

If you were going to measure a human life what would you do? Would you take out a tape measure and record the height – a scale and register the weight? Would you use a calendar and calculate the age? Would you ask to see diplomas and certificates of attendance? Report cards? Grade transcripts? Would you search the newspapers for articles about accomplishments in the arts or in sports? Use a calculator to determine financial assets, net worth? Would you examine deeds and vehicle titles to evaluate possessions? Or would you Google the name to see how much information about this one there is on the internet? Would you check the driving record and check the police blotter to determine if there have been any arrests? The military record and any honors? Work record? Church attendance? Would you look at the home? The marriage? The children? Would you talk to family and friends – work associates, classmates – would you ask questions about character and love and faithfulness? If you were going to measure a human life what would you do?

What about the life of a congregation? How would you measure that? Membership? Attendance? Budget? Number of staff members? Number of worship services? Amount of square footage of the building? Would you ask people in the community what they know about this congregation? Or the denomination? Would you talk to the members about how well their needs are being met? Would you look at growth of the music program or the Sunday school? Would you survey the members to see how much they know about God or how often they pray or how much they give of themselves to the community?

In our gospel for today Jesus says some things that may affect how we would evaluate a congregation. Jesus is praying for his disciples – his followers. Our reading begins toward the end of his prayer. Listen: “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word that they may all be one. As you Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Jesus is praying for those who believe through the disciples’ witness – he is praying for us. He prays that we might be one – that we might be in the Father and in the Son so that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus.

That we might be one. Just as Jesus and the Father are one in love and in purpose Jesus wants that for us. Not divided – each seeking his own advantage – her own way- but gathered in a common purpose – in our being one witnessing to the truth that comes from God.

Jesus continues: “The glory 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 says that the glory the Father has given to Jesus, Jesus has given to us. The glory is the love that Jesus has for us in giving himself on the cross. Self-giving love is the glory of God – the glory Jesus pours into you so that the world may know that the Father has sent Jesus.

Think about all the talk about Christians and Muslims we hear – Jesus is saying that the truth that the Father has sent Jesus is shown in our being one in love. Not just love for one another but love for those who do not deserve love – the very love Jesus has shown for us. The battle for the hearts of people in all of the world will not be won with guns and missiles, nor by our prosperity or wealth, but with love.

Jesus prayed, “Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I have made you name known to them and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

The world does not know God. Jesus reveals God to the world – makes God’s name known. The world does not know that God is a God that in Jesus gives himself for the life of the world. But as the love of God is in us, the world comes to know that God sent Jesus – people come to believe that God sent Jesus and people come to God in this way.

How will a church be measured? By how much giving of ourselves in love there is so that God is revealed to the world. Not by attendance, not by growth, not by financial assets but by how much love from God is poured out through us - not so that people will know how great we are but that people will know that Jesus is from God.

We are called to be one in love – in your daily life – in what we do together as a church. When there is love in us people will come to believe that Jesus is from God. May God grant it. Amen.