



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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May 12, 2013

Easter 7

Sermon Text: [John 17:20-26](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Acts 16:6-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 14](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 15:14-20](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 17:20-26](#)

Jesus Prays For The Church

That it may be united
That it may reflect his glory

Maternal instinct...have you ever heard that phrase? Maternal instinct...what is it? Not to push your child out of a moving car, right? It's a phrase that depicts the mother's natural tendency to love a child. Isn't that what we're talking about? At the same time, have you ever wondered why there's no such thing as paternal instinct? Why is it just mother's that have this feeling and not fathers?

I think we all know what that is talking about, right? This desire that the mother has to care for, protect, take care of the child, put the child's interest ahead of her own. It leads mothers to do certain things for their children. All the things I just mentioned. It probably also leads a lot of mothers to pray for their children. They recognize there are so many things that are out of their control and they need the Lord's help. The Lord has to take care of them because they can't anymore.

Because we are sinners on this side of heaven, have any of your prayers (you mothers here) ever gone like this...Lord help, or Lord why...when it comes to a specific child? Do you ever pray like that? Do you ever say, "Lord, could you get them to move out a little sooner?"

The point being, our love on this side of heaven isn't perfect. Even a mother's love isn't perfect. Mother's lose their patience. Every child here knows that. Anyone who was ever a child here knows that. But that maternal instinct that would put the child's interest ahead of their own, that we can understand, that we can recognize.

This is what makes it amazing, the words that I just read to you from the Gospel of John, Jesus' love for you, because he's praying for you the night before he is going to die. There he is. He's praying out loud so his disciples can hear him. He prays first of all for himself. Then he prays for his disciples. Then he prays for those who would come to believe through their message. "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." Here's Jesus, he is about to be betrayed by Judas, he is going to go to this sham trial, he is going to be hung on a cross, and you're on his mind. Isn't that kind of the definition of maternal instinct?

Here's the thing that is so amazing about Jesus. His patience never runs out with us. His love for us is always perfect. His will for us is always to give us what is best for us

for our eternal good. I grant there are plenty of times when you and I can't see how that is the case as we go through certain things. That's why we call it faith. It's not a matter of sight. It's a matter of believing what we don't see.

Just think about that for a minute. Here's Jesus at this point in time in his earthly life. He's about to die. He knows everything that is coming. In a little while he's going to say, "God, Father, if there is any way, take this cup from me because I don't want to drink it down to the bitter last drop." Yet he still stopped to pray for you.

Think about how over the course of time someone's dying breath whispered from a hospital bed has stuck in people's minds. They always remember it. It's kind of like that with this. This is what Jesus is praying right before he dies. He's praying for us. Don't we want to think about what he says and why he says it? Isn't that then something that we want to take with us every day of our lives? That kind of makes sense.

Notice what he prays for. He prays that the believers that would come would be united, not a false unity based on human words, but a unity that is like how the Father and Jesus are one. Then he prays that the Father and Jesus' glory would be revealed through that church as we love one another. That's what we talked about the last couple of weeks...love one another. Love obeys. And again, in his high priestly prayer, "in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." He takes us back again to "love one another," and that's how we make his glory known.

Jesus prays that the believers (you and I) of all time would have a unity. I don't know if you've ever heard of this big fancy church word, but I'm a pastor so I have to use them. It's in the code. Ecumenical movement...ecumenical is a big fancy church word, right? You did not use that in conversation this week at all, did you? It's the ecumenical movement that takes these words of Jesus, where it says, "I pray that they may be one," and they say we want all churches to come together into one church. All the different denominations come together and this unity isn't based on agreement in what we teach and believe or agreement on the Word of God. It's just based on the agreement to agree that we want to be one. It sounds good. It sounds noble. It sounds pious. But then again, a lot of Satan's deceptions sound good and noble and pious, right?

Notice what Jesus prays. They don't use the rest of the sentence that Jesus prayed. He said, "I pray that 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one." So the unity he is talking about he defines for us. He wants us to be united as the Father and Jesus are united. What does that mean?

Do you think this conversation ever took place in heaven where the Father says, "I'm going to send you to earth so you live and die in their place and you take away all their

sins. Then everyone who believes that you did this will be forgiven and they'll go to heaven and they'll be with us forever in heaven." And the Son said, "No, wait a minute. I think they should have to earn their way and if they can't do it, they should just go to hell." And then the Father and the Son just said, "You know what? Let's just agree to disagree. You believe in salvation by faith alone. I want it to be salvation by works." Do you think that ever happened? Of course not!

