

**The Reverend Heinz D. Raidel**  
**Sermon, Seventh Sunday of Easter, 2023**  
**May 21, 2023**

**Prayer**

**Quick question to start things off... as followers of Jesus, what makes us stand out in the world?**

- we could make a list
- high on the list would be that we have hope
- and also high on the list is that we pray to a higher power
- now there are people who are skeptical of our both hope and our tendency to pray
- those folks tend to point to the last environmental disaster, or mass shooting,
  - and they point out that that our prayers and thoughts are not working
  - and then they point to the world and every evil they can think of and they point out how horrible everything is and from that they want to say that our hope is.... Hopeless
- the gospel reading from for today is Jesus praying
  - and I want to take a closer look at that
  - because in this Jesus prayer is a lesson which shows the error of the thinking of the folks who question our hope and prayer habits
  - and in this Jesus prayer there is encouragement not only that our hope and prayers are the right things,
  - there is the good news which is Jesus is telling us to keep up the good work.
- BTW: short message today, but there is a lot packed into it.

**Now, let me ask ... what is prayer?**

- I know some of us are going to say it is where we ask God for the things we need
  - yes, that is certainly part of prayer
  - I want to point out that prayer is more than asking God for something
  - because the people who say “your prayers are not working”?

- they say that because their only understanding of prayer is asking God for something... and they claim prayer failure of they don't get immediate results from prayer
- okay, so, how about prayer is us talking to God
  - yes, very good, but there is something more to prayer
- and that is this: Prayer is our relationship with God in action
  - we can only talk to God if we are in relationship with God
  - we can only ask for something if we are in relationship with God
    - and every time Jesus teaches the Disciples (and us) to pray
    - Jesus is teaching us or showing us to be in relationship with God
    - not just to be able to ask for anything
    - but if we are in relationship with God, then we have the commitment and strength of our relationship to use what we're asking for
    - and an open and honest relationship with God just makes everything about our faith life better and easier

### **I know some of us have never looked at prayer in this way**

- and I also know that for most of us,
  - we HAVE been using prayer as a relationship with God
  - without knowing it
  - yes, we have probably been doing the right thing without even knowing it.
  - by this I mean,
    - if we pray honestly and earnestly
    - if we pray trusting that God knows what's in our hearts
    - if we pray trusting God knows what's best for us
    - if we pray knowing we are parts of God's bigger plans
    - if we can pray out of desperation and fear and whatever honest emotion we feel
    - if we can be honest with God
    - then we can KNOW that God will hear and respond and take care of us.
  - some of us might be thinking "I have already been doing most or all of those things in prayer"

-and I would respond, indeed you have. I just said when it comes to prayer most, if not all of the time we are already doing the right thing!

-and speaking of doing the right thing, let's take a quick look at the gospel reading, and Jesus' prayer and... I think we will be able to see that we're doing the right thing in prayer....

**The Gospel reading is from John, ch 17, and it is obvious Jesus is praying.**

- (point out) Jesus is not just praying, also teaching his disciples and us how to pray by example
- this Jesus prayer is part of a larger teaching and prayer,
- started in ch 14
- called "the Final Discourse"
- Jesus is giving lessons, hope, and encouragement to his followers
  - Jesus knows what is coming up in Jerusalem
  - wants disciples and us to ready for that and for what comes after that
- and Jesus is also stressing one more thing- that the relationship between God and the people (us)
  - will continue through the resurrected Jesus and the Holy Spirit

**-now... I want to go back to where I said we're already doing the things in regards to prayer, and then go forward from there**

- I said that we are already doing a lot of the right things when it comes to prayer
- then I said Jesus is praying and teaching his disciples how to pray by example
- let me take Jesus's prayer from the reading today and show you what I am talking about.
- I mean Jesus does three things that we are probably doing without thinking about them (this is quick)

**-Glorification**

- first thing Jesus does is give glory to God
- this sets up the relationship
  - (-most of us have never got into the complicated glorification Jesus refers to here, we don't have to
  - for us glorification is as simple as starting with Father,

Heavenly Father, Most Holy God...

-again, glorification, big word for setting up the relationship (I am praying to you because you are the most powerful)

### **-Truth**

-next thing Jesus prays for is truth

-some might say hang on Pr Heinz

-Jesus prays for knowledge and eternal life for his followers next

-to those astute folks I would say "good point"

-I would also say that knowledge and eternal life are included in "truth"

-and I would say for us, we probably already pray for understanding, for forgiveness, and for the promise of life eternal for us and for our loved ones- we are doing it right

-also, praying for truth for us can be or is as simple as praying "Lord, show us the way"

### **-and last thing...Unity**

-Jesus prays to God for his followers

-notice the language Jesus uses here

- "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

-I am not sure how clear this is

-Jesus is asking that his followers will be connected to each other and to the Father in the same way that Jesus is connected to the Father

-Jesus is praying for unity-

-a unity not just between Jesus and God, but also one that includes people, AND

-it's a prayer for unity among the people

-now, some of us might be thinking... do we pray for unity?

-You know when we pray for the less fortunate sick, needy, poor, hungry victims of violence and evil among us,

-that's a prayer that we might all be united in God's blessings

- And one important thing you might not be thinking of
  - prayer language using plural “us” and “we”
  - we have been conditioned to use the plurals
  - a prayer “Lord help me” is a personal prayer
  - a prayer “Lord help us” is a unity prayer
- and yes, most of us already pray unity prayer pieces maybe without recognizing it.

**Now, if we pull together everything I have mentioned today, we might draw the conclusion that we are already doing the things in prayer that Jesus was doing, and that Jesus taught us to do in his prayers**

- and you might be asking, where is the good news in that?
- well, for maybe this one week, this one time, the good news might be that are doing the right thing in using prayer as a way of strengthening our relationship with God
- and the faith and life lesson, this one week, might just be, People of faith and followers of Jesus,
- keep up the good work.

Amen.