

6 I have manifested your Name
to those you gave me from the world.
They were yours, and you gave them to me;
and now they have kept your word.

7 Now they know that everything you've entrusted to
me
does indeed come from you.

8 I entrusted to them
the message you entrusted to me,
and they received it.
They know that I really came from you;
they believe it was you who sent me.

9 And it's for them that I pray—
not for the world,
but for these you've given me—
for they are really yours,

10 just as all that belongs to me is yours,
and all that belongs to you is mine.
It is in them
that I have been glorified.
I am in the world no more,
but while I am coming to you,
they are still in the world.
Abba, holy God,
protect those whom you have given me
with your Name—
the Name that you gave me—
that they may be one,
even as we are one.

12 As long as I was with them,
I guarded them with your Name
which you gave me.
I kept careful watch,
and not one of them was lost,

except for the one who was destined to be lost
in fulfillment of scripture.

13 Now I am coming to you;
I say all this while I am still in the world
that they may have my joy
fulfilled in themselves.

14 I gave them your word,
and the world has hated them for it
because they don't belong to the world
any more than I belong to the world.

15 I don't ask you to take them out of the world,
but to guard them from the Evil One.

16 They are not of the world,
any more than I am of the world.

17 Consecrate them—
make them holy through the truth—
for your word is truth.

18 As you have sent me into the world,
so I have sent them into the world;

19 I consecrate myself now for their sakes,
that they may be made holy in truth.

SERMON

(Start with exhale - emptying, so we can receive the breath, receive what's next)

Several years ago, Jacqueline Novogratz sat with a group of women weavers outside in their rural village in Pakistan. (PICTURE 1) The day was hot ... over 120 degrees in the shade. Jacqueline had gathered these women to tell them about a company that was bringing solar light to millions of people across India and East Africa. She excitedly told them about the transformative power of that light that would come into their homes. (PICTURE 2)

"We have this light" she said, "costs about seven dollars. People say it's amazing. If we could convince the company to bring those products to Pakistan, would you all be interested?" The women stared, and then a big woman whose hands knew hard work looked at her, wiped the sweat off her face and said, "We don't want a light. We're hot. Bring us a fan." "Fan," Jacqueline said. "We don't have a fan. We have a light. But if you had this light, your kids can study at night, you can work more --" The Pakistani woman cut her off. "We work enough. We're hot. Bring us a fan."

Jacqueline says she remembers lying -- sweltering in her bed in the tiny guest house that night, so grateful for the clickety-clack of the fan overhead, (PICTURE 3) and thought, "Of course. Electricity. A fan. Dignity." Now when this solar company goes to a really hot place, (PICTURE 4) and if there's a rooftop system, there is also a fan.¹ (PICTURE 3 again)

In our scripture this morning we overhear Jesus praying. The prayer has several parts, and here, in the middle of the prayer, Jesus is praying for his companions - those who have accompanied him, worked beside him, sat at his feet as he taught. With some discomfort, they allowed him to wash their feet. Yes, Jesus is praying for those who are to carry on the work; God's work.

Listen again to Jesus' words:

(John 9-10 selected)

*And it's for them that I pray—
not for the world,
but for these you've given me—
for they are really yours,*

*just as all that belongs to me is yours,
and all that belongs to you is mine...*

*Abba, holy God,
protect those whom you have given me
that they may be one,
even as we are one.*

¹ https://ted2srt.org/talks/jacqueline_novogratz_what_it_takes_to_make_change

Jesus recognizes that he's done all that he came to do. Earlier in this prayer, Jesus said "I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."

The work continues. It's up to the disciples. It's up to us, Jesus' followers here and now, to continue this work. The work is more than any one person, even the person Jesus, can do. The work of living out that New Commandment Jesus gave his disciples, 'love one another as I have loved you.'

This prayer, my friends, is for us, followers of Christ Jesus, as well.

The prayer in John 17 continues:

*I don't ask you to take them out of the world,
but to guard them from the Evil One...*

*Consecrate them—
make them holy through the truth—
for your word is truth.*

*As you have sent me into the world,
so I have sent them into the world...*

We have been sent into the world... what a privilege, what a responsibility! Jesus prays that the disciples be protected from the "evil one" who is at work in the world, but not that they be taken out of the world (verse 15). Ultimately, just as Abba, God, sent Jesus *into* the world, so too Jesus sends the disciples *into* the world to continue his mission of spreading the good news of love, grace, and recognizing that we are one as Jesus and God are one.

Consecrate them, Jesus prays. Consecrate -sometimes translated as sanctify, is to be made sacred. To be made holy. Consecrate them for the purpose of going out into the world. Jesus' prayer is asking God to consecrate them, not as a way of being made pure and holy by being set apart. It is intended as the way for disciples to be sent forth to share the t/Truth and the w/Word. It is not a way of being taken out of the world but being sent into it.²

Jesus is praying for his followers to be holy, sacred, as they go into the messiness of the world, sharing the good news. That they may be one.

