

John 17:20-27

7th Sunday of Easter

May 31, 1992

From the first time I entered this space, I knew this was a place in which I would want to worship. The stain glass, the wood, the arrangement of this room, all fit together to create a space for prayer, and meditation and centering thoughts on God.

So I have not been surprised to regularly hear others say the same. What a nice sanctuary you have here. I feel good when I come here. How beautiful.

Now I do not know the architect who drew up the plans, the artist who designed the windows, the workers who brought it all into reality. Were they saintly people, whose hearts were as peacefilled as what they created? Were they believers whose love for God was given expression here? Was their designing and drawing and cutting and pounding and finishing an act of prayer for them? Maybe.

Or maybe this was the only time they came into a church building. Maybe their personal lives were full of anger and discord. Maybe the only time God's name was on their lips was in cursing. By looking at what I see here I simply do not know. I see their work, but I learn nothing about the heart of the workers as I see it.

Jesus prayed: Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you and these know that you have sent me.

The world does not know you, Jesus said to his Father. The world does not know God. The world sees his work, every moment is lived in his work. But just as the architect is hidden from our eyes even as we see his work, so God is hidden even as we see what his word has brought into being.

Yet the world thinks it knows God.

Stop anyone on the street, they can tell you about God. Surveys say that 96% of people believe in God. They have seen the world, they sense

that it all is not simply some accident. So seeing the work of God, they jump to conclusions about God.

↳ God is on the side of the winners. Rich people, people who get well. White people. Tall people. Strong people. Male people. Smart people. Americans. Attractive people. Most of the people on the street would say that's the way God is.

And when a winner suddenly becomes a loser, business fails, job is lost, M.S. strikes, an accident causes a brain injury, a teen ager has a neurological disorder, then the world knows that God is expressing displeasure, making a point, trying someone's faith.

But Jesus prayed: "Righteous Father, the world does not know you."

But I know you, ~~Jesus~~ prayed.

Jesus's knowledge of God was not based on seeing the world and jumping to conclusions. That is how the world knows God, how you and I know God apart from Jesus. But before there was a world, Jesus knew God, was with God, was God.

It is like the difference between how the wife of the architect who designed this building knew that man (assuming that it was a man and that he was married) and how I know him. I see only a small work, day after day she lived with him. Heard him snore, knew how he liked his eggs, sensed when he was afraid.

Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you have sent me.

The these Jesus speaks of are the disciples, those who were with him in that upper room. But we are also those who know that the Father has sent his Son into the world. For we have heard the disciples word, we have believed in Jesus through them.

The whole New Testament is that word, their witness. Jesus prayed, "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who will

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."

You and I who believe through the witness of the disciples are now sent to tell the world of Jesus. To the world that does not know God we are sent to tell of God.

We tell them that God's place in this world is not in the palace. Not in the winners circle. Not among the powerful.

We tell of Jesus who was born among the poor. We tell how Jesus gathered all sorts of people to follow him, women and men, business people, taxgatherers, dreamers, disturbed people. All sorts.

We tell how he ~~was~~ received ~~by~~ the blind and the lame and the lepers and the demon possessed. And how he was a threat to the people in control who plotted to kill him. Then carried out their plot.

As we tell of Jesus the world senses how wrong they have been about God. To be white and male and American are not all signs of God's pleasure. Because I am healthy or intelligent or strong, a winner, does not ^{mean} mean I am winning with God.

For God is busy lifting the fallen, holding up the weak, giving himself for everyone in need.

Jesus prayed, "The glory that you have given me I have given them so that they may be one as we are one."

Jesus glory, God's glory is the cross. Where all our sin~~s~~ is heaped upon Jesus. All divisions, all conflict, all hatred is heaped upon him and he willingly bears it, there we see the glory of God, his love.

Jesus gives us that glory. We bear the burdens of the weak. We sit with mourners, offer a hand to the poor. We embrace those who are shunned, and forgive sinners. In giving ourselves in love we are one with one another, one with God. And the world sees more truth about God than a

million years of walking through national parks will reveal. God is the one who loves even to the point of death. God's love is for all, as great as our need. God's love is not lost in ^{times of} misfortune but endures even beyond the grave.

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

This was Jesus prayer for us, his last will and testament. He prayed that God's love would be in us, that he would be in us, that the world might believe.

May God answer his prayer in us. Amen.