

John 17

John 17:6-24

John 17 is one of the most remarkable chapters in the whole of the Bible.
It is about being drawn into the most intimate place.
A place that we hardly ever see, and certainly never for this length of time.

There is a line in the opening to John's gospel, the famous prologue
It says, "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"

This is about the infinite length of time, in which the Father and the Son and later we discover, the Spirit, were with each other before the World began.

And you wonder, what did they say here,
What did they talk about? How did they pass the time?

This chapter here is an insight into the kind of conversation that the Father and the Son were having with each other, it is a conversation of complete intimacy, trust, love, belonging, truth, saying things that both of the known, in order to have the joy of hearing the other say it.

What happens at the beginning of chapter 17, is that we are told that simply Jesus moves his eyes towards heaven, he makes eye contact with heaven, and then he is plunged into this world, where you can sense that Jesus is utterly at home, but for the first and only time, that know recorded, he is prepared to unveil this to his disciples.

There is a circular, mirror-like, repeating quality to this conversation, they they move round the same truths again and again, just enjoying them.

"Glorify your son that your son may glorify you"

"All mine are yours, and yours are mine"

There is an immersed flow of connection and joy.

The closest analogy I can make is a couple who find themselves in love.

In the old days, the complaint of the parents when their daughter or son fell in love, was that one particular bill in the house rose exponentially, which bill - The phone bill.

And why, because they would spend hours and hours on the phone to each other,

This of course was very frustrating for the others in the house for whom the one phone in the house was now out of commission for the whole time.

In fact, the parent, or perhaps another sibling in the house, would say
You were on the phone for ages
And yet for the other person, that phone call did not feel like ages, it felt like seconds, the time passed.

Now if that is the perception of time for a couple who have just fallen in love, human love which is partial and fickle,
What must happen to the concept of time,
When under the infinite, and limitless love of the Father and the Son.

That is what we are given here.

But unlike the love between the teenage couple, this is a love which is expansive, which invites others in. In fact in this sense it becomes like the love of two parents, wanting to invite others into the love which the two of them share.

This is a passage in the the most common reference it he Son talking about himself
I 58 times
Father 54 times
Disciples 44 times

Proper self-awareness does not deny the existence of ourselves
It expands ourselves to include the other.

I have thought a lot about this of late, but the sense of self, the true sense of self rooted in God, does not negate the self, it expands it, opens it, both to God and to others.

And so this is full of sentences in which the Father and the Son are being joined to "them", the disciples..

Verse 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"

Or Verse 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."

All the time there is a quality of the disciples, us, being drawn into the relationship of the Father and the Son.

Verse 18

“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

When we studied this in the podcast I am part of, The Outspoken Bible, last year, we had a guest host, Gill Lythe. I hadn't known Gill before, but I had known her Father, Brian Swan. Brian was an engineer, who specialised in Bridges. For many years he had been in charge of the team that had run the Kingston Bridge in Glasgow.

There are a couple of things about this. Firstly you might be thinking - the Kingston Bridge, built in 1970, 52 years old, surely they just build it, and then do some annual checks, and then you are fine - no a whole dedicated team. Why - because Bridges, like all relationships need work and time and effort and attention. That is what is going on here with this Bridge, this relationship between the Father and the Son - it needs work and time and attention.

The other thing about Brian is that he absolutely loves Bridges. Gill joked on the podcast that on her Dad's bedside table there are two pictures - one of Ann, who is Brian's wife, and the other of a Bridge somewhere in France - Brian absolutely loves bridges. He says that these are his two favourite things in the world - which is a bit of a sore point with Gill and her sister.

Brian knows the time that you have to give to a Bridge, - you can't just build a bridge, you have to keep a bridge, and that he loves Bridges - this is a three way bridge here, between Jesus the Son, Jesus the Father, the Disciples and Jesus, the Disciples and the Father.

We are being welcomed into this place of deep connection. The last thing he does before he goes to the Cross, is that Jesus pulls the disciples into the deep connection between him and the Father.

We are going to listen passage to this again, and I want you to listen to the other themes that keep appearing.

Firstly, there is a whole lot of giving in this relationship. Everyone is giving. It is a relationship where they love to give. In the love languages of God, gift is certainly up there.

Verse 22

“the glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,”

Or verse 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.”

Notice as well the attention to the word "One"

Jesus is desperate for us to be "one" - not as an afterthought, it's the last thing that he prays for us. I have a friend for whom unity has become very important, and he often says that if I was dying, the thing I would say to my wife on my death bed would be "Look after the kids, keep them together, look after the kids". This is the most important thing - let them be one.

There is going to be a lot of talk of glory - Glory is about letting the thing being known, it is unveiled, and what is unveiled is not a diamond but it does glisten, or the glory of a morning, or the glory of Rome, there is an unveiling, an unveiling of a relationship.

And listen to all the talk of giving and sending
Of being in the world, and being protected
This is everything for those who have been given to the Son, a great gift
Son - these are yours, the ones I am giving you.

Never ever put down the Church,
Because the Church are the ones that the Father gave to the Son and he was delighted
He was so grateful
Giving and giving and giving
I gave them to you.

Listen for the giving.

Last year, I remembering picking up Zoe with some friends in Dunkeld, and I was to drive them home - I think from the Station. Zoe sat in the front seat, and her friends were in the back.

Now, usually there are strict instructions for such a journey - Drive, do nothing else but drive.

But this time something odd happened, as soon as the door was closed and I started driving, Zoe turned to me and said "How are you today, Dad?"

"Were you at one of your meetings in Edinburgh?"

"Who have you been to visit to today?"

And I was bewildered, until the only the possible explanation for this emerged
She loves me
And she wants her friends to know she loves me

And she wants them to hear the conversation.

In the same way,

He loves the Father,

And he wants them to hear how much he loves his Father

And in doing so he is going to tell the Father how much he loves them - he sees the best in them.

There is a lot of hearing of who is who,

Of immersion in the other..

So let us sing the Holy, the song of God's presence

And then Lorna is going to read further

And then we are going to sing again...