And so what about us?

How do those questions raised by Tod Bolsinger, during the Future Church Summit, live in us - as individuals, yes, but more so as a community of believers?

²

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/seventh-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-john-176-19-4>

What's our unique gift?

As individuals, as a community? Sometimes we come broken, feeling on the margins, unsure. Yet we are all, all made sacred, blessed.

What's the gift we, as UMC, bring? Do we know it? How do we discover it?

When sitting with those women in Pakistan, Jacqueline Novogratz learned the importance of listening. Listening well to the needs and the dreams of those around her.

The Future church summit left me full of questions for our community.

How do we discover what our gift is?

How do we listen to the pain of our community, and of the world and respond?

How will that require us to change and grow?

Tod reminded us that a Spirit of adventure is needed -
And that change requires learning and change results in loss.

My friends, I'm scared, I'm excited, I'm full of so many questions.

So I return to these intimate words of Jesus. Look to it for a way forward. This prayer of Jesus' is his farewell address. He is sending his followers into the unknown.

Jesus prays for those who join him in the work.
He recognizes that danger is ahead;
he names that the work is more than any one person can do;
he asks God to remind them, over and over,
that they are One, One in Christ, no matter how differently they see the work continuing.

In just a moment we're going to move into communion. Communion was Jesus taking an ancient ritual and making it new. Jesus transformed the sharing of the passover meal, that sacred time of remembering God's saving work, and used it as a way for us to remember - remember that grace and love he shared, and shares now, with us.

Our work now, my friends, is to take the core teachings of Christ and carry on his work.
So many questions of what this might look like!

As we take a moment to breathe, listening to song, I invite you to ponder, what gift are we called to share as a community of believers?

END SERMON WITH SISTER SONG: ONE VOICE

CALL TO WORSHIP

This morning, and for the next couple of Sundays, we're going to set the stage for exploration.

As part of the review process of my ministry, but also of the ministry of our church, Leadership team sent out a questionnaire that many of you participated in.

It gave lots of useful feedback, but the one question I was most interested in was this:

Name two or three places where you believe God's Spirit is moving, calling us as a congregation to grow spiritually and in our ministry and mission.

We received nearly 5 pages of ideas! Lots of thoughts, hopes, dreams for us! The Spirit is alive and moving among us!

Ever since I came here to pastor, I've been asking the question - what's our central vision and purpose? What's our reason for being here, UMC, in this place, at this time?

I've asked this because, without knowing what our unifying vision is, frankly, it's really hard to know how to lead, especially to lead us forward.

My role is not to say - here's MY vision for UMC, jump on board. My role is to listen well, encourage all of us to listen well - to each other and to the nudging of the Holy Mothering Spirit - to explore, listen and discern together.

This past February, several of us attended the Future Church Summit on Zoom. One speaker, Tod Bolsinger, from Fuller Seminary says that:

***Each congregation has a gift for the community.
A unique gift that addresses pain.
A unique gift to meet the pain in our community and our world.***

My hope, my prayer, my friends, is that we dive deep - asking ourselves and one another-

What's our unique gift?

How do our gifts address the pain of our community/world?

Dr. Bolsinger says that naming our gift, our purpose

will require us to change and grow.

He says a Spirit of adventure needed -

***Adventure that requires learning
and results in loss***

The Easter season is coming to a close.

Change is all around us -

Next Sunday we'll celebrate Pentecost - the birth of something radically new - the church.

Worship and work are one.

So join me now in worship, as we explore our giftedness, our call to discern. Our work now is to take the core teachings of Christ and carry on his work.

Our scripture this morning is Jesus' farewell address - where he prays "that they may be one, even as we are one."

We begin by hearing this prayer. Listen, to this prayer of Jesus, for his followers:

(John 17:6-19 read)

(after sermon response song)

COMMUNION:

We are forgiven, loved and free.

For freedom Christ has set us free.

Communion was taking ancient ritual and making it new. Our work now is to take the core teachings of Christ and carry on his work.

We do this together, we do it in community.

Jesus did not share his final meal with the powerful, the ones who thought they had all the answers. Those who were confident they knew what it meant to love and serve God.

No, Jesus shared the bread and cup with seekers; those who asked questions, who made mistakes, and who kept showing up.

Yes, they kept showing up, even with all their humanness.

Jesus invites us to that same table.

It's a table big enough for us all.

It's a table not for the worthy, but for those who are hungry.

So come, all you who hunger for a new way of loving and living;
a new way of serving the risen Christ.

Come with your questions

Come, the table is here, for you.

Zoom communion -

Blessing bread and cup and then, with song, an opportunity to eat and drink, separate and yet together.

We remember that night, long, long ago, when Jesus picked up a loaf of bread....