

A Name Made Known

Easter 7

Pastor Josh Frazee

John 17:20-26

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” These are the words with which we begin every service here at Augsburg. But in fact, they are more than just words; they are the very name of God. He is the Triune God; three distinct persons in one, divine being. Yet He is not three Gods, but one God.

So then, why do we begin our worship services in God’s name? After all, God is with us no matter where we are as He is omnipresent, that is, He is everywhere. What is more, God has promised to be where two or more are gathered in His Name. Then it cannot be that we use His name to ask God to come, necessarily, but to remind us that He is already here.

Still, there is more reason than just that: we recognize that this is where God gives us His gifts. Here, in Augsburg Immanuel church, we have baptisms and we receive Jesus’ very body and very blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. Here, we hear God’s Word in its fullness and purity from the lectern, from the pulpit, and even in our liturgy and hymns. Here we receive the means of grace: God’s forgiveness given to us for the sake of Jesus Christ.

But again, let us focus on the name of God spoken a few minutes ago. God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is one in unity among His three persons. This is the kind of oneness for which our Lord Jesus prays for both His apostles and for us as the ones yet to come to have in His high priestly prayer. We heard part of that prayer this morning as our Gospel text.

Verse 1

As part of His duty in His office of priest, Jesus would offer prayer. He taught His disciples the Lord’s prayer, and He would go out in the early morning and pray by Himself. In our Gospel text, Jesus prays one of His final prayers before His betrayal by Judas. In it, He prays not only for His apostles, not only for those around them, but even for you and me. He prays, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Jesus recognizes and prays for several relationships in that one petition. He prays that all of His disciples, from His apostles and disciples of that day, to us today, that we would all be one. What does it mean to be one with one another? Does it mean that we all have to be the same as each other? No, we are each individuals. Yet at the same time, we are each members of one body—the Church, the bride of Christ.

In other words, we become one by holding the same belief in common. We already do this, as the members of Augsburg Immanuel Lutheran Church. We advertise weekend to weekend that we agree with the Scriptures and how they are taught through the Confessions. We advertise that we believe that we are receiving the true body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion, just as Jesus Himself said. But our faith is not yet completed.

That is why we continue to come and hear the Word and receive the means of grace. We do not desire to fall out of faith, to fall out of the oneness we have with one another. If you do not have that desire, look at what Jesus prayed again. His desire was that we would be one with one another just as He is one with the

Father. How close is Jesus in relationship to the Father and the Spirit? He is one with them. They are each immortal, divine, all-knowing, all-powerful, and all of the qualities of God equally. That is how close Jesus prays that we would be with one another as His bride, His Church.

Jesus prays that we would be one and that we would be in His Father and Him. He does not say one with them, because while a bride and groom are unified in their bond of marriage, they do not stop being separate beings, and the same is true for us with God. Jesus wants us to be with God the Father and the Spirit, but He does not ask that we become God. So then our purpose is not to become God Himself, but that we be with Him, so that “the world may believe that (God the Father) sent (the Son).”

Verse 2

Jesus continues, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

Here Jesus continues His prayer to His Father saying that He has given to His church the glory His Father had given to Him. This glory would lead to the oneness of His followers, both the apostles of His day and us today. As we continue to come and to hear the Word and receive the Sacrament together, we are built together as the bride of Christ in such a way that the world will have no choice but to recognize our oneness.

So often, though, there are distractions and excuses for not coming to hear the Word which brings us together. You are well aware of what they are without my listing them; and I am not preaching only to those who are not here this morning, but even to you. How often do you let those distractions or excuses get in the way of your coming?

Repent of those times. Repent of those distractions and excuses. This morning we heard from a sister in Christ who went to Madagascar. Did you know there are more Christians in Madagascar than in the entire United States? That’s right; not just Lutherans, but Christians in general, are fewer in number here in the States than in Madagascar. We are not being brought together as one. Society, Satan, yes, even our own sinful flesh are winning against us, against the unity for which our Lord Jesus prayed for us to have.

But all is not lost. Rather, quite the opposite. Jesus has already won the war. He defeated our enemies—sin, death, the devil, and our own sinful nature—at the cross of Calvary. Following this high priestly prayer, John records how Jesus was betrayed and taken to be crucified on the cross. Yet Jesus did not go *un-*willingly. No, no one could take His life from Him; He gave it up willingly for you. He took the full punishment for your sin, for all the times you were led astray from coming to hear His Word. Your sin, not in part, but in whole, has been taken away.

Verse 3

Jesus died for you, and He prayed for you. He prayed for the faith He would work in you through His Spirit. He told His Father, “O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Though the world does not know God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, you do, dear friends in Christ. You have received God's Spirit that you might be taught and made one through God's Word. God's Word is all about Jesus and His life and death for you, having been sent by the Father, and made known to you by the Spirit.

So what does it mean that a name has been made known? It is true that there are many names for God in the Scriptures, yet one stands out the most from this text. The name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. If God is not the Triune God, then we do not have the Son. If we do not have the Son, then we do not have access to the Father. And without the Spirit, we would not have the faith to believe in Jesus. So it is that Jesus has made known the name of God to us.

By coming into this world, He broke through the darkness of sin and revealed the light of God. By His baptism, we hear how God the Father spoke to Jesus once He was baptized in the river Jordan and how the Spirit descended on Him like a dove. In the Old Testament, there were many names given to God and even to the Messiah to come, but they did not know Jesus' name. Today, you do know Jesus' name—His name which fits into the name of God we use at the beginning of every service here at Augsburg. The name which we use in every baptism. And the name by which we are saved, because it includes Jesus, the Son of God, who has taken away your sin. In Jesus' Name. Amen.