The Father and the Son are one. They are perfectly united in all things. Jesus carried out his Father's will perfectly because they were united in that will. That will centered in the fact that before time God knew that people would sin and that Jesus would then come to earth. And because God demands perfection of you and me, that we be perfect, that we be holy, and because you and I can't do it, Jesus provides it for us. He lived perfectly in our place. Then because God said, "The wages of sin is death," sin had to be punished by eternal death, the agony of hell. But he poured that out on Jesus instead of us.

The unity of the Father centers on the unity of how we are saved. It flows out into everything else. They are completely united in all things. That's what God wants for us...a unity that is based on our knowledge of Scripture, that Scripture speaks and we say, "That's what God says. That's it." It doesn't mean I always understand it fully, because I'm a sinner. I can't understand a holy God. It's Mother's Day. How many of you men can understand women? And you think we're going to understand God? It's not going to happen, right? That's the nature of it. We're sinners.

But what we need to know, God makes known clearly to us. Our sins are taken away by the life and death of Jesus. You and I know that. You and I rejoice in that. That gives us purpose for life. That's what we want to be united around. We want to be united in everything we think, teach and believe from Scripture because that's how the Father and the Son are one.

The more we grow in that knowledge of what we are united in, the more that we have Jesus made known to us, the more we will reveal Jesus in the world.

Did you notice what Jesus said toward the end of what I read to you? "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." "I will continue to make you known." Forty-three days from when he said this, his visible presence ascended into heaven, what we celebrated last Thursday night. Yet Jesus continues to make himself known to us. That's the basis of our unity. He continues to instruct us through the Word. He continues to strengthen us through the Sacraments. He continues to assure us that all the times that you wander from him, all the times you thought your ideas were better than what God says in Scripture, he took them away through the life and death of Jesus. In his body and blood, you are forgiven. All the times that we think we know better than God, all the times we don't find time to get into the Word and to listen to the Word, Jesus took all those sins away. When we recognize that, then we want to get into it more so that he makes himself known to us more.

Who wouldn't want to know a God that loves us so much that the night before he dies, we're all that's on his mind, and he's praying for us, and he's concerned about us, and we weren't even born yet, right? That's the love he has for us. That's why we want to know him, because he loves us so much and he's done so much for us.

The more we know that love, the more we make that love known and God's glory is revealed to the world through us. That's God's plan. He continues to make himself known also through you and through me. Not just as we get together at worship, but as we love other people during the week. "Love obeys." "Love one another." "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." That's what we've been looking at the last two weeks. This is God's plan.

We talked about it last Thursday night, how Jesus rules over all things. Sometimes we like to think Jesus rules over the big things like how he'll bring good out of an earthquake or something, right? All things means even the little things. That means, like we talked about Thursday, that annoying person that you worked with that you really can't stand and they're always a pain in your side. How you love them is how you make Jesus' glory known to them.

God's been kind of hammering this home to us the last few weeks. Now he's saying, "I'm leaving. I'm gone. I've gone back to heaven. Now it's up to you to make this known. It's up to you to love one another. It's up to you to let my glory be known as you put what you believe into practice."

God's real clear. Faith alone saves. But faith is never alone. If you truly believe that Jesus did all this for you, "you will love as I have loved you." We won't do it perfectly at all times, because we're sinners, but there is that part of us that loves our Savior and wants to get better at loving the people we don't like. That's hard. It's not always easy. It's not always fun. But that's how we make God's glory known.

Think about it...when did Jesus love us? After we had done so many things for him? After we had built a big church for him? After we had done all these things to say we love you Jesus? Or was it while we were still filthy rotten miserable sinners? While we were his enemies he loved us. That's what he calls us to do. That's what makes his glory known. If you and I just love only as the world loves, those who earned it, those who we think deserve it, those who will love us back, if we only love in that way, we aren't making his glory known. We want to love as he loved. That means we love those that are often difficult to love.

Think about that...when you and I do that and it sticks out and people say, "How can you be so nice to that person that's always a jerk to you at work? How can you continue to show love to your fellow congregational member who has made your life miserable?" We can say, "Because that's how my Savior loved me, and I want to thank him that he took away my sins. I want to thank him that he gave me heaven. I want to glorify him because he has given me heaven."

Those are the truths that you and I need to stay focused on. Those are the truths that you and I need to continue to grow on. Those are the truths that you and I need to live, not to take away our sins, but because Jesus has already taken away our sins. This is just simply our big thank you card to the one who has a perfect maternal instinct for us...Jesus Christ. Amen.