

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson
St. John's Episcopal Church
13 May 2018
Easter VII (John 17:6-19)

We must remember: *We are the community for which Jesus prays.*

He is not giving us a set of instructions; rather, he is reminding God (just in case the omnipotent God doesn't remember) that though he (Jesus) is about to leave the earthly plane, he is entrusting our care to the God of all Love.

It seems ironic that while we pray to God-in-Christ, God-in-Christ prayed for us. You and me.

Rather humbling, isn't it?

I mean, first you have God coming to earth to save humankind from its somewhat terminal brokenness. He walks like us, talks like us. He heals, he blesses, he feeds, he forgives. We fear his power and his message and we prepare to kill him.

And in the midst of this plan for Jesus' destruction, he prays for us. Us. Broken as we are, us. "Protect them, Father." And, of course, later on, "Forgive them, Father."

Yes, I find this quite humbling. Because... *who am I that Jesus would even care?!?*

This is who we say I am, from the Book of Common Prayer burial service: "A sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming." (BCP p. 499)

In other words, *we belong to Christ Jesus for ever.*

We are members of the Body of Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. *Nothing.*

We are sanctified, set apart for sacred purpose. And that purpose is to love others with a godly kind of love that has no limitations, no boundaries, no expectations, no other purpose than to love wildly and to bring the Kingdom of God to this broken, broken world.

Because we are loved.

So what is this "world" that St. John mentions so many times in this Gospel passage? Planet earth, whose stewardship we so badly neglect in the name of comfort, in the name of greed? Rainforests destroyed for palm oil and coffee beans, the waters of the Dakotas and the Straits of Mackinac in danger so we can move non-renewable resources more quickly, carbon emission standards eroded by a Washington on bended knee before the idol of corporate greed?

Is this world the grandeur of Victoria Falls, the splendid isolation of Peru's High Andes, the power of the Colorado River, the breathtaking storms of the North Atlantic – and Lake Michigan?

God pronounced creation "good" – and yet we continue our rush toward its destruction. Are we in this world or of it? And if we are, indeed, both in and of this world, is it not our responsibility to *care* for it?

As someone has written, “There is no Planet B.”

Or is this “world” Jesus prays about *us*? Is this world we who allow children to be slaughtered, we who allow the continued objectification of women, we who refuse to acknowledge the sin of racism that so taints us, we who allow our representatives – and remember, they are *supposed* to be *OUR* representatives – to deny basic services to those people who are poor, those who are people of color, those who are sick, and those who are dying? Is this world we who passively accept the threat of annihilation by nuclear war, we who denounce a football player who kneels in solidarity with his brothers and sisters yet give a racist sheriff a pass, we who remain silent as families are ripped apart at our borders?

Is this the “world” Jesus is praying about?

And is he praying about the world of the single mom struggling, yet with deep love caring for her children as she balances part time jobs and home, the dad who says “no” to an after hours beer so he can attend his son’s Little League game, the doctor who sacrifices a lucrative career and serves sick immigrant children in Turkey, the women who teach the women of Sierra Leone to be midwives, empowering women and making a difference?

Perhaps it is indeed this world – broken and healing, hurting and restoring, warring and crying for peace.

Jesus loves us.

He is in the world – in each of us, on the streets, in the board rooms, in the church, in the barrio, in the penthouses – and yet he is not *of* the world. His calling is higher: To encourage us to love one another and change the world.

And as long as we have breath he will speak. In this world and in the next.

If only, if *only*, this world would listen.

Amen.