

**ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)**

**SERMON (YEAR B)**

**SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**16 MAY 2021**

**READINGS: ACTS 1:15-17, 21-26/ PSALM 1// 1 JOHN 5:9-13//**

**JOHN 17: 6-19**

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*Let us pray*

*God of wisdom and love, source of all good, send your Spirit to teach us your truth and guide our actions in your way of peace and love.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN*

Parents, especially young parents during the times when they are going to be separated from their children, become very concerned about the safety of their children. They worry about their wellbeing, are they being taken care of, are they getting hurt, is anyone being mean to them, how is their day going.

We see this same mentality in Christ in this part of His prayer for His followers. He realizes that His time on this earth is nearing its completion as His work is coming to an end and while. He will be returning to God they have to continue his work in the world and therefore he expresses His concern about the fact that His believers will be left in this world that is full of sin, sorrow, trouble, worry, heartache. It is due to this genuine concern that He had for His disciples – and ultimately us as modern day followers – He ask the Father to sustain his disciples and us during this time

The Prayer in our Gospel reading John 17, prayed by Jesus just prior to his death, is often called his High Priestly Prayer.

In today's text John 17:6-19 stead he asks three things (three **petitions**) for his disciples.

**Firstly Jesus pray for the protection of the disciples**

In John 17 v 11 we read *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father protect them by the power of your name- the name you gave me- so that they may be one as we are one.*

***While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by the name you gave me.”***

The physical presence of Jesus Christ provided protection for his disciples. In many ways the physical presence of Jesus was a wall and a shield. Now that Jesus is going to the Father that physical wall and physical shield is being removed. Jesus has taken the brunt of the world's hatred and opposition, and up to this point the only hatred that the disciples felt was the hatred that splattered off of Jesus and onto themselves. Because Jesus is leaving that necessarily means that the persecution experienced by the disciples will increase. Since Jesus will no longer be in the world but going to the Father this prayer becomes a necessity. God must protect them

In v 15 we read ***“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one ‘***

Jesus did not pray that the disciples should be taken out of this world. He never prayed that they must escape from the sorrows and challenges of life in this world but he prayed that they may find victory. The kind of Christianity which buries itself in a monastery or convent would not have seemed Christianity to Jesus at all. The kind of Christianity which finds its essence in prayer and meditation and in a life withdrawn from the world would have seemed contrary to the message Jesus died to bring.

Yes there is need of prayer and meditation and quiet times, when we shut the door upon the world to be alone with God, but we have to demonstrate the Christian life in the ordinary work of the world. Christianity was never meant to withdraw from life but to equip us better for it. It does not offer us release from our problems but a way to solve them. It does not offer us a way of easy peace, but a triumphant warfare. It does not offer us a life which troubles escape and evade us but a life in which troubles are faced and conquered .However much it may be true that the Christian is not of the world, it remains true that it is within the world that our Christianity must be lived out. Jesus insisted it was in the rough and risky circumstances of life that we must live out Christianity and that God will be with us and protect us.

### **Secondly Jesus prayed for unity amongst his disciples**

In v11b we read ***“So that they may be one as we are one”*** Jesus' objective was unity and he knew that the church (Christians) could never make the impact on the world that He wished it to make unless spiritually the world see the oneness, the unity of the Church (Christians)

Christian unity is not determined by whether we agree with each other about every interpretation of scripture or doctrine or form of church government. Christian unity is determined by whether we love one another, and whether we reflect the love of God in Christ for the world. There will always be that which separates Christians from Christians and denomination from denomination. But we can still affirm and celebrate God's love for us all and our love for one another. In the ways of mutual respect; understanding and acceptance, we can be "one" in Christ and the world will recognize it.

Every member of God's church must be united in Christ, and from that union, should flow every thought, decision, and action we do. If we say we are united in Christ, then what do our actions say about it? How is our relationship with Christ? Do our lives show an oneness with Him? Can people see that we have a personal loving relationship with Jesus Christ? When people look at us, do they see Christ?

A beautiful example of Christian Unity and oneness in Christ during this time was the recent devastating mountain fire and the floods of the Overberg area—where people from all walks of life young/old came together to collect and donate to all those who were affected by the fire and the flood.

### **Thirdly Jesus prayed that his disciples must be sanctified**

In v 17 Jesus prayed "*Sanctify them by the truth --your word is truth*"

Sanctify means to set apart, to make holy, to consecrate.

It means to set apart for a special task.

On Thursday we celebrated Ascension day and in the appointed Gospel reading Luke 24:v 46 we read "*You are witnesses to these things* and in Acts 1 v 8 we read "*but you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth the reading for Ascension day*

Jesus is going to the God and the disciples have to continue spreading the Gospel and make him known to others in the world. The disciples were sanctified, they were set apart they were made holy to do this task.

*In our Acts reading Peter discerned that the time had come to fill the position after the twelfth apostle left open after Judas' betrayal of Jesus and his subsequent death. They chose two candidates: "Joseph called Barsabbas who was also known as Justus"-the other, Matthias.*

*The disciples prayed to choose the person who would take Judas place  
The apostles asked for God's guidance trusting that God knew the heart of those men. Then, they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias and he was chosen.*

We too are sanctified, we too are set apart too be a witness for Jesus Christ in this world.

But sanctify just not only means to set apart for some special office and task it also means to equip the person with the qualities of mind and heart and character which are necessary for the task.

We cannot perform our mission of witnessing to the love of God in this world unless we ourselves are holy, if our lives are not transformed. Sanctification separates us from the usual operating systems of the world. We must live according to and reveal God's system for the world: things like love, mercy, forgiveness, beauty, wisdom, generosity.

If we serve God, we must have something of God's goodness and God's wisdom in us, and this will draw people to God. He who serves the holy God must himself be holy too.

## **CONCLUSION**

My dear brothers and sister we must remember that God has chosen us and dedicated us for his special service. That special service is that we should love and obey him and should bring others to do the same And God has not left us to carry out that great task in our own strength but out of his grace he fits us for that task. If we place our lives in his hands

*Secondly whatever problems, struggles, challenges you are going through right now you don't have to carry it alone and in your own strength remember the presence of God is protecting you AMEN .*