

## Easter VII      St. Luke's

Acts 16:16-34

Rev 22:12-14,16-17,20-21

Jn 17:20-26

### Reflection

*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.*

*Revelation 22:17*

*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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. John 17:20-21*

It sounds so simple: Everyone! Come, you're invited. Drink that water of life and slake your thirst for that which really matters. Jesus is first, last, and everything in between. Jesus even prays on behalf of everybody that we'll be one with God "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us." Then in Acts, jailers and prisoners end up with a mutually happy ending.

There should be room at the fountain and water enough for everyone, yes? This kind of unity and reconciliation should be possible in a world where Christians are known by their love and acts of charity, mercy, and solidarity. Why can't we all just get along, neighbour loving neighbour, enemies kissing, "clean" and "unclean" lines blurred in holy recognition of common humanity?

But Jesus never did promise us a rose garden, or an easy stroll in the park, or even absence of pain. Jesus promised love, accompaniment, and real life that matters: forever, not just for a season in this life. The work of unity and grace is tough, sometimes dirty, often heart-breaking, and rarely predictable. The constant is God's love in Jesus Christ poured out for us on the night he was handed over and always at his table of broken bits of bread and small sips of wine, in body and blood and water and recognition in one another of his real presence among us.

God -the words of Revelation proclaim - is the beginning and end, the Alpha and Omega. Not locked into timelessness, God bends toward the earth, embracing humanity in its pain and weakness. God offers living water to all. God's ever-flowing grace is available to all. We simply need to say "yes" to the grace that already sustains us, living by grace now, and not fear, despite the challenges of life. The waters of salvation are here, so come to the waters, regardless of your journey's meanderings. In John 17, Jesus is praying for *us*! Jesus is visualizing all who will come after his first followers and is praying that we be one with him, God, and one another. The love of God for Jesus is intended to shape *our* identities, preserving our unity and inspiring our own love for the world God has created.

We are stewards of this costly and tough work of God's people, stewards of the mystery of the divine mathematics of abundance and acceptance and hope. In a world that seeks to pit us against one another along any number of lies and lines—from right to left, rich to poor, privileged to disenfranchised, black or white, old or young—Jesus gives us a new story to live, to tell, and to share. Instead of seeing the "other" as different or less than or terrifying, Jesus prays that God's love and presence will be in us, and that this presence will help us to weave a common thread as beloved children of the Creator.

In the Addington parish, a new parishioner had the idea of creating an interwoven, multicoloured woollen cross hanging which all parishioners and any community folk who wished, could weave during Lent. Men and women of all ages – some of whom had never held or threaded a needle – all participated in the simple weaving and the result is quite spectacular, and symbolises are interconnectedness and unity in diversity.

*The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one...* [from John 17]

When the heart of God beats within us, our own hearts want to join with the hearts of others, that we may be one. We forget this to our spiritual peril when we fail to

empathize with people of another race, nationality or language, home town, sexual orientation or gender identity, income status, or religion. If we view news footage of refugees fleeing danger and we don't feel anything, we have silenced the heart of God that makes us one. If we hear the stories of people who are struggling from the actions of others and we don't sense a connection to their pain, then we have some reconnecting to do with God's heart.

How would we react today if we were in the shoes of Paul and Silas? After having been brutally beaten and falsely accused, their only wrongdoing in freeing the possessed slave girl and depriving her masters of using her for gain, the two men are thrown into jail and fastened in stocks. A violent earthquake sets them free, yet they do not run. In doing so the grateful jailer's heart is opened to the message of God, he and his entire household are baptized, and he offers hospitality by caring for the men's wounds and feeding them.

The question triggered by today's scriptures is whether we can put aside the animus and fear that both bind us and tear us apart. There is no better time than now to turn our hearts toward our home in God, to drink those living waters of life, and to live the gift of grace in the beloved community that is formed in many unlikely yet beautiful ways.

It is the heartbeat of God that makes *our* hearts beat together, that brings us into unity despite our differences, to care for both neighbour and stranger. As our hearts learn to beat in union, humanity grows closer to the solidarity and peace every heart desires.

Today's readings describe God's power and glory in terms of loving care. We can sing in desperate times and gain the courage to respond to crises because God is with us, our deepest reality, inspiring and sustaining us.

How this world needs us to live in God's mighty and freely given love.

Then, as John of Patmos saw in his vision, we too, can shout "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints.

Yes - ALL the saints. Alleluia! Amen.