



DAILY DEVOTIONS

A thought to comfort and encourage you



Light Lutheran Church
Pastor Geoff Kuchel

May 2026
Sunday 17th -Saturday 23rd

This weeks Devotions are by Charles Bertelsmeier

Charles is a retired engineer who has worked on telecommunications projects for the air force, army and navy. He lives in a retirement village in the outer north-western suburbs of Sydney with his wife, Diane. Together, they have four children and eight grandchildren, all of whom they love spending time with. Charles keeps busy caring for their pot plants and a community vegetable garden, researching his family history and volunteering in the community and at LifeWay Lutheran Church.

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A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW HOLY SPIRIT?

By Charles Bertelsmeier

... the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you (John 14:17).

Read [John 14:15–21](#)

How well do you know Holy Spirit? Some have commented that Holy Spirit is the forgotten member of the Holy Trinity.

Now you might find it strange that I leave out the definite article 'the' in front of Holy Spirit. The strangeness may be because we have rarely heard it omitted, but I have noticed it more often recently.

So, I did some research, and a rule I found applicable is that the definite article is not used with proper nouns – that is, names of people and countries. So, if Holy Spirit is the proper name of the third person of the Holy Trinity, maybe we should not be putting a 'the' in front of the name. Beyond that comment, I wouldn't argue with anyone about it. For me, putting a 'the' in front of Holy Spirit tends to depersonalise him and could be part of the reason why some treat Holy Spirit as the least important member of the heavenly family.

If you have been baptised into the Christian faith, in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you received the gift of Holy Spirit into you as God's presence with you. As he is one with the Father and Son, he is working in your life on their behalf, leading and guiding you towards being and becoming the person God is developing you into.

So, if Holy Spirit is living in you and being your guide and tutor, how aware are you of his presence? Are you actively listening to his guidance? Do you talk to him and seek his guidance? Do you treat him as a person or a vague spiritual force?

Your response may be that you talk to God and listen to God throughout your day, but not to Holy Spirit. Or the person you talk to and listen to may be your Heavenly Father or even his Son, Jesus. This is so ripe for a complicated theological discussion, but I don't want to go there. The point I want to make is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the one God, and communicating with any of them individually is communicating with all three.

So, in a sense, it doesn't matter which member of the Holy Trinity we have in our minds when we talk to God and listen to God. The important thing to remember is that God has decided to take up residence inside us through Holy Spirit, provided we accept his invitation. And he is committed to guiding and growing us the same way Jesus did with his disciples, guiding and growing them in their relationship with him.

Holy Spirit, are you really living in me and guiding me every day of my life? I apologise for ignoring you and your advice. I often like to think that I have the answers to all life throws at me. Thank you for not growing impatient with me and giving up on me. Thank you for still being there with me when I finally give up and ask for your help. Amen.

THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU

SELECTIVE BLINDNESS

By Charles Bertelsmeier



If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father (John 15:24).

Read [John 15:18-27](#)

Have you ever watched an illusionist and wondered how they did their tricks? Speaking generally, what the illusionist does is divert your attention to some activity they want you to concentrate on while doing some trickery with their other hand or by their assistant. Because you can only visually concentrate on one thing at a time, you don't notice the slight activity off to the side. Another aspect of our psychology is that as we switch our visual attention from one object to another some distance away, we don't see any details of anything between the two objects. Illusionists rely on this, too.

This is related to another truth about our psychology. To understand new information or ideas, we need to fit them into our current frames of reference. Let me give an example. Our current experience is that when we take five loaves of bread, break them into pieces and hand them out to feed people, there will not be enough to feed at least five thousand people, with 12 baskets of leftover scraps. So, when we hear about this happening, we try to fit it into this frame of reference. Which means we think that it didn't happen as reported. There must have been some sleight of hand or other explanation.

Now, if your frame of reference includes a God who has unlimited power over nature, you don't have a problem, because this example of the multiplying bread is just a miracle. This implies that the person who performed the miracle is either God himself or acting on God's behalf.

On the other hand, if someone has embarrassed us and we are very angry with them, when they try to talk to us, we may be so absorbed with trying to justify our anger with anything further they say that we don't hear the important information they are trying to share with us.

