

Sermon: Easter 7 / Morning Prayer

The Rev. Mike Wernick

May 13, 2018

Year B
John 17:6-19

I would like to start by wishing all the mothers in the congregation a Happy Mother's Day.

I looked up the definition of the word mother and one definition had a line in it that caught my attention: A mother is someone that exercises protecting care over something else.

In our home, growing up mom played many different roles, but she was mostly the heart of the home. She and my father together parented us, and as any parent knows their job includes loving and caring for their children while preparing them for life in the world. Mom was for my brother and I, caretaker, counselor, teacher and protector. She was loving and very joyful. She sometimes referred to herself in a fun loving way as chief, cook and bottle-washer, but we felt that she, like most mothers, wore many different hats.

In our Gospel reading today Jesus is winding up his earthly ministry and turns to God in prayer. This prayer has been known since the 5th century as the "High Priestly Prayer" and some sources say that the prayer took place in the Upper Room in the presence of the disciples just prior to Jesus's arrest and crucifixion."

It is the longest of Jesus's recorded prayers, and is thought to have 3 parts: The first being Jesus's offering of himself for Gods purposes, secondly, concern for the destiny of his disciples after his ascension, and lastly for all future disciples and believers.

Jesus is saying farewell while asking God to guide and protect the disciples as they go into the world without him, to proclaim Gods love and God's ways as taught to them by Christ. The disciples were given to Jesus by God, Jesus was the mentor and vessel for

all that God wanted the disciples to know, especially to know God's love. Jesus made God's character known to the disciples.

Basically, Jesus is turning the disciples back over to God so that they will be functioning in the world under God's guidance, love, protection and care.

Jesus knew that the disciples would be witnessing and living out their faith in a very hostile, unbelieving world. As Jesus was sent, he is now sending out his disciples. By his death and resurrection he will have glorified himself and God, and he is now returning to the Father.

Jesus was not asking God to keep the disciples from experiencing hardships or challenges, he was asking God to protect them from evil, and the effects of evil, which presents itself in many ways. And, he asked that God would protect them in particular, from Satan. The disciples would need to be united in spirit and love, just as God and Jesus were. And, they were to persevere in faithfulness.

As St Paul says in Philippians 2:2, be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose.

The disciples were to remain in the world, but not be of the world. They would become the Body of Christ. The goal was to be engaged in the world, spreading the Gospel message, without being involved in the world's lures, values, morals and practices. Jesus's prayer was not only for his disciples at the time, but also for all future disciples and that includes all Christians and all of us today.

We live in a crazy, frightening world. We are surrounded by problems that seem almost too big to even begin to tackle. Problems like poverty, mass shootings, violence, climate change and pollution to name a few. But we, like the disciples have God's love too. We were not abandoned after Jesus's death, resurrection and ascension.

I have a framed saying on my desk that reads: "The power behind you is greater than the task ahead of you." It was given to me by Jeanne Laird and was done in her beautiful calligraphy. She gave it to me at a time in my life when I faced what I considered an almost insurmountable task. I believe the power she was referring to is God's love, and it is available to everyone.

Our challenge as individuals and as the Church, or Body of Christ is to live and function in the world with Gospel values. Not embracing, but challenging the values of the world, and to work to address or change things that we can, that go against Jesus's teachings. And, of course, no one can tackle all the world's problems, but united in spirit and in God's love we can begin to address some of the issues of our time. Even if we are the drop in the bucket, as Mother Teresa once said, at least we are the drop.

This morning we will, as a parish, pray over the afghans made by members of Warm Up America (including some of our own parishioners).

These afghans will go to children and teens going into foster care--going out into the world. They can protect the recipients from cold, and for younger children they may be a source of comfort and perhaps security. But more than that they are symbolic of God's love, made by many caring hands as a ministry to those transitioning to a new life. Like Jesus, they and all disciples today (including all of us) will make many transitions in life.

So let us go forth, to love and serve the Lord, as disciples carrying Christ's message into the world by our lives, actions and words, under God's motherly/parental love, guidance and power.