

<b>SERMON TITLE</b>	<b>Prayer that Binds us together</b>
<b>TIME/PROPER</b>	<b>ADVENT 1</b>
<b>PREACHER</b>	The Rev. Calvin Brown, Executive Director The Renewal Fellowship within The Presbyterian Church in Canada
<b>LOCATION</b>	Cambridge, Ontario
<b>SCRIPTURES</b>	2 Peter 3:8-15a    John 17: 1-26    Psalm 103 1-22
<b>NOTES:</b>	This is easily adapted to other times of the year if the first paragraph introduction is changed.

This is the first Sunday of Advent - the beginning of the Christian New Year. It is the season that we remember that just as Jesus has come to us in human form as a babe in the manger (which we celebrate at Christmas as the first Advent - Advent simply means coming) so also we believe he is coming again (the second advent) but this time in all his glory to judge the living and the dead as the Creed reminds us. So are we ready?

There is no better way to get ready than to deepen in our life of prayer .

Today we look at what has been called the high priestly prayer or the pinnacle of Jesus' praying life before the events of holy week. It reveals the whole plan of God and how God has ordered our lives so we should attain it. It is to enter into the deepest heart of Jesus and the most secret counsel of the Holy Trinity. What is especially relevant is that it is the prayer that Jesus specifically prays for you and for me. Here we see his heart of love looking down the long corridors of time until it stops today in this time and place and we are the object of His prayer of intercession. What is it then he says about us ? What does he ask the Father to do that is precisely what the Father desires to do and has planned from the beginning to do? What blessing will the Holy Spirit be sent to bring to us ?

Let's examine this incredible text. Jesus is aware that the time of his crucifixion is drawing near and he prays that he would bring glory to the Father but in his humanity he realizes that this can only happen not in any human strength but only if the Father first glorifies him. And so this is what he asks for. In that poured out glory Jesus has revealed to the apostles the real meaning of eternal life and declares that *eternal life is that they may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*. WOW! the secrets of God gone public. What he reveals as we overhear his prayer to the Father is that when we really know God then we have already begun eternal life - we have taken hold of eternal life or perhaps more correctly eternal life has taken hold of us - it is no wonder the saints and martyrs have so little fear of death and the threat of death by tyrants is of so little effect - they already have eternal life. One of the reformation martyrs was addressed by his executioner who asked his forgiveness to which the martyr simply replied "Do your duty - you send me to God" It is a very thin curtain for the Christian between earth and heaven for they have long ago on earth entered eternal life and know that the God who loved them so well , who is hidden from our site by the curtain of time , will most certainly be on the other side with outstretched arms of welcome to eternity in heaven. Jesus then affirms that by doing the work God had assigned him to do on earth he had brought glory to God and asks that on his return to heaven he should be restored to that shared glory he had with the Father

before the world began. Those to whom this prayer is shared remember too the work our Father has given us to do and the shared glory promised to us as well.

Having finished praying for himself he now prays for his disciples . In verse six and following he tells the Father that the disciples who God has chosen for Him he has shared the gospel with and they have believed fully that Jesus came from the Father because they believed the word. He then prays God will watch over them even in the trials that are to come and expresses confidence that they are sanctified by the word.

He then comes to the prayer for us.

v,20 My prayer he says is not only for the disciples that actually walked and talked with me but for those who will believe in me through their message. - that's us! And what is his hearts desire ? Why does he pray for us? He prays that *all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.* His dream - his vision is that all believers would be as much in unity as Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are in unity. It is one life - it is no longer in the church mine and yours but all things are ours. To be sure we can still distinguish personalities and even functions and gifts but the bottom line is that we are one. Not just husbands and wives but the whole family of God - the whole church is one - all our purpose is one, all our resources is one, when this was fresh in the church as the book of Acts records it - it was common for many to sell what they had (although there was no pressure to do so) and lay the proceeds at the apostles feet to distribute where it was most needed. They understood that what they were given was for the common good. St Paul says the same thing about Spiritual gifts - that they are given for the common good and on another occasion he says the gifts are given so that TOGETHER we will grow up into Christ. There is the not so subtle implication that it is only together as we each contribute the gifts God has given us that we will be mature enough to reach the goal. So the prayer is for unity - that is why church disruptions are such a horrible sin - they fly in the face of what Jesus died for - that we may be one in the body of believers as he is one with the Father. To us in an individualistic society where it is every man for himself this may seem to threaten our autonomy but the autonomy we imagine is an illusion that leaves us alone and afraid - it is only in community that we reach completion - only in community (in family) that we can feel loved, and valued and complete. That is why the Psalmist says that God puts the solitary into families. We were meant for community living .What a glorious vision ! A community of love where all share in peace and joy and all needs are met and all tears wiped away,

Listen Jesus is praying for us! I pray that all of them may be one Father just as you are in me and I am in you.

Will you open your hearts to others here - to brothers and sisters - to all who have believed the gospel that Jesus prayer may be worked in your life?

Yet the prayer does not stop at such an amazing vision he prays on and lifts us to unbelievable heights. He prays “ May they also be in us so that the world may know that you have sent me.” Not only are we to have a wonderful love controlled common life with one another but here Jesus prays that we will also have a common life with God himself - that we are invited into the intimacy of the Godhead.- that we should be included in the eternal love the Father has for the Son and the responsive and humble joy the Son has for the Father and the holy respect all have for one another. I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one.

What is the glory of God ? One early saint said the Glory of God is man fully alive! I like that

definition - it is to be all we can be but not in some limited human way - it is to be all we can be when we are endowed with the power of God . In other words we are participants in the very life of the God of love . When we are so included in the fellowship of the Trinity that we live and move and have our being in the full extent of their love so that like Jesus, if need be, we would even lay down our life for one another - there is no greater love than this.

When people see this lived out in our day to day lives they will know that God is real and dwells among men. Jesus' prayer describes it like this: May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Why does Jesus want this? His prayer explains why - Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

The prayer is for the most intense intimacy that will last for eternity with the creator, redeemer and sustainer of the whole universe - to be surrounded by the power and the glory of the king of kings and Lord of Lords - not only in the age to come but now this is available to us as we walk as Jesus walked.

Surely this is marvellous in our eyes. It seems too amazing to be true and yet this is the prayer of Jesus who prays only what the Father is desirous of offering and the Holy Spirit is eager to deliver.

This gift is not a one time experience but as Jesus prays it is so he may continue to make the Father known to us so that the love the Father has for the Son may be in them and the Son himself may be in us.

St Paul describes this intensity and new life by saying “ *It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives through me.*”

Do you ever think your faith is too small? Your vision too short? I invite you in Jesus name to open your lives afresh to receive the blessing that Jesus has asked the Father to pour into your life. Do not be afraid but believe for this is the same promise St Peter also writes of this when he says 2 Peter 1: 3-4 *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Know this that even at this hour Jesus is praying for us and it is the Father's generous heart that desires the prayer be answered in us today.

Now to him who is able to do exceedingly more than all we ask or even imagine - to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through out all generations for ever and ever !

Amen