

## Sermon on John Seventeen

In today's Gospel reading Jesus prays for the disciples to be united; to be one. Let's put the setting into context. We're back on Maundy Thursday and this is Jesus' final prayer with and for the disciples before they go to the Garden of Gethsemane. They're sharing a final meal, Jesus has set an example for them by washing their feet; he's shared with them the bread and wine and commanded them to love one another. And now he's preparing them for what's coming next—his arrest, torture and death.

It's not an easy task. They're fearful and confused. Jesus has promised his resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them. But they have what I call bad news syndrome; you know, when someone gets some bad news and they don't hear anything else said after the bad news. So Jesus does one more thing—he prays for them.

The disciples are afraid, confused and anxious, so Jesus prays for them. They can't handle any more, so Jesus prays for them. Jesus knows that soon the disciples will be on their own, so Jesus prays for them. In this prayer Jesus is telling the disciples that they don't have to do everything or understand everything. Jesus tells them that he will support them, that they aren't alone, and that they're beloved children of God.

It's a powerful moment of prayer and it would be easy to think that this prayer was only for the disciples with Jesus in that upper room, but let me reread the first verse for you again. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." On

behalf of those who will believe in me through their word—that's you and me!  
We're the latest in a long line of people who have come to believe in Jesus Christ because of the words and actions of those original disciples.

Jesus prays for us to be one—one with each other, one with Jesus and the Father, just as Jesus and the Father are one; so that we can have peace. Too often we equate unity with being uniform. That couldn't be farther from the truth! Take a look around you—we are far from being uniform. We come in many different sizes, ages, sexes and economic situations.

Even when we speak as one voice in word or song; the whole has many parts to it. When we speak the creed or say the prayers it goes to God as one made up of many. There are loud voices, there are soft voices. Some are deep, some are high, but they all go to God. I tell people that I love being up in front when you sing, because I get to hear the harmonies blended into one beautiful song raised in praise, thanksgiving or lament to God!

Maybe a better way to understand unity is that we are all equal to one another, especially when it comes to the Sacraments of the church. When we come to the font or to the table it doesn't matter how old we are, how much we understand, how much money we make, or what our sins might be. It doesn't matter because it is our God who making everything possible. Our God who desires so strongly to be united with us that God put on flesh and became one of us! It is God's word united with the water that makes us beloved children of God. It is Jesus' promise to be with us in the bread and in the wine that the meal we eat feeds and sustains us.

As you can see from history that if it was left up to us to make us one it would never happen, but thanks be to God that its not! The unity that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share is ours only because God wants to give it to us! And with God all things are possible!