

### Pastor Roy's sermon from May 6, 2018 (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter)

Prayer is a gift of God which brings us hope and peace. Sometimes we think of prayer as a responsibility rather than an opportunity. We think of it as an obligation rather than an invitation to freedom.

When we pray we are bringing ourselves to God. We step apart from the fray, the distractions, the endless details of our lives and strategies of our lives, and our desire to manage it all--including God. We pause long enough to hear the voice of God calling us to stillness, to mercy, to joy. John in chapter 17 remembers Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane. He prays, "You Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us. . .so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them, and you in me, so that they may be completely one. . .so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Jesus is inviting us to prayer. It's not about getting God to do what we think God needs to do, or even what we think God wants us to ask for, prayer is about laying down our strong habits and opinions long enough to receive the love of God.

Prayer is not an easy process. Waiting, listening, being mindful of God's presence. . . no, this does not come easily for us.

Our instincts are about survival and taming the chaos around us and within us regardless of the cost to the people around us and our own souls.

And here comes Jesus talking about unity, love, joy, peace.

Prayer is hard, because even in prayer we often try to make God into our own image. That is why in our confession, grateful adoration, and intercession, we must also spend time in silence so that God can transform us into God's image.

True prayer is about discerning the presence of God in all things. When we are praying, we are being remade in the image of God. That's how Jesus can talk about unity and love and mercy. It's not about getting it all right--it's not about success--it's about laying it all down and confessing that we are the creatures, we are God's children, we are the ones who follow, who obey, who rest in mercy.

The Source of all goodness and life and hope and peace offers us **rest** in prayer.

Prayer opens us to trust God beyond our fascination with words, and thoughts which keep us in control. We are never in control. We are floating down the river of God's welcoming peace and mercy. Prayer helps us to accept this as it is. In prayer we remember our baptism and are prepared to celebrate communion.

When we are baptized, we are baptized into the church as a child of God. We receive grace upon grace.

When we receive communion, we are acting out our union with God and one another. Jesus meets us here. We are not just remembering what happened 2000 years ago. We receive the body and blood of our Lord as a celebration that we are what we eat. We are the body of Christ. Translated, communion means union with. He meets us here at this table, an invitation to love and peace.

Everything we do begins and ends in prayer. We are welcomed by God and we welcome one another. Thanks be to God. Amen.