

## **Lenten Devotional April 1, 2021**

### **Scripture**

John 17:1-26

*1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. 20 I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them 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. 24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26 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."*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Leland Platt '02**

"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" (vv. 20-21). Jesus' prayer in John 17 expresses Jesus' care, love, and compassion not only for his current disciples but also for all who *will* believe in him.

Other than Jesus, few creatures can express compassion as well as dogs can. And dogs have played an important role in my ministry. Because dogs express compassion so well, I have used several of them as therapy dogs in homes, nursing homes, and hospitals to visit members of my congregation. Case in point: Russ and Shirley had been married for more than 40 years and were incredibly close. Shirley was hospitalized with an unknown medical condition. Russ was terribly worried. The next morning he showed up at my front door in tears. "I don't know what I will do without her," he sobbed. I invited him

in. He sat sobbing away in a desk chair as I fixed him some coffee. Purves, my Golden Retriever, immediately came to Russ, placed his paws on the chair, stood on his hind legs, then placed a paw on each of Russ's shoulders and, with deep compassion, looked Russ in the eye. Russ stopped crying as he looked into Purves's eyes, laughed, and said, "I needed that." No pastoral words of mine were needed.

While watching a five-year-old boy play with a large yellow Labrador Retriever, Luther Seminary professor Andrew Root observed: "This boy was experiencing the [message] we long for most as humans . . . *You are loved. You are mine. You are beautifully and wonderfully made*" (*The Grace of Dogs* [2017], p. 76). I know that's what Russ experienced as Purves looked into his eyes.

### **Prayer**

God of all grace, love, and compassion, we thank you for your enduring presence among us as you remind us so often, and in unexpected ways, that we are loved and cared for. You make it easy to say with the psalmist, "Light, space, zest—that's God! So, with God on my side I'm fearless, afraid of no one and nothing" (Ps. 27:1, *The Message*). Amen.