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One Anothering
John 17:1-11

*After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people,^[a] to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ **And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.** ⁴ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.*

*⁶ “I have **made your name known** to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ **All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.** ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, **so that they may be one, as we are one.***

I wonder what **LESSONS** you have learned from **ONE ANOTHER—**
in THIS church?

God speaks to us **through one another!**

Sometimes those lessons and gifts are the most powerful!

Jesus uses the body of Christ to help us GROW.

That’s what’s **behind Jesus’ prayer in John 17.**

These are more of Jesus’ LAST WORDS at the Last Supper.

It’s **what matters most to him—**like a young Dad facing the end of his life, who leaves a video for his young daughters to see when they grow up.

Jesus knows that the Holy Spirit will keep this in the hearts of his disciples, including us, all these years later!

And what is his POINT? For us to know God's LOVE and salvation.

Not just eternal life—but the life we live now, and forever.

And it's a completely different vision of love and truth

from the Roman Empire that occupied the people of Jesus' day.

Which means, it's similar to our context!

Because ***our view of truth and love*** is different than that of the world or the government.

We are called to ***a different way of life*** as Christ-followers.

Nancy J. Ramsay, *Feasting on the Word*, Year A, Vol 3, pg. 540

Throughout his prayer in John 17 Jesus prays:

That they may be ONE as WE are ONE.

Who is that WE?

Most believe he is talking the Father and the Holy Spirit—the ***Trinity***.

John's Gospel begins by saying that God and Jesus are ONE.

And yet, the members of the Trinity are ***NOT exactly alike***.

So, Jesus is NOT saying we all have to think or act the same way.

We can learn and grow from one another,

because ***WE ARE diverse and different!***

In Confirmation class, we studied the Apostle's Creed,

and they used it as the template to write their OWN statements of faith.

That Creed is about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
and the CHURCH.

It concludes by saying that we believe in the church,
and ***'the communion of saints.'***

What's that?

It's US—sharing life together in the body of Christ.

It's why our confirmands end their studies by

Joining the church!

And one of the primary gifts of the church is the gift of UNITY!

Which might sound ludicrous....

How are we to become ONE with God, and one another?

Well, we unite with God through ***prayer, worship, Bible study, and service!***

And the SAME is true for uniting with ONE ANOTHER!

We need to **pray** together, we need to **study** God's Word together, and we need to **serve** alongside each other, we need to **worship** together.

Linda Lee Clader, Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol 3, pg. 541

PRAYER is especially important.

Today is the last Sunday of the Easter season—
next Sunday is **Pentecost**, the birthday of the church,
the day the Holy Spirit rested upon the believers
and gave them the power to speak in different languages,
leading to over 3,000 people joining the new community,
known as the church!

But do you know **what they were DOING** when all of that happened?

They were gathered together—in PRAYER.

Which is why we desperately NEED Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Prayer is the **FOUNDATION for unity with God, and one another!**

When Jesus prays that we would be ONE as he is one with God,
Many theologians describe that relationship in the Trinity, as a DANCE.

How could **we learn to dance, TOGETHER**, within the church?

We may have different interpretations of the Bible, of worship, of mission,
but we can and should **honor one another and love another.**

What if we thought of church, as a joyful dance?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his book, ***The Dignity of Difference***, says:

"We need a theology of religion to help us recognize the image of God in the face of those who are not in OUR image."

Isn't that so true?

What if we could see the image of God in the faces of ALL people?

Quoted by Linda Lee Clader, Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol 3, pg. 542.

That's EASIER SAID than done though, right?

It's **HARD** to **see God** in all people,

It's **HARD** to believe in **unity**,

It's **HARD** to **seek unity**—because we are surrounded by so much division!

Everyone seems to have a problem with everyone else!

Republicans with Democrats, Conservatives with Liberals,
we have division between races, ethnicities, genders, families...
and we have come to accept this as 'just the way it is'.

We even accept this kind of division **within the CHURCH!**

This is **NOT God's will** for us.

This is WHY Jesus prayed for unity!

Because he knew the challenge of Unity!

The early church was also full of division—over who could eat with whom,
who could lead, who was a 'true' Christian, who was filled with the Spirit...

So does this mean that God didn't answer Jesus' prayer?

What if it means that we need to **think about unity differently?**

Maybe as a **dance**—maybe as some 'give and take'.

