

True life is all about knowing God and knowing Jesus.

It is centred on our relationship with God, and that relationship comes through knowing Jesus. When Jesus prays for us, he is after something deep in us and in the heart of God. Jesus did not pray that all believers would agree. The source of our unity is not in human structures or denominations. It is in Jesus Christ. Our unity gives us strength in difficult times, for there really is strength in numbers. It reminds me of some of the words in the song "United We Stand". It was recorded in the late 1960s by a group called the Brotherhood of Man. The words I am thinking of are:

**For united we stand. Divided we fall
And if our backs should ever be against the wall
We'll be together. Together, you and I**

In order for our unity to be successful, we have to learn to work together in the things we are to do. When we pray together and work together, it increases our capacity to do God's work in our world.

In our Gospel reading today John 17; 1-17 Jesus prays that he would glorify the Father (v. 1). Simply stated, Jesus lived to glorify his Father and that people would recognize the importance of his Father. We often say of some people who think they are important that they are throwing their weight around. If anyone could have thrown their weight around it would have been Jesus. But instead he sought to show the importance of God. He wanted people to understand and recognize the weighty importance of God in their lives. He lived his life so that God would be glorified (v. 4). If anyone could "bask in the glory" for what they had done it would be Jesus. But Jesus chooses not to bask in his glory but rather reflect that glory back to God. Jesus prays that he might receive glory (v. 5). This is not a self-serving request; he's simply asking to receive back what was his to begin with. Remember Jesus gave up his rights as God and became a human, in fact, a slave, and then died on a cross. Jesus laid aside his preincarnate glory with the Father when he came to earth to be born, to serve, to suffer, and to die. Since his work on earth is finished, he is asking that his preincarnate glory be given to him again. The reason is that the Son might glorify the Father in heaven.

Jesus is not asking here for a return to a heavenly status quo where he can forget that the experiment of the incarnation ever happened; he is praying for a new situation of increased knowledge and glory, where his disciples are included in the relationship between Father and Son, caught up in this mutual giving of glory, like so many mirrors reflecting the eternal light.

God's glory is everywhere, but it is not always visible. Sometimes a moment of glory precedes a separation, as it did for the disciples on the mountain-top. Sometimes glory is hard to recognise, as it was for the disciples before the crucifixion.

Sometimes glory is hidden, as it was for the suffering Christians. But the glory of God persists. “I’m praying for you.” When I hear those words I feel a peace in my heart. I know that the person who said this cares for me. What if Jesus said, “I’m praying for you”? How would that make you feel? Well I can tell you in verse nine he did, and still prays for you and me continually. This prayer was prayed just before Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Knowing that his death was imminent, you and I were on his mind. How’s that for love? Especially when it was when the people were crying out that Jesus was incompetent and time for his death was coming ever closer, he pleads with God for the people. How’s that for compassion? His thoughts during the final moments on earth are not on himself, but on others. This prayer is the greatest prayer every prayed and the greatest prayer every recorded. They reveal the heart of Jesus in a unique way.

Why did Jesus pray this prayer? Clearly he was readying himself for what lay before him and the suffering to be endured for our sins. But he also had you and me on his mind. He was praying for us. He knew, we could face opposition and suffering in our lives. And certainly at this time when we are locked down outside our normal world as we see it. We need even more his words, his protection, his care, his joy, his glory, his love. As a people we need to be unified and sanctified for the world to know Jesus. With Jesus’ prayer as a model, our prayers are to reflect the will of God, not our will. Jesus had a much higher purpose in mind than merely taking care of our needs and wants. Through his praying he shows that prayer’s highest aim is not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth.

Christian tradition affirms that Jesus was fully God, but yet also fully human. As fully human, he had limitations of time and energy just like we do. Jesus did not heal, visit, or teach everyone. In the midst of never-ending demands, his life was directed by his mission from God, not the urgent needs of the moment. His divine calling was not to work twenty-four hours a day, but to do the will of his Father. There was clearly an unending amount of work for him to do—always more people to heal, more people to save. But yet at the end of his life he prayed that he had fulfilled the work his heavenly Father gave him to do.

That Jesus did not endlessly make himself available to meet the needs of others is important for us in developing a theology of boundaries, rest, and renewal. This is a particularly crucial consideration for those of us who feel indispensable in the face of the never-ending needs we encounter in our lives, whether at home, work, or church. If Jesus was fully God and fully human and yet needed to retreat from the overwhelming demands of life to rest and renew, how can we do any less? Jesus understood what we too often forget. Bodies cannot be everywhere or do everything. Bodies need rest, food, water, and companionship. As a result, we will need to respect our God-given bodies / limits and those of others.

Like Jesus, God has not called us to meet the endless needs of the world, but to do the will of the one who has sent us into the world in our body, in our family, with our

personality, and with our energy level. In order to respect our internal, biological rhythm, we will need to accept our limitations and acknowledge when we have done what we can. That Jesus did not heal or minister to everyone will help free us from much of the false guilt we may feel about being all things to all people at all times. When we have done what we can, we can trust God and then let go of the rest. There will always be more work than can be finished in one day, whether at home, work, or the church. For this reason, it's important for us to come to a point at the end of each day where we can say to ourselves: "I've helped everyone I can. I've loved with my whole heart. Now I am going to leave the rest for tomorrow and to God." Like Jesus, we can lie down and rest at night, confident that God continues to save, heal, and work while our bodies and minds are refreshed by the gift of sleep. United with God we stand together, You and I. Amen.

We are sent out into the world as Jesus' disciples to love as he loved. Do not fear! You are not sent out alone. As you go remember you are one of God's beloved children and let the love of God bring you joy. You are one of Jesus' disciples and let the teachings of the teacher live in your life. You are filled with the Holy Spirit and let the Comforter be your companion on your way.

Go in peace! May God Bless you all.