we can do is pray for each other. When you don't know what else to do, but it is someone in the church, you can say: can I pray for you. Bud, Bev, Jean, Dorothy, Dave and Dave and Dave..... Because it's one thing to imagine that someone else might be praying for you, and it's another to hear your name or your concern said out loud.... It might feel awkward at first, but if you can get over how awkward you feel, it can be a real gift to someone else....

One of the most important things we can do is pray not just for each other, but with each other. It is one of the ways we experience God's care – it's one of the ways God's care becomes real.

This is what Jesus models for the disciples. They will know God's love for them, because Jesus prays out loud - for them - to God - right in front of them.

Jesus knows that life is going to get hard for the disciples. They will literally be fed to the lions, jailed, whipped, crucified, drawn and quartered.

What Jesus offered them wasn't protection from death, disease, hatred, cruelty, disaster. What he thought they needed was to know deep down in the bottom of their soul that God would never abandon them. That God knows their name and treasures them. That having known love they would understand that no matter

what life threw at them, nothing could destroy their value or their worth. And that is what we all need.