Like the Trinity--they are independent, yet one,

They are all God--yet unique in each person!

Three, and one.

It might also mean saying YES to things we would rather reject.

Like, "Yes, those other people really are Christians too.

Yes, there is **pain** in all this **diversity**, but there is also **possibility**.

Yes, there is **struggle**,, but there is also **glory**."

Linda Lee Clader, Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol 3, pg. 543

**Jesus knows the TRUTH—the truth that really sets us free,
to love God AND our neighbor.**

And that truth is that we need each other.

We need the **communion of saints**.

And Unity IS our biggest challenge.

Because the Enemy of God would have us divided.

Because our American culture is all about **me, mine, and my way**.

We think that we live for our OWN happiness, and our own PLANS,

And we simply ask God to **rubber stamp what we want**.

And when that doesn't work—we blame God, and push God away!

We blame others, and push one another away.

***We need the family of faith—the church.
But we often treat church like any other commodity.***

We act like ***shoppers***, instead of ***disciples***.

When was the last time we came to church—
thinking about what we could ***BRING and GIVE***,
and not just what we might RECEIVE?

***Do we ever leave worship entirely focused on what we LIKED,
or didn't like?***

Like—I had to park too far away,
They played too much piano and not enough organ,
The drums drove me crazy,
The kids were shuffling in the pews,
The music was not my style,
The choir sounded too old fashioned.
The list can go on and on....right?

Ever felt that way?

Of course we do—our culture teaches us to be ***CONSUMERS***,
so we come to church with that same attitude!
It becomes more about ***what God can do for US***,
Than what we can do ***FOR AND WITH GOD!***

So how can it be different?

How do we find unity?

What if we came to church ***expecting God to challenge us?***
What if, we came to ***prayer and Bible study*** the same way?

***What if, we came before God—knowing that to truly grow in faith,
We have to step outside our comfort zone?***

And do some things we do NOT like?

What if we accepted THAT'S how God can ***prune us and stretch us?***
And true growth can come from being challenged?

***What if, we spent more time developing our relationship with Jesus
than trying to get our own needs met!***

Of course, ***our needs are met*** when we do this...

But what if we went to Jesus, with a desire to grow closer?
 Through prayer, Bible study, and service?
 What if we came to worship—to hear from Him?
 To learn what **he did, and said**—as our model of faith?

And what if we learned HOW TO PRAY?

Jesus taught his disciples **The Lord's Prayer**—
 a foundational prayer for us still today.

The Confirmation class memorized it—because it will be with them forever!

And we learned the BASICS of prayer---specifically A.C.T.S.—

That prayer is made up of more than just asking God for what we want,
 like a holy vending machine!

We need **A-Adoration**—to praise God for who God is.

C—Confession—to say we're sorry for wrongs.

T-Thanksgiving—to thank God for our blessings.

S-Supplication—to ask God for help, for ourselves and others.

An even simpler idea is just 4 words, **4 types of prayer:**

Wow.

Sorry.

Thanks.

Help.

When we grow in prayer, we grow in faith, and in our relationship with God!

And, we **start to notice what God is doing!**

We start to **understand** where God is leading us, AND our church!

I wonder, how have you GROWN through this church?

As we welcome the Confirmands, let's think about ourselves, too!

What have YOU learned—

**BECAUSE of the diversity, differences,
 and even the conflicts along the way?**

How have you experienced the COMMUNION OF SAINTS?

What has God taught you through one another?

And what have you shared?

We are blessed by diversity, differences, and by staying—
even when things do not go our way!

We find God and faith ***through our differences.***

We grow, and we are better—***TOGETHER***—better than we would be apart!

The church is amazing!

The church can also be ***wild and crazy,***

Frustrating and maddening.

Here, we hang out with people we might not otherwise!

But we ***LOVE GOD, and we love ONE ANOTHER,***

And what ***UNITES us is SO MUCH STRONGER*** than what divides.

Friends, that is the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel today.

Our Savior Jesus calls us to UNITY—with Him, and with one another.

And for that gift, all God's people can say together, Amen!

*I want to encourage you to take the **index card** from your bulletin—*
And write down

Wow.

Sorry.

Thanks.

Help.

And after each word—write something about that, to God, as your prayer this week.

May God bless you in these prayers, and help them grow your faith!