

John 15:9-19

7th Sunday of Easter

May 15, 1994

Getting ready for the rummage sale, Don Weiland pushed aside a ceiling panel in the fellowship hall. Though I've been in that room hundreds of times, though my life and safety has depended on what was hidden by those panels, I had never seen the steel girders that cross that room. They carry the weight of snows, the tons of water that rush toward the drains in a downpour of rain. For forty years they have done their work, unseen.

We see what is on the surface. We forget what lies beneath.

Think of your home. You know all the surfaces so well. But unless the roof leaks, or the floor joists creak it is as if nothing but the surfaces exist. Yet the surface matters so little next to what is hidden from our gaze.

Jesus spoke a prayer long ago. He prayed for many things on that night of his betrayal. ~~But~~ This morning I want to pick out just one sentence.

Jesus prayed, "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."

Jesus prayed this prayer for you. Later in his prayer he says that he prays not only for the eleven disciples but also for those who would believe through their word. Jesus prays this prayer for you.

The Son asks the Father to protect you from the evil one.

^{Since} ~~Imagine~~ this prayer of Jesus hidden beneath the surfaces of your life. Unseen, yet present every hour of the day and night, the Father has ^{been} shielded you from evil. Wherever you are, whatever happens you are being sheltered from the evil one.

Faith is looking beyond the surfaces. Everyone can see the facades of life, prosperity and pain, beauty and storms, birth and death. As Jesus says in this prayer he does not take us out of the world. But in Jesus Christ God has revealed to you what is beneath the surface, the love of God

that is like ~~the~~ girders keeping all the weight from falling upon you, ^{also} collapsing on you. *Faith is living your life aware not just of the surface but of what is beneath, the protection and care of God.*

Sin in you, your sin mars all the surfaces of your life, but beneath the surface Jesus reveals the forgiveness of God that brings a new beauty when all is ugliness, brokenness. *Left to ourselves there is no strength to resist, beyond our seeing God is at work protecting us from the snares of the evil one.*

Most of all there is death, marching toward us, relentless, devouring all in its path. Yes all the world knows about death. But the Father who raised the Son, ~~restored~~ *the Father gave new life to the Son when death had claimed Jesus.* the Son from death, has given you the vision beyond the surface of death to see the eternal life that ~~will be yours.~~ *God has prepared for you.*

Jesus who has done all this for us, prays for you that God will protect you from the evil one. Even when you are not aware, protected. *What is prayer? What does it accomplish?*

Sometimes I ~~think~~ *wonder* about prayer. Maybe Jesus prayer is like the main structure, supporting the sheltering love of God. And your prayers the crisscrossing beams adding strength.

Is that what we will see when the ceiling panels of our lives have been pushed aside at the end? Will we see that prayers we never knew were prayed for us have meant more in our lives than all our anxiety and effort? Will we be shown how little depended upon ourselves, how very much was gifted to us through the prayers of Jesus and of his people? I believe that we will be shown just that.

Paul tells us, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." On the surface we see all our working, but beneath all that we do is the working of God, the support and working of God's people.

Remember Jesus prayer. As you are busy working out your life, remember Jesus prayer that you be protected from the evil one. Remember.