

Teen Devotion

Year C – Seventh Sunday of Easter

Victorious



One truth shared: God's people celebrate diversity and strive for unity.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20-23

Unity Marches Victorious in Diversity

When the question "What's your favorite food?" is asked to a large group of people, there are many answers—cheeseburgers; pizza; spaghetti; maybe even a few people would answer Brussel sprouts or green beans.

People are different that way. Not just when it comes to food, though. But also in our fashion sense, our musical genres, our choice of entertainment and more.

"Different" is a good thing. Our God loves variety. He created a vibrant different world exploding with plenty of different colors, shapes, and sizes.

"Different" is a good thing. But only so far as being "different" doesn't harm the unity our God wants us to have in worship and praise of his holy name.

In our reading today, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He will shortly be betrayed, arrested, beaten, and then nailed to a piece of wood. All of what awaited him is what causes us amazement as he spends this precious time before his suffering and death praying about... others.

Listen again as the Son of Man prays, "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you 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." In a world of diversity, unity in Christ Jesus marches victorious.

And why? Because wherever you come from, no matter what your abilities are, no matter your favorite food or musical genre, Jesus Christ died for you. His victory is your victory. His resurrection from the dead is proof that your every sin is forgiven and that heaven is your home.

You may never eat a Brussel sprout—unless it's wrapped in bacon. You may not be a fan of certain kinds of music, and romantic comedies may just put you to sleep. You might be different... and that's okay. "Different" is good, as long as we are united in Christ Jesus—together praising him and proclaiming his holy name for all to hear.

Prayer: Be with me today, Lord Jesus, as I live in a world not unified to serve you alone. By your Word and sacrament, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may live to glorify you and proclaim your holy name. Amen.

Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

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Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Let's spend a little time discussing our favorite food... music... movie... class in school...

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

Agree/Disagree: It's a good thing that there is so much variety in the world. Why do you think the Lord created it that way?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- **Read John 17:20-26.** Jesus is deep in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as our reading begins. He's praying for his disciples' well-being, but we read "My prayer is not for them alone." Who else do we see Christ praying for in this section?
- In what way can differences threaten unity among God's people? In what ways can it strengthen it?
- According to verse 24, what is Jesus' ultimate desire for God's people on earth? Why is this so important for us always to remember?
- Reread verse 25. How is it evident today that "the world does not know (God)"? What can we do in attempt to remedy this sad situation?
- The theme for our devotion is that "God's people celebrate diversity and strive for unity." How would you put that into your own words?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

For Discussion: Let's look at some very real-life ways in which you, your friend group, your family, or your church can build a sense of unity while still celebrating different likes, dislikes, abilities, and passions.