

Easter 7 – Year C

Today we celebrate the 7th and last Sunday of the Easter season. Through these weeks of Easter, we've heard the challenge to take up and live our own resurrection, to offer our hand to another and help them "Get up!" I've said we need to let God out of the tomb – and we even need to let God out of the temple of our own constructing.

Today, on this Sunday that is tucked in between Ascension this past Thursday and Pentecost next Sunday, today we are called to let God in. Actually, I think the reality is more than that. I think we are called to acknowledge, to accept, to believe wholeheartedly that God is *already* in – *within* – us. Today is about an invitation into intimacy.

In today's Gospel, we are still with John's description of the last night of Jesus's life. We have been given the commandment to love one another as Jesus has loved us. We have been assured that Jesus and his Father will come to us and make their home in us. And we have been promised the coming of the Holy Spirit. What we hear today is no instruction, no command. What we hear instead, what we *overhear*, is the prayer of Jesus. It is called the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. And that prayer is all about being One.

I think we often want to skip over this prayer of Jesus. It sounds a little convoluted. Some people call it, not the High Priestly prayer, but the Higher Math prayer. But this prayer of Jesus comes out of the most intimate relationship in his life – that relationship that the other Gospels describe when Jesus calls God "Abba" when the disciples ask him to teach them how to pray. There is no "lord's prayer" in the Gospel of John, you see. No, it is *this* prayer at the end of his life that reveals the intimacy between Jesus and the God he calls Father.

There was little in Jesus' Jewish upbringing that would have led him to think of God in such terms. God was the one who forged a covenant with Abraham, the "I AM who AM" – who provided the Mosaic laws. Leviticus and Deuteronomy were encyclopedic lists of laws regarding every aspect of Jewish life to which the observant Jew was bound. The relationship between God and God's people was described, in the Hebrew scriptures, as one of an agreement, a contract, a covenant where each of two separate parties had obligations. God would care for Israel, God's people, and they, in turn, were to follow the law.

Yet Jesus somehow developed, discovered, recognized an intimate relationship with God – not with the lawgiver or the author of dietary regulations and prohibitions and rituals of all kinds – but with a God he called in the vernacular "Daddy." This was such an intimate relationship that Jesus can say, "The Father and I are one." How could that come to be? It came by grace, no doubt. It came by Jesus daring to believe what he learned from his mother, about the mighty One who does great things for the lowly. This relationship with God came from hearing and believing the voice from the cloud that said, "You are my Beloved." The intimacy of that relationship between Jesus and Abba is what John is trying to describe in the first words of his Gospel when he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS God.... And the Word took flesh and dwelt among us."

"And the Word took flesh and dwelt among us." We have been hammered with this message over the past several Sundays – from the words of Revelation: "See, God's dwelling is among mortals!" to Jesus's assurance that we heard last week: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." And so today we hear, in this final prayer of Jesus: "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us..." Did you catch that? Do we really hear that? Jesus is praying us into the same intimacy with God that he enjoys. We are being invited into that same relationship.

Let us keep listening. Jesus says, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, ...” “Glory” here does not mean high praise or acclamation – We will be closer to the meaning if we understand it as the dwelling or settling of the Divine Presence. “The glory that you have given me – The Divine Presence that you have given me, I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Jesus is telling us, through this prayer, that the Incarnation is true – that God has entered fully into creation, God has taken flesh. The Divine Presence took flesh in Jesus the Christ. And that is the relationship with God which Jesus extends to us in this prayer.

God is out of the tomb. God is out of the temple. God is in our lives. Even more, God is *in us*.

If we could hear this - *really* hear and believe this... if we could acknowledge the Divine Presence deep within our own selves – and that same Presence in our family members and our neighbors and our enemies – then perhaps we would be able, like Paul and Silas, to respond to the dark places in our lives with such love and concern for the other that they would be compelled to say, “How can I have that kind of relationship?” “How can I come to know the God who loves like that?” If we could be willing to let God out of the box and acknowledge God already present *within* us and everyone else – then perhaps no one would feel so unloved, so unappreciated that they would want to do harm to others or themselves.

Perhaps the prayer of Jesus in the other Gospel’s – the “Lord’s Prayer” – and this high priestly prayer of Jesus from John’s gospel are really one and the same. “Father/Mother God, may the Oneness, the unity of your kingdom, be present to us. May we know your Divine Presence with and in us, so that all have enough bread to sustain them and forgiveness overflows. Because everything is Yours, and Your Glory – your presence – is in all.”

May it be so. Amen.

[Acts 16:16-34](#) [Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20-21](#) [John 17:20-26](#) [Psalm 97](#)