

Seventh Sunday in Easter
Wicker Park Lutheran Church
The Rev. Jason S. Glombicki
June 2, 2019

“That they all may be one” (John 17:21) – it is that simple. Jesus sums up the purpose of all the stories, all of the parable, all of the pain, and all of the joy. It is all there so that we may be one. The whole scandal of God being embodied in human flesh was so that we all may be one. The “glory” revealed in John’s gospel when Jesus hangs on the cross is so that we all may be one. All of it, the whole thing, is so that we might be one. So, how are we doing? How’s the church doing? Have we perfected unity these last two-thousand years?

A quick scan of social media, a glance at the news, or even a walk through Chicago gives us a failing grade. The political realm has deep divisions. Christian denominations are breaking apart. Our city is deeply segregated with a widening gulf between the rich and the poor.¹ For generations, we have seen that our dualistic minds are incapable of creating unity. We must have someone we label as “other.” It’s “us” verses “them,” even in the church. In the early church, it was “us, Christians” verses “them, Jews,” then it was “us, Christians” verses “them, Muslims,” then we

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2018/03/chicago-segregation-poverty/556649/>

added “us, Protestants” verses “them, Catholics,” and still today we add in “us, expansive Christians” verses “them, literalistic Christians.” Our dualistic minds are killing us, literally with hate crimes, mass shootings, and environmental destruction.

Jesus’s idea is one that is so simple, but seemingly impossible. It’s simple because Jesus’s unity is built on one thing: love.² Jesus message is what theologian Richard Rohr describes as “unitive consciousness.”³ That is, an awareness that we are all one in Love. And, the Christian Journey, from a Lutheran perspective anyway, is all about love.

And, I’ve never had anyone object to that principle. For Jesus loved humanity to the bitter end. Jesus showed loving-kindness to all. After all, there’s the pesky verse you might have been taught in Confirmation class from John’s gospel that states that, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...” (John 3:16). So, if we come to terms that humans are pretty darn selfish and dualistic, then it makes sense that Jesus took the final moment before his arrest to pray for unity – a unity found in love.

Today, we will welcome fourteen new members into our church. Sure, we’ll say the Apostle’s Creed as we connect with our ancestors of faith; sure, we’ll give them gifts;

² http://danielerlander.com/uploads/pdf/its_all_about_love.pdf

³ <https://email.cac.org/t/ViewEmail/d/502BE3D120A84F082540EF23F30FEDED/B5DB36482C97230E6A4D01E12DB8921D>

and sure, we'll welcome them into this community. But the essence is that we're committing to support one another in striving to love. And, we do that, not only because it's the right thing, but because it's the Jesus thing. For, it's the primary expression of how we live out our faith every day.

So, how does this come alive in the church? Well, yesterday, the council gathered for its annual retreat where we planned for the year ahead. We also reviewed the Ministry Evaluation most of us took last month. Every year, since we began this practice, the lowest ranked item is in regards to how people feel the church is doing at equipping them to live out their faith. Now, it's a funky question, and maybe the "church lingo" is tripping us up. But, today's gospel gives us a simple answer. That is, if we, as a church, are helping people think about how to love with a self-giving and servant-minded kind of love, then we're equipping. It's that easy. If you are given opportunities and supported in them to serve, you're equipped. If you are given opportunities and supported in the ways you show love each day, you're equipped. And, so, I feel like Jesus is reminding us to apply the K.I.S.S. principle to our faith. And what I mean by the K.I.S.S. principle is that we "keep it simple, silly."⁴ (That's the G-version, by the way.)

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KISS_principle

So, here's a K.I.S.S. exercise that even our youngest member can do to help us hammer home how we are all already equipped to live out our faith. Ready? Let's take a moment to brainstorm ways you can embody Jesus's call to "all be one." That is, think of a way that you can love with a servant-minded love. (Take a moment to think.) Who wants to share? We could advocate for the poor to have equitable access to resources; we could smile at the cashier; we could be empathetic when a loved one had a tough day; the list goes on.

So, do you, now, feel equipped to live out your faith? You've got the tools and, together, we refine them here together each week. When we look at the example of Jesus, we discover the best practices for showing love. Each week, we gather to embody that love as we welcome the stranger, we embody that love as we gather at the table without the need for credentials, and we embody that love as we go into the world and share that love every day. So, fear not, be confident in your loving!

Ok, so that's it for today. Sometimes, we make things harder than they need to be. Sometimes, we think that gestures of faith need to be huge things like being burned at the stake or hung on a cross. But, today, Jesus reminds us that he's got the whole hanging on the cross thing on lockdown, and so we have an opportunity to simply love all people. We start there because we have first been loved by our God. And, as

we enact God's love, then we will experience resurrection as we become one. Thanks
be to God. Amen.