

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Easter 7
5 June 2011
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
John 17:1-11

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

“Holy Father, keep them in Your Name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one.” Amen. (Jn 17:11)

Jesus, having ascended to the Father just a few days ago,
now prays for us.

He prays for those that are His own—
those that He’s called by name in Holy Baptism,
who’ve received His gifts in the Divine Service,
and who’ve been led to believe in Him as the One sent by the Father.

Jesus prays *for us*.

And in this prayer from our Gospel reading today, Jesus asks for only two things:

1. That the Holy Father keep us in His name; and
2. that we be one, just as God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is one.

It seems simple enough—just two things.

But what does He mean for us to be one?

Does He want us to give up what makes us unique?

Does He want us to all have the same gifts and skills and abilities?

Does He want us to think the same way, feel the same way, and act the same way?

What does He mean that we be *one*?

And worse yet, does that mean we aren’t one?

Well, He says He wants us to be one ***just as He is one***.

God, as you know, is this mysterious Three-in-One sort of God.

There’s the Father as one person,

the Son as another person,

and the Spirit as yet a third person—

three persons, but still one God.

Each of these three persons is special: differently-gifted and uniquely known.

The Father is the creator of the world,

who begets the Son and sends forth the Spirit—

His gifts come to all men, good or bad, Christian or non-Christian:

light, life, food, clothing, house and home, and so forth.

The Son is the eternal Word, born of Mary, taking on real flesh and real blood,

who makes His way to the cross for us and for our redemption;

He also breathes on us, sending the Holy Spirit to us.

The Spirit isn’t Father or Son, but the One that comes from both in the Word—

He calls sinners to repentance and those already struck to the heart to believe.
 He's the One who preaches, teaching us to know the Father through the Son,
 never taking the credit for Himself.

Each person is unique, special, and charged with a certain task and authority—
 and yet each is equally God.

They're unique and yet still *one*.

They share an essence, a being, a one-ness that cannot be broken or divided.

They share an intimacy, a love that no one can put asunder.

This one-ness, this sharing of the same essence and being,
 is what our Lord now wants for us—
 one with Him and one with each other.

As Jesus prepares to go the way of the cross,

He looks out at His disciples and knows He must pray for them.

He sees their brokenness:

their disagreements, their hatred, their jealousy, their selfishness, and their pride.

He sees how separate each one of them is from the other:

how each does his own thing,

and how each thinks himself better than the others.

When our Lord Jesus looks at this world, even at the Christians here in this congregation,

He knows He must pray for us.

He sees our own bitterness towards family members,

He sees our envy and anger and frustrations,

He sees our laziness, and our lack of love;

He sees how each one of us wants very little to do with the other—

and so He prays for us.

We're so caught up in ourselves that we're blind to what goes on around us.

Perhaps this is most clearly seen when we come forward to the Lord's Supper—

How often do we come to receive the Body and Blood as if it's just me and Jesus up there?

How often do we try to "get in the zone" or block out all around us so that *we* can best
 focus and receive?

How often do we consider what it is we confess up here?

That this truly is Jesus coming to us again with His real body and blood—

that partaking of this meal is a confession of faith, of who Jesus is for us!

And that those communing here all confess publicly this same faith!

How often do we forget the needs and the worries and the joys of the person next to us—

or do we even know them?

It's this sort of *disunity* that our Lord now prays against.
 He prays that we may be *one*—just as He is *one*.
 He prays that we might share the same essence and being and one-ness of our neighbor—
 that the person kneeling beside us be seen as an extension of our own life!
 That his or her worries be our own and our joys and worries be theirs—
 that our confession of who Jesus is be the same—
 that's the oneness, the unity, that Christ Jesus prays for.

And this oneness is expressed and seen in our sharing Christ's *name*—
 "***Holy Father, keep them in Your name.***"

So we must ask what it means to be kept in His name?
 What does it mean to have His name, to bear His name, to live within His name?

For this, we must go to the place where His Name is first given—
 Holy Baptism.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, the last thing the resurrected Jesus gives to His Apostles, is the
 Sacrament of Baptism.

**"Therefore, as you go, make disciples of all nations
 by baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"** (Mt 28:19).

Just as the Apostles were commanded, so they did—
 and you were baptized.
 You were given the *Name* that's above every other name (Php 2:9).

And wherever His Name is, there He is also.
 And so at baptism, you were put into God—
 into Christ—
 into the Spirit—
 and into the Father.
 You were put into this Three-in-One sort of God,
 and He was put into you—
 and so you were *made One, just as He is One!*

But it's hidden.
 You can't see it—
 that's how much of God's work goes—
 He does it, He tells you He does it, and yet we do not see it—
 but we believe it.

So now, as we go through this world,
 making our way through a very difficult life—
 a life of sorrows and pains and frustrations and set-backs—
 we go as those marked and called by the Name—
 we go as those who are one with Christ and with all the baptized.

As Christians, we cannot know who truly is *one, just as God is one*—
 but wherever we hear the Name,
 wherever Baptism has been administered,
 wherever God has promised to put His Name,
 and with it His presence and benefits and grace,
 we Christians treat them as One.

We honor them,
 serve them,
 help and support them,
 love and cherish them,
 defend them, speak well of them, and explain everything in the kindest way.

We treat them as if they are God Himself.

And in our failure to do this,
 because of our disunity,
 Jesus prays for us.

Our one-ness and unity will not come from us doing these things at all—
 it comes by Christ alone doing these things in and through us.

And so we also pray,
 “*Holy Father, keep us in Your name, that we may be one, even as You are one.*”

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit