

Sermon for May 29, 2022  
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Today these words are a little raw. This was a hard week.

This Thursday after seeing the faces of the children who died in the horrendous tragedy at one school in Texas scroll across my TV screen and Facebook feed, I sat in the auditorium of my own children's school and watched the familiar faces of the children in my life, the children in our community, move across the stage in front of me. There were just about 19 in Brayden's boys choir.

As I listened to my child sing the lyrics to the Les Mis song "Bring Him Home" – my heart ached, imagining this was the prayer on the lips of the parents who had waited outside that school that day- "God on high, Hear my prayer, In my need, You have always been there, He is young, He's afraid, Bring him home." We all pray God bring our children home safely.

I sat in that auditorium chair, the story of the young mom who had been at her child's program that morning, her cry of regret ringing in my ear "I always take her with me after a program - but not today, for the first time ever I didn't. She decided to finish the school day with her friends. Now I will never have the chance to take her with me again..."

Flashbacks of the day three years ago when it was my child who called from school in the middle of the day whispering on the other end of her cell phone. "Mom – there's somebody in the building. I was going to lunch and when we came down the stairs there were police in full gear with guns out. They yelled at us to go and hide. All the rooms were locked but we found one. We are hiding and listening for shots. I have to go. I have to be quiet." The panic. The fear. The frantic prayers...

That day tragedy was averted, my child came home. But too many other days have not ended as well, too many other children have not left their classrooms after an all clear to call their moms.

In many ways we are numb – there is so much heartache, so much tragedy, so much pain and brokenness that we watch it for a news cycle and then choose to turn it off, to walk away, to distract ourselves with brighter, busier things. It is almost too much to bear.

And I sit with these texts for today, with this call to preach and I am almost paralyzed. What is the word from God to us today?

And the most powerful thing I can find in today's text is that Jesus is praying for us. Jesus, the Word made flesh, with deep love and longing, comes into the presence of God and prays for us, God's people. Only chapters earlier, Jesus has spoken of human hatred and brokenness, he has foretold that these, his disciples, will betray and deny him and now before being led to the cross himself, he stops and prays for us.

We have a God who prays for us.

And this is what he prays in today's text: <sup>20</sup>"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one." That they would all be one.

What would oneness look like in this nation so divided on every issue? What would oneness look like when even the death of 19 children does not drive us together in unity but sends us to our corners for the battles ahead?

<sup>1</sup>Jesus prays "I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Oneness – the love with which God loves, in and through us. Unending, persistent, determined love that transcends all, that reaches even beyond the grave. Jesus prays for us -may this love be in them.

Oneness does not mean we will come to agree on every issue. Oneness will not demand assimilation to the most powerful voice. Oneness will not come through our own strength and ability.

Jesus says "I made your name known...I will make it known...so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them." Let there be no pronoun confusion. Oneness will come from and in Christ alone. Christ will be at work so that the love of God may be in us and Christ in us. To begin to live into the oneness of God "I" must cease - only Christ in me.

In our Revelations text today we read <sup>13</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root, the bright morning star." The response from all creation in this text is simply "Come... Come Lord Jesus."

Jesus prays for us that we might be one. The only words that I can find are "Come...Come Lord Jesus... may we all be one, your love in us, Christ in us.

Before the concert ended on Thursday, one of the groups sang a song titled "Inscription of Hope" by Randall Stroope. The text of the song was inscribed on the walls of a cellar in Germany where the Jews were hiding during WWII. The song dedication states "the words serve as a reminder that hope held firm will eventually reign victorious over the greatest odds." The choirs dedicated the song to the community of Robb Elementary.

*I believe in the sun even when it is not shining  
And I believe in love even when there's no one there  
And I believe in God even when he is silent  
I believe through any trial there is always a way  
But sometimes in the suffering and hopeless despair  
My heart cries for shelter to know someone's there  
But a voice rises within me saying Hold On my Child  
I'll give you strength I'll give you hope just stay a little while...  
May there someday be sunshine...*

*May there someday be happiness...*

*May there someday be love...*

*May there someday be peace...*

Jesus is praying for us "God - the love with which you have loved me be in them and I in them."

May we openly respond "Come Lord Jesus – come love – unending, persistent, determined, transcending – be in us, through us..."

We pray as Jesus taught - Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done. Amen.