Jesus faced both these situations with the religious leaders of his day. The things Jesus said and did didn't fit their frame of reference for a religious teacher, and their focus on capturing what he said to use against him prevented them from hearing the good news he wanted to share with them.

Now, we also need to be cautious of people trying to mislead us in our relationship with God, so we must check things against our other frame of reference, the Bible. And the best way to do this is to regularly and prayerfully read the Scriptures.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word, both the written word in the Bible and the Living Word, Jesus. Please help us to be open to where you are leading us in our daily lives, and please protect us from being deceived by those who want to lead us away from you. Amen.

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME

By Charles Bertelsmeier

Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete (John 16:23b,24b).

Read [John 16:16-24](#)

Jesus had been trying to get his disciples ready for his impending death and eventual departure from this earth. He had already given them the promise of Holy Spirit coming to them to replace himself. Now he was explaining to them that the grief that they would feel following his death would be replaced with everlasting joy, even after he leaves them.

With Jesus no longer physically present with the disciples, they are to have a new relationship with God. They now have direct access to their Heavenly Father and the guiding and powerful presence of Holy Spirit living in them.

We often end our prayers with a phrase such as, 'We ask all these things in Jesus' name.' In today's Bible verses, Jesus promises that whatever we ask our Heavenly Father for in his name, we will receive it. It almost sounds like a bit of magic. We just have to add this phrase to the end of our prayers, and God will give us what we ask for. So let us have a deeper look at what it means to ask or pray in Jesus' name. Firstly, we can only call God our Heavenly Father because of what Jesus did through his perfect life, sacrificial death and resurrection, which opened the way for us to be adopted into the Heavenly Family as God's children. When we pray in Jesus' name, we acknowledge that it is only through what Jesus has done for us that we can come to God.

We also pray, asking for those things that Jesus would ask his Father for. Sometimes, when we are overwhelmed by the importance of someone, we may ask an intermediary to take our requests to them. Of course, the intermediary would only take up our request if it aligned with their own ethos. This is similar to our prayers. We don't have to pray to Jesus to ask our Heavenly Father on our behalf, but can go directly to our Heavenly Father, asking for those things that Jesus would be happy to ask his Father for on our behalf.

And it is also an acknowledgement that we have surrendered our wills and our lives to the Heavenly Family so that God can achieve his will and purpose in us. We don't go to God with our Santa Claus list but seek his help and guidance in how he wants to use us to bring his gifts to the people he places in our path each day.

Of course, as a loving Father, God cares about all the things that affect our daily lives and wants us to talk to him about them. But he also wants us to hand them over to him to manage as we get on with doing the things he has planned for us.

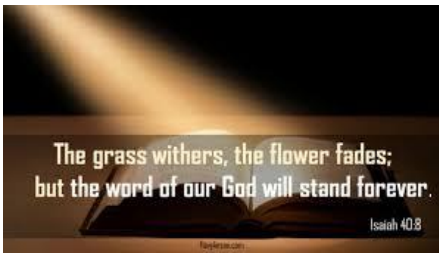
Notice how Jesus ended our verse for today: 'and your joy will be complete.' He promises us his joy as we let him guide us in living according to his will for us.

Heavenly Father, thank you for all that Jesus achieved for us to become your children and live as members of your family. I surrender my life into your hands for you to live your purpose in me. Amen.

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU

INNER PEACE

By Charles Bertelsmeier



I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Read [John 16:25–33](#)

Jesus promises his disciples peace while at the same time telling them that they will experience 'trouble' in this world. How do we resolve this dichotomy? We generally see trouble and peace as opposites; however, Jesus seems to be saying that we can experience his peace even amid troubling times.

One thing we need to become clear about is that being a child of a loving Heavenly Father does not protect us from facing troubling issues. We can still experience medical and health issues; we can be involved in accidents that cause injuries that take a long time to heal and possibly leave us with lingering limitations. We can face financial issues, lose our jobs or experience challenging workplace situations. We may be affected by droughts, bushfires, floods, earthquakes and landslides. We may fall foul of the law, even possibly when we believe we were not at fault. It may financially cost us or even lead to imprisonment. We may fall out with a friend, and our marriage may fail. All these things happen to people committing their lives to God's care. I know, because I have experienced many of them, some in a minor way and a few more intensely.

