

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 12, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

John 17:20-26

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. 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. "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. "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (NIV)

Some children were asked, "What is love?" One little girl answered, "Love is when mommy reads you a bedtime story." Another child quickly chimed in: "and true love is when she doesn't skip any pages." But in all seriousness on this Mother's Day, I want us to thank God for loving moms. After all, what could be better than a mother's love? A faithful mother tends to her children's every need. She makes sure her children are dressed and fed, and (now this is real important) that they get a good night's sleep. She watches over them carefully when they are sick and nurtures them and helps them in ways that many of us men just can't seem to do as well. A mother protects her loved ones and that is why is not wise to mess with a baby cub or you will get the wrath of mama bear. What in this world could be better than the love of a faithful mother?

This morning we listen to the prayer not of a faithful mother, but of our faithful Savior. In this prayer our Savior opens up His heart revealing how he feels about God's children. What we see is His love – amazing, astounding, faithful love! We view in this prayer a love that even surpasses the love of the best mother in the world. As we listen to the closing words to what is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer, I pray every one of you recognize and take comfort in this truth: **Jesus loves you even more than mom.**

These words appear to be the last words Jesus spoke before leaving the upper room on Maundy Thursday evening for the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prays. Jesus prays as the great high priest. He intercedes for His people. This time Jesus does not go off to a quiet place all by Himself to pray. This time Jesus does not speak silently to His heavenly Father from the heart. This time Jesus prays in front of His disciples and out loud so that they could hear Him. I am so thankful to God that He did. For now we, like the disciples, get to hear His prayer. We are able to listen to our Savior pour out the concerns of His heart. We, like the apostles in the upper room, get to listen to what Jesus wants for us – we get to hear just how much He really loves us.

This beautiful prayer begins by Jesus saying His time had come – to bring glory to His Father – to do His Father's will and then return to His Father in the glory He had with Him before the world began. My prayer is all of us here know how Jesus did this – by laying down His perfect life on the cross for all the world – by shedding His innocent

blood to pay for every sin of every sinner. After praying for this work to be completed, Jesus' prayer turns to the disciples in the room with Him, the disciples Jesus loved; the disciples Jesus would send out into the world just as the Father had sent Him into the world. Jesus prays for the Father to be with them, to watch over them, and protect them. Jesus understands the world will hate them and Jesus knows that the evil one will try to devour them. So Jesus prays to the Father asking Him to sanctify them with His Word of truth. He prays that not one of them is lost.

And now we read: ***"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."*** On Jesus' heart and mind on this night before He went to the cross and died were not just these apostles, but you and me and all believers. Yes, Jesus' loving prayer here is for us – for us who have been brought to faith through the gospel the disciples went out into the world to preach. Jesus prayer is ***"that all of them may be one."*** My mother often had to be the peacemaker as she raised us four boys and one girl. Often she would tell us that she just wanted to get along.

But the oneness Jesus prays for here is much more than just getting along. Jesus is not talking about an ecumenical movement here (as some have wrongly turned these words into) where the visible church on earth just works to get along even if it means overlooking doctrinal differences. Jesus prays for true spiritual unity, a kind of oneness that only God works through His Word. He prays for a perfect unity that the Holy Trinity shares – a united will and mind. He prays for His believers to keep growing in faith so that the world might also believe that God sent Jesus and that Jesus loves them too.

These next words of Jesus' prayer are some of my favorite words in the Bible. ***"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."*** One thing I think every loving mother wants is for her children to come home. I don't care how old her children get she wants to know when they are next coming back to see her whether it is for Christmas, for a weekend, or just anytime at all. A mother just wants her children home. Our loving Savior also wants all God's children to come home – to the home filled with many mansions which He is preparing for us. Jesus wants you and I to one day be where He is – to see Him face to face – to share for eternity in His glory.

Until that day comes when we are taken to be with Jesus, our Savior has a prayer for us. This is how Jesus' awesome high priestly prayer comes to a close. ***"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*** Jesus turns to God calling Him ***"righteous Father"*** for Jesus knows He will act in a way that is just and right. Jesus' prayer is not only that we understand God sent Jesus into the world and that now we too have a Father in heaven. But Jesus prays we continue to know better and better our heavenly Father and His love as He lives in us.

What a blessing it is to know God as our Father! In this world of chaos, we have a God who remains our anchor. In this world of confusion, we have a Father who speaks to us through His unchanging Word of truth. In this world of sin, we turn to our Father who forgives all of our sins each day. In this world where no one seems to be listening anymore, we have a Friend who answers our every prayer. In this world where so many are lost we know the way. In this world where the love of many has grown cold, we have

a God whose love keeps shining bright. Most of all we have the love of a Savior, our ascended Savior who still intercedes for us before the Father. This prayer helps us understand a little better the heart of this Savior. He wants God to protect us from the world and the devil. He wants us to grow in faith and to know the Father better. What He wants most of all is for us to one day be in heaven with Him. What a beautiful prayer! This prayer could teach us many things when it comes to the prayers we have for our loved ones.

There is a true story that took place some years ago about a woman named Patsy Lawson. She was a fifth grade teacher who one morning was on her way to drop off her two year old at the baby sitter's before going to school. She never made it that far as her car spun off a mountain road turning upside down into a cold mountain stream. It was eight and a half hours later that her husband, James Lawson, found her as he scrambled down the cliff. She was holding her little boy's head just above the water in the submerged car. For eight hours she held her beloved toddler afloat until she had finally died, her body almost frozen in that position of self-giving love, holding up her baby so he could breathe. She died so that her child might live. That is the essence of a mother's love.

What could possibly be better than the love of such a faithful mother? We know, don't we? Our loving Savior didn't just pour out His heart in prayer for us, on the next day He poured out His blood on a cross for us! Jesus suffered much worse than a frozen death to buy us back – He suffered the fury of hell itself – the hell our sins deserved. Jesus loves you even more than mom. His cross and grave are proof of it. And the fact that our Savior's grave is empty means that Jesus is able to give us the very blessings He asks for us in this beautiful prayer. What love! I pray we all not just on this Mother's Day, but each day, recognize and take comfort in this wonderful truth: Jesus loves you even more than mom. As Isaiah writes for us these words of our Lord: ***“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”*** Amen.