

“That The World May Know”

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Old Testament Lesson: Psalm 57:1-3, 11

New Testament Lesson: John 17:20-23

Arthur F. Burns was an economic advisor to a number of presidents from Eisenhower to Reagan. Burns was also Jewish. So when he began attending an informational White House group for prayer and fellowship, no one knew quite how to involve him. This was back in the 1970s when Christians were less skilled at involving our Jewish friends in prayer groups and such.

Week after week, different people took turns ending the meeting in prayer, and Burns was always passed by – out of a mixture of respect and reticence; they didn't know how to handle the situation.

One week, however, the group was led by a newcomer who did not know Burns was Jewish. As the meeting ended, the newcomer turned to Burns and asked him to close with a prayer. Some of the old-timers glanced at each other in surprise and wondered what would happen.

But without missing a beat, Burns reached out, held hands with others in the circle, and prayed this prayer: “Lord, I pray that you would bring Jews to know Jesus Christ. I pray that you would bring Muslims to know Jesus Christ. Finally, Lord, I pray that you would bring Christians to know Jesus Christ. Amen.”¹

In Our New Testament reading today, Jesus prays a similar prayer, saying, “I ask not only on behalf of these (the disciples of his day), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word (praying on behalf of us who know Jesus through the words recorded in the Gospels), that they (that we) may all be one.

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,” says Jesus, “may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” “So that the world may believe.” That prayer is Jesus’ plan for evangelism, for building the church. Actually, it’s a formula – a formula for belief, the faith formula. Jesus is doing a little divine arithmetic here: 1 + 1 + 1, God plus Jesus plus us, his disciples equals what? He’s counting on the fact that with God, there’s always more than meets the eye, there’s always another layer to uncover. With God, 1 + 1 + 1 (God + Jesus + us) doesn’t merely equal three. God + Jesus + us equals the whole world – “so that the world may believe that you have sent me,” says Jesus. God + Jesus + us = the whole world.

The key to this formula is God’s glory. Jesus says, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them

¹ Cited by Os Guinness in his book, *The Call*.

and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Ok, that’s a confusing sentence, with all the “me’s” and “I’s” and “them’s.” So let’s just focus on that one word: Glory. “The glory that you have given me, I have given them,” says Jesus, “...so that the world may know that you have sent me...”

The glory that God gave to Jesus came through his sacrifice on the cross. Is that what Jesus wants for us? Is Jesus calling us to the cross? “The glory that you have given to me. I have given to them.” No, though we all do have certain crosses – or burdens – to bear. But dying on the cross was part of Jesus’ mission, not ours.

Our mission is to live life differently because Jesus lived, died, was resurrected and risen, ascending to heaven. Our glory – the glory that God gives to us through Jesus Christ – comes from living in Christ, living in the manner of Jesus. How do we know how to live in the manner of Jesus, what actions we should take?

Jesus said a lot of things during his earthly ministry, I think of the things he did, the actions he took, the physical acts he performed, those things we can picture him doing. For example, **Jesus broke bread** and poured wine at the Last Supper – He made eating with family and friends a sacred time. And so can we. Pray at meals. It’s a great way to give God the glory and share the faith.

Jesus walked on water – He used things in nature to point out God’s power and glory. We can talk about the complexity and beauty of nature like the incredible flowers in the Parlour, giving credit to God as Creator of all things.

Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish – he fed the hungry, giving thanks to God. We can and should provide for each other’s physical needs. How about when he drew in the sand – The Pharisees brought him a woman to be stoned to death for adultery, and instead of arguing with them, Jesus bent down and drew in the sand and somehow, in that, he showed that we are all in need of God’s mercy – “let anyone who is without sin cast the first stone.”

(Humor warning). That’s the setup for one of my favorite jokes. Jesus says “let anyone who is without sin cast the first stone,” and with that Mary picks up a stone to throw. And Jesus said, “Come on, Mom! I’m trying to make a point here.” Mary was the only other person without sin.

So, in addition to showing mercy to others like Jesus did with the adulteress, we can also have a sense of humor as Christians. That could actually help the world to know Jesus; Jesus must have laughed, right?

Jesus also passed through the midst of them – Jesus didn’t engage his attackers in his hometown of Nazareth, but rather he trusted God to see him through. We don’t have to escalate a confrontation with someone.

We can't control other people's words and action, but we can control our own, trusting that God will see us through.

Those are just a few of the many ways we can share our faith with others in fulfillment of Jesus' prayer, when he prayed *that "the world may believe,"* believe that God sent Jesus as a supreme act of love. You know, love is always involves uncertain. Love takes faith, love involves risk.

Jesus risked everything by loving us the way he did. He risked everything having Judas at the Last Supper, by asking the Pharisees to show mercy, by feeding 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish, by calling Peter to walk with him on the waves, by trusting God to save him from his attackers in Nazareth and throughout the world. Jesus risked everything, trusting God, and God saw him through it all.

And so it is with us. If we remain grounded in Jesus, God will overcome, God will be glorified, and the world will come to believe in Jesus and act on that belief, act more like Jesus, because of how we act.

We have that big of a role, we are that important to God's formula for sharing the faith. So let's act that way – you and me. Whatever you do this week, in word or deed, do it in the name of Jesus Christ, confident that you can change the world for the better, and to God be the glory. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Your love, O God, knows no bounds. We have gathered here, neighbor and stranger; friend and foe; young and old.

Where we have been divided, your love has made us one.

This we know for we have received the tangible assurance that your love is real, through the gift of the meal prepared for us this day.

Let us gather at this sacred table to join in worship this day in the light of Christ.

For you, O Lord, are the light of the world and the song in our hearts, calling us to lift our voices as one, praying as you taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.**