



**June 1, 2014**

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**Glory – John 17:1-11**

Jesus, in this complicated prayer, says an awful lot not just to God, but also to his disciples and to us. I want to focus, though, on the last part of verse 11: “that they will be one just as we are one.”

Now, there are three ways, at least, that we are one: first, we are one in Christ through the waters of baptism; the second is in the sacrament we’ll soon celebrate, so wonderfully called “Communion;” and third, because God has made it so. Like that incredible mystery at the core of Christianity, the Trinity, we are each different, and at the same time, the same.

It is, apparently, a basic and normal part of human nature that makes us see each other as different. That, in itself, really isn’t bad; it means, at least, that we can be who we are, and not something like a coral, a colony of similar organisms, and more like Portuguese Man-of-War, which is a sort of floating mutual agreement between a whole bunch of different creatures. (The Portuguese man-of-war is a siphonophore, an animal made up of a colony of organisms working

together. In a way that is extremely unpleasant, if you've ever run into one before!)

But when human beings start *looking for* how we're different, rather than *how we are the same*, then the problems start.

Think back to those days when you may have said that you didn't much care for one group of people, but did have one or some of them as friends.

One of the things that I've always loved about Green Valley in general and Valley Presbyterian Church in particular has been a willingness to focus on others as, well, fellow-travelers; to focus on what holds us together rather than what pulls us apart. So, at least at social hour, we tend to avoid the typical topics of the Green Valley News editorial page, and why you haven't heard me speak strongly for or against any particular political position: there is, in my estimation, much to lose and little to gain.

And so I've confined myself, by and large, to the Gospel and the message of salvation. That message is the heart of this prayer of Jesus we've just read, and I want to focus on one part this morning: the last verse.

This verse ties together everything we are, what makes us Christians, and how we should live together on this planet God gave us

in just a few words: “that they will be one just as we [Jesus and God – and the Holy Spirit] are one.”

That is the whole purpose of God: to bring us, his reluctant creations, made in God’s likeness and image but separated by the gulf of our sin (however you want to define that: for some that’s an awful strong word, for others, it can’t be mentioned enough) separated from God because of God’s holiness, God’s glory, because we are neither, even at our best.

Now, we could argue about this one piece for days – been there, done that. There are lots of people who feel that they are not sinners: they live quiet, unassuming, good lives. Let’s not debate that for now, shall we? It’s much more important to realize that even the most competent and intelligent person on earth falls short of perfection, and some of us are, you could say, perfectionally challenged.

Jesus came as God’s peace offering, bridging the unbridgeable gap between us, and in his redemptive death and purifying resurrection, made it at last possible for us to be even close to God, through Christ, by means of the Spirit.

That is glorification, that is being glorified, that is the glory of God.

I love Jesus’ words, “that they may be one even as we are one,” too, because it doesn’t make us all one in the sense of one uniform mass

of sameness: it makes us one as the Trinity is one, three different persons in one God. We can be different, our own people, and still be one with God. What a relief!

We're a lot like snowflakes. It's true, every snowflake is different, but not only are they still snowflakes, they are all created by water condensing and freezing around a speck of dirt. And our beauty is created around – perhaps even because – we have that speck of sin in each of us, so that God's glory can be shown in making us one.

This poem, I think, gives us a tiny glimpse of the glory of God in the most unlikely of places:

“The very [preacher] who baptized the baby who became me went senile.

We could tell because he refused to condemn sinners:

The deacon caught with our tithes in his pocket,

The farmer who attacked his hired hand,

The woman taken in adultery. All

he said of such situations, Seeds

of every sin lie in every heart.

All he would do, pray – for his

own sins too.

Once when someone  
asked how he was he said, O  
Satan is bothering me so  
today. Then we knew for  
sure he was over  
the edge.

Is it  
senility in me  
that what we  
called sen-  
ility, I  
now call  
holiness

?” (Sietze Buning, pen name for Stanley Weirsma)

So, we are not perfect, but we are one, made one by God and  
Christ – and part of our unity is not just in our redemption and God’s

glory, but in the bit of dirt in all of us. By God's grace, may we see that glory – and that dirt more clearly.