When we face these events in our lives, we can spend a lot of time trying to think up answers about how to deal with these 'challenges' to the peace in our lives. They can keep us awake at night and rob us of sleep. They can make us tense and hard to live with as we concentrate on solving our problems, leading to relationship issues. We can lose focus as we concentrate on finding solutions and fail to carry out our responsibilities to family, friends and employers, leading to further negative consequences. I have experienced all these too.

Jesus' answer is, 'But take heart! I have overcome the world.' To start with, God is in complete control of his universe, including all the minutiae of our lives. Then, Jesus has assured us that he will be with us always, to the end of time (Matthew 28:20). Whatever God allows to happen in our lives, he uses to grow us in maturity in our relationship with him. So, he promises to be right alongside us as he guides us in working out his solutions to our problems, and he does this through his Holy Spirit living in us. So instead of being busy trying to think up solutions, he wants us to stop, rest in his presence and talk to him about our problems, all the time listening to the guidance he wants to give us.

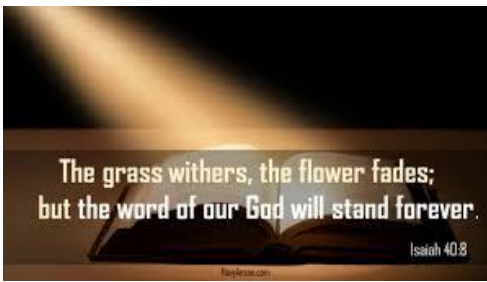
We also have his word to us in the Bible, so he invites us to spend time reading our Bibles during our rest. Sometimes, the guidance will be during our time of rest. At other times, the guidance will come as we get up and follow where he is leading. As we follow him, we will grow in trusting his commitment to us and in knowing his peace.

Heavenly Father, thank you for being in complete control of everything and for your commitment to growing me in my relationship with you. Thank you for the peace this brings me. Amen.

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU

JOURNEYING WITH JESUS

By Charles Bertelsmeier



While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Luke 24:51,52).

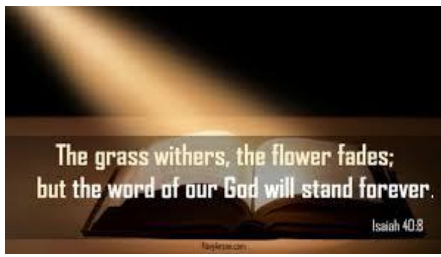
Read [Luke 24:44–53](#)

I find it interesting to contemplate the rollercoaster emotional ride the closest followers of Jesus had been experiencing. First, there was the excitement and adventure when they had first answered the call to follow Jesus. Then there were the challenges to their long-held beliefs about what the promised Messiah would be, and even questions about whether Jesus was actually the promised Messiah. Then, after being with him for those three years, Jesus started talking about his impending death/execution. There would have been much unsettling confusion. Would the three years following Jesus have been a waste of their time if they had to go back to their old jobs after he left/died? And their future and security came tumbling down when Jesus was arrested, condemned and crucified. They were afraid that they would be next, so they went into hiding from the authorities. But then there was the joy when Jesus came back from the dead and the 40 days with him as he clarified for the disciples what his ministry was all about. However, when he left them again at his return to heaven, I would have thought that his followers would again descend into a time of grieving at his departure. But no. They went to the temple each day full of joy and celebration. Remember that they had not yet received the empowering of Holy Spirit – this was still 10 days away at Pentecost. But they had been transformed. Their fear of the authorities was gone, and they had the confidence that God was in complete control and that he was implementing a plan. They would play a part in God's ongoing plan, even though they were unaware of many details. Any thoughts of returning to the lives they had before meeting Jesus were now completely expunged from their minds.

When a loved one who knows Jesus personally dies, we, of course, grieve their departure. But in a similar way to the followers of Jesus celebrating his return to heaven, we can celebrate that our loved one has also gone to join Jesus in heaven. And as his followers got on with their lives with the assurance that God had a plan and a future for them, so we too can, still in our grief, have confidence that our loving Heavenly Father will be with us through Holy Spirit in us. His presence helps us focus on God's ongoing plans for our lives after our loved one is taken from us.

