

Sermon for May 7, 2016

Many of our most memorable and meaningful verses of Scripture come from the Gospel of John—“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” “In my Father’s house are many dwelling places,” “I am the way, the truth and the life,” to name a few. But I think that the first verse in today’s Gospel reading can be one of the most meaningful to me. Why? Because in it we hear Jesus praying for us—yes, nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus is praying for us.

To understand just how incredible this is we need to set the scene. It’s the Thursday evening when Jesus will be betrayed by one of his own and handed over to his enemies. He will be deserted and denied by his closest friends, tried, beaten, convicted and crucified. Knowing all of this Jesus gathers those closest to him and offers them words of encouragement and hope. And then he prays for them.

He prays that they may endure the challenges that are going to come their way. He prays that they discover the strength in their unity. He prays that they will be drawn together in love as Jesus and the Father are one. And then, he prays not only for them, but for those who will believe in him because of their words.

And that’s where all of us come in because we’re here in church today because someone told us about Jesus. Whether it was our parents, grandparents, or a friend, someone told us about the good news that in Jesus we see the love that God has for us all. With the inspiration of this promise and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we came to believe. I remember well the person

who brought the stories of the Bible alive for me. Her name was Mrs. Grace Pinnow and she was my fourth grade Sunday school teacher. She not only told us the stories, she helped us to envision them—whether it was having lamb as part of a Passover meal or setting up a panorama of the empty tomb—we were part of God’s story.

But here’s the thing, someone had to have told Mrs. Pinnow. And someone else told that person. And someone told that person as well and so on and so on—all the way back to the witnessing of those disciples who despite their fear—both on this night and on Easter morning—moved out from their locked room because of the promise of the resurrection and began to share the good news of Jesus with others.

So when Jesus prays this night, he’s not only praying for the disciples seated right next to him; he’s praying for all who will believe because of them—all the way up to you and I and for those whom we will tell the good news. Too often what we read in Scripture seems like a story that happened to people a long time ago and we wonder just what it has to say to us today. But there are a few passages that are like doors that open up and invite us into the story as active participants. We saw one of those doors a few weeks ago when Jesus told Thomas, blessed are those who believe in Jesus even though they or we have never seen him.

And today we get another door as Jesus takes time away from everything else that was happening and he says a prayer for us. It’s a powerful thing to know you’re being prayed for and as we go through this thing called life; we can forget

that not only those we know and who love us are praying for us—Jesus himself is praying for us.

No matter what is going on in our lives, even those things that our closest family and friends know nothing about, we aren't facing them alone. On the night in which he was betrayed, the night before he was crucified, Jesus prayed for us. Jesus continues to walk with us and accompanies us through all that we will go through. He holds onto us through the muck and mire of this life and even walks us through death into the new life to come. This is the promise given to us in the resurrection.

And this is the promise we need to hear again and again; a promise we need to believe and trust. So I want you to take a few moments and write down one thing in your life that you need Jesus to pray for and care about. Keep it with you and when you need to, turn to it and remember that Jesus is praying for you. Now. Today. Tomorrow. Always.