

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

**So that the world may believe**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).*

The entire 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John is Jesus' prayer on behalf of his disciples. He prays for them just before he is to be betrayed and arrested. It is the night before he is to be murdered by the powers that be and yet his attention is focused not on what awaits him. His attention is focused on his disciples.

Such unimaginable love. Shortly before praying for them, he told them, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." (15:13-14). And what does he command his friends to do? "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (13:34-35).

You and I are his friends; he laid down his life for us and there is something he wants us to do. It is in the text for today's devotion.

In his prayer, Jesus declares that he is not only praying for his disciples; he is also praying for all those who will come to believe in him through their witness and, as a result, become a part of the community of faith

And that is what he wants us to do as well—witness to him who is the incarnation of God and the revelation of God's love and justice, God's compassion and mercy and forgiveness, God's redemption and salvation.

And how do we do that? We witness to Jesus by becoming mirrors. Just as Jesus is a mirror of God's love for the world, individual Christians—and collectively communities of faith—are to mirror Jesus' love for the world by what we say and how we live "so that the world may believe" and, in believing, consciously enter the circle of God's love.

Walter Rauschenbusch (the theologian I wrote my doctoral dissertation on) once wrote that, "It is faith to see what God is doing in the world and then claim your part in what God is doing in the world." Christian faith and faithfulness are all about love for the world God is loving.

Prayer: Loving God, may my words and my actions mirror the great love with which you love the world. Amen.