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for your promise to be with us always, through all the experiences of life you take us through. Please take away our fear of the future, because we know it is all part of your loving plan for us. Amen

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL

By Charles Bertelsmeier

When they had crossed [the Jordan river], Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?' 'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied (2 Kings 2:9).

Read [2 Kings 2:1-12](#)

The account of the lives of Elijah and Elisha can be found in the Bible from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 9. Elijah and Elisha were both prophets of God, and the transition between them is recorded in 2 Kings 2. Soon after the exchange recorded in the Bible verse for today, Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

When Elisha asked for a 'double portion' of Elijah's spirit, it wasn't actually Elijah's spirit that he was asking for, but for Holy Spirit living in and working through Elijah. What Elisha was asking was that he would also be empowered by Holy Spirit living and working in him. As for the 'double portion', in Israeli society at the time, this was reserved for the eldest son in the father's inheritance. So, Elisha was really asking that he be recognised as Elijah's successor in carrying on his prophetic ministry.

Now, we need to remember that Elijah didn't select Elisha as his successor, nor did Elisha decide that he wanted to become a prophet. We read in 1 Kings 19:16 that God told Elijah to find and anoint Elisha as his successor. We read in the subsequent verses that after his call, Elisha killed the bullocks he used in his profession as a farmer and made a fire using the plough and other farming equipment to cook the meat and have a feast. He then turned his back on his old profession to learn how to be a prophet as Elijah's disciple.

Notice what happened here. God called Elisha into his service. Elisha let go of his past securities and committed his life to God's purpose. As a result, his focus changed so that his goals and visions aligned with God's goals and visions for him.

God's call to us has many similarities. God wants us to let go of the things we cling to for our security and instead learn to trust his love and commitment to us. This is a learning and growing process and takes time. Generally, God's goals and visions for us are to live as his children in the environments in which he has placed us: our families, our places of work and study, our church families and our communities. This means not looking at these as places that we use to better ourselves, but as places where we live out the other-centred love that God has first demonstrated to us in the way Jesus lived his life. And we achieve this, not by our own abilities, but by Holy Spirit living in us.

And as for our 'double portion' inheritance, that is ours, too. As Jesus' adopted brothers and sisters, we have inherited all that Jesus has – kept in trust for us.

Holy Spirit, thank you for coming to live in us and guiding us in how to live as Jesus' brothers and sisters. We ask that you help us to find our security in our Heavenly Father's love for us. Amen.

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



A LOVING, COMMITTED FATHER

By Charles Bertelsmeier

Father to the fatherless, defender of widows – this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy (Psalm 68:5,6a).

Read [Psalm 68:1–10,32–35](#)

I can say that the above verses align with my personal experience. I had a very loving father, and I was able to transfer the wonderful positives of my relationship with him to my Heavenly Father. I have experienced God's deliverance in threatening experiences and his liberation from severe negatives in my life.

But I know lots of people who have been failed or feel they've been failed by actual fathers and father figures, by absent fathers and fathers who died while they were young, and then seemingly by God also.

So how do we reconcile our experiences of people suffering severely and a loving God who says he loves and cares for everyone? Many people use this as an excuse for rejecting the Christian God (and any god, in fact).

From my reading of the Bible, and the stories of real people's lives, I am one hundred per cent convinced that our loving Heavenly Father is working in the lives of every single person in this world to draw them into a relationship with the Heavenly Family (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Remember that God's Son, Jesus, suffered the humiliating execution on a Roman cross for every single person who has ever lived, is alive now, and who will live in the future, to remove all barriers to them being welcomed into this heavenly family.

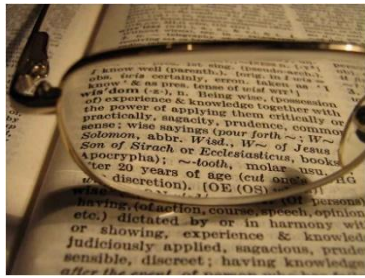
How God works in people's lives is very specific to each person. God knows each person intimately, and out of his love for them, works in the way he knows best to reach them with the offer of his healing and restoring love.

Beyond that, I am not going to sit in judgement of God as to how he could have done a better job with any specific person.

