

Lent Devotional February 21, 2026

Scripture

John 17:20-26

20 “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who 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.”

Devotion

Dr. Daniel Frayer-Griggs '08

Jesus' prayer to his Father in John 17 is the culmination of the Farewell Discourse, a section of the Gospel that began in chapter 13 and describes some of the most intimate moments Jesus shares with his disciples. Perhaps foremost among them is Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet, an act so vulnerable it makes Peter squirm. Jesus' prayer extends this intimacy outward. In the verses immediately preceding our passage, Jesus has prayed for himself (vv. 1–5) and for his disciples (vv. 6–19). Here, as he faces betrayal and abandonment and contemplates his own death, Jesus looks beyond himself and his immediate circle and turns his attention to others: “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word” (v. 20). Jesus prays for those believers who were not among his followers during his ministry, those who depend on the witness of others. That includes us.

And what is Jesus' prayer for us? That we all may be one. It's tempting to think of this oneness as sameness, but that's not language Jesus uses here. When he prays, “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,” he describes a relationship so intimate that it requires the language of mutual indwelling. Importantly, however, this mutuality doesn't collapse into sameness. There remains an “I” and a “you,” a “they” and an “us.” Such relationships honor the other *as other*, or as Martin Buber puts it, “love is responsibility of an I for a *Thou*.” This way of being with one another requires trust, vulnerability, and a recognition of our own dependence on God and one another. Conformity sounds a whole lot easier. In this season of Lent, let's reconsider what it means to be one—not erasing the other but entrusting ourselves to God and one another.

Prayer

Gracious God, draw us into a oneness defined by mutuality and trust rather than fear and sameness. Teach us to remain vulnerable with one another, recognizing our mutual dependence, so we might know and share your love. Amen.