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## SERMON ASCENSION

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### A WORD FROM THE WORD

My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.

Last week I talked about belonging. Belonging is something that all human beings ache for. Our Relationships are critical for our wellbeing!

Some people want to be disconnected, often because they have been hurt by relationships which have been dysfunctional. Others choose to be disconnected because they can't get their own way. We have all experienced that disconnection and separation, even now in our own church community.

Family is the most significant of all communal relationships. And in every family there is one person who is the glue.....holding all things together, working at maintaining and strengthening the connections. Who is the glue in your family? It is normally a female member of the family, but not always.

In my family there are two who keep the whole clan connected, in their thoughts and with their actions; they are the glue that holds us together—my mother and my oldest daughter. My mother keeps me connected with my siblings and their families, all 80 of us. And my mother is the pray-er, the one whose prayers bind us to Christ and to each other. She knows each one by name and names each person individually in her prayers. My daughter keeps our clan informed about all the activities that are happening in our lives; she would and could do so without Facebook, even though we rely on Facebook for most of our communication. She also manages all our family activities. For that I thank her because it is no longer my responsibility.

Today we are reflecting on the last hours that Jesus shared with his disciples at the Last Supper. He concluded the Passover with a prayer. It is called the High Priestly Prayer. And through that prayer you get a clear picture of who holds things together for us. **Jesus keeps us connected**, through his death and resurrection. Jesus keeps us connected by gathering us together. Jesus keeps every one of us in his heart. Metaphorically speaking, he has written every one of our names on his hands.... As the Prophet Jeremiah implied. Whenever I think of that image I can only conclude **that's some tattoo**. Is there any space on that arm for more ink?

The High Priestly Prayer in John 17 is a profound prayer delivered by Jesus shortly before His arrest and crucifixion. In that prayer, Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples, and all future believers, emphasizing His role as the intercessor between God and humanity.

Jesus began by praying for Himself, because the time for the ultimate act of the redemption of humanity through the crucifixion and resurrection was fast approaching. It is through his willingness to sacrifice his own life for us, which, above all other actions, creates us all as the family of God. That was never an easy burden to carry. Even so he gave his Father the glory and the honour for the new life that he was creating.

Then he turned to those who had been closest to him for the previous three years. He interceded for His disciples, asking for their protection and their unity, and stated, **"I am**

**not asking that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one".** This is a prayer for them to be protected and kept together.

Finally, Jesus prayed for you and me. He prayed for all future believers. And his primary concern was that the relationships we share with each other will be strengthened. He prayed for unity among us and expressed His longing for us to be with Him and give a witness to His glory. He offered us a most profound gift—unity and connection in the face of conflict and oblivion.

This prayer is considered one of the most profound moments in the New Testament, reflecting Jesus' deep love for and commitment to His most intimate followers and everybody who puts their trust in his grace.

Jesus is concerned about every single person in our community. He is the glue joining and holding us together as children of God. He demonstrates his concern for every single person for whom he died.

Unfortunately, we are so often concerned only about our little corner of the block or cul-de-sac, our own room, our own bed, our own cup and plate. Here, in this prayer, Jesus opens our eyes and our hearts to the full extent of the people of God and our place in that community.

He prayed for his approaching death. He prayed for those closest to him, those who would share the journey to the cross. Then he prayed for all who were rescued by his death. He is concerned about our needs and our connections.

This prayer of our most gracious and generous High Priest provides the foundation of our journey together as the children of God, the followers of the Messiah. It lays down the path for us to walk together as we remain bound to the Christ who died for us. It doesn't matter whether we continue to share the intimacy of a common place of worship, or whether we are separated by leagues of open land and confronting barriers, we walk together with Christ keeping us bound together as his own family.