However, I repeatedly surrender all that I am and have to God so he can use me as part of the way he works in people's lives and change me so that I can be used by him more. I say 'repeatedly' because I also regularly take back control of my life, because I haven't yet learned to fully trust God with my life, and often think I can do a better job. Thank God for his gracious love and mercy.

Heavenly Father, you have declared your love and commitment to every single person in this world, and you are working in their lives to bring them into a relationship with you. I surrender all that I am and have to you to use me as your hands, feet and voice of love to those I interact with each day. Amen.

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



HELD

By Jane Mueller

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me ... (John 17:11b).

Read [John 17:1-11](#)

Jesus prays this when everything is about to unravel.

The teaching is finished. The meal is over. The room will soon be empty. Jesus knows what's coming. Arrest, betrayal, confusion and fear are just hours away. Everything that had begun to make sense is about to collapse.

And yet, he does not rush. He does not scramble. He does not strategise or issue final instructions.

He prays.

Jesus lifts his eyes and speaks to his Father. He doesn't cry out for escape; he calls for care. He doesn't plead that his followers be spared from what's coming; he pleads that they be protected through it – kept in the Father's name. He prays that they would be held.

The Christian life is about being held. The disciples are held before they understand. Held when their faithfulness falters. Held before they find their footing again.

Jesus does not pray that his followers will hold it all together. He prays that they will be held. Held when fear strips away certainty. Held when unity is strained. Held when security seems distant. Held when the next step feels unclear. Held when tomorrow feels unthinkable. Held when praise comes slowly, and trust has to be relearned.

This is the beginning: God holding us. It's not about our grip; it's about God's.

The Bible readings for the days ahead will speak of peace in noisy places, provision in dry ones, unity under pressure, confidence without control, faithfulness in the ordinary and praise that moves at an unhurried pace. Every one of these readings flows from this same starting point. We do not keep going by gripping harder; we keep going because God is already holding us.

We are held.

Heavenly Father, when I feel overwhelmed, unsure or afraid of what lies ahead, remind me that I do not have to hold everything together. Hold me when my inner world feels unsteady, when fear gets loud, and when trust has to be relearnt. Amen.

SERMON ASCENSION

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.

**A LETTER
FROM THE PASTOR
THAT THEY MAY BE ONE**

JOHN 17:20-23

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me.

I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are—I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me.

This prayer of Jesus, the High Priestly Prayer has been the subject of significant controversy. Part of it is what Jesus prays for. He prays for unity among his followers. Does that mean that we have work to do, to maintain unity? Or does that mean that we have nothing to worry about? Jesus has it under control. The sad thing is that throughout the history of Christianity we have been everything but unified.

Even our little group of Jesus' followers find it difficult to maintain a modicum of agreement and unity. The joke states that where there are four Rabbis there are eight opinions. I think we Lutherans believe that there is only one opinion that matters and its mine.

There are two thoughts from the prayer which really stimulate my interest. One is how Jesus speaks about unity. "You are in me and I am in you!" This is the way that Jesus speaks right throughout the Gospel of John. Elsewhere Jesus is even more direct with Thomas: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). I understand the significance of unity; however, I struggle to understand the preciseness of the language and the metaphysical image. This confusion becomes even more significant when Jesus goes on to describe the relationships that we share in exactly the same language.

So that they may be one, as we are—I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one.

The second thought that I often come back to is the insignificance of the group of disciples balanced against the 'glory' of the Father. Sometimes glory seems to mean the magnificent presence of God. Sometimes it seems to mean giving honour to God. What does 'glory' mean in this context? Jesus gave glory to the Father 'simply' by doing what the Father asked of him. Earlier in John's Gospel, when Jesus asks the Father to give him glory, he was referring to his death on the cross. Here the will of the Father is fulfilled, and God's purposes for humanity are reaching their peak. (The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus are almost an after-thought, the icing on top of the cake.)

But in this prayer Jesus also talks about returning to the glory he shared with the Father, before coming to earth. Here glory almost certainly means the magnificent presence of God. However, when Jesus is talking about you and I seeing God's glory, it may well be happening within the gathering and the living of the small community of disciples. We live and experience the glory of God. Maybe we are part of that glory.

Your shepherd-servant and brother in Christ.

Pastor Geoff