

Title: Sanctified in Love

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, living life is hard and it can be made better through your loving-kindness; be with us, love us, and sanctify us to reflect your love to all those around us, we pray through the source of love Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The story of a Yale student making a police report about a black student sleeping in a dorm common area is in the news of late. The white student determined that the black student did not belong there, prompting the call to the police. After some investigation, the police verified the black student's identification and that she was a resident of the dorm. The white student was admonished by the police and she was reported to the Dean of Students. I also fear that life at Yale is now so bad for her, she cannot return there.

The story of black realtors meeting at a Starbuck's prompting a manager's call to police resulted in a store-wide anti-racism training event. A white woman called Oakland police because a black family was thought to be using the wrong charcoal for their barbeque on Lake Merritt. A black family leaving an Airbnb rental had a police visit after a neighbor determined they were not friendly and called police. The caller was white.

One of the questions being asked is, is this a current trend or has it been happening for a long time and we only are more aware of it due to social media and video smart phones. I have not heard a definitive answer to that question.

One response I did hear was not directly about this issue, but it still applies. It is: before calling the police on a black person or persons would you also make that same call on a soccer mom? () It's okay to be afraid, but is the fear justified?

This comes back to Jesus' commandment to his disciples and us from last week's gospel reading: love one another as I have loved you. In a time of terrorism where if we see something, we are to say something, seeing someone different from us doing ordinary things is not a cause to say

something to the police. The police have a lot more important things to do. It is a disservice to the one or ones being reported and on the police.

We could use some prayer. We can pray to God. We can pray for one another. Even Jesus can pray for us. In fact, Jesus did just that.

In part B of Jesus' high priestly prayer, Jesus is commissioning the disciples for ministry after Jesus is gone and giving a farewell address. Jesus is addressing God in the presence of the disciples.

In ancient times, knowing someone's name gave power to the one knowing the name. The story of Rumpelstiltskin comes to mind. That may also be why God never allowed God's name to be said. In the Ten Commandments, it was to prevent someone swearing to the truth of something in God's name and only to be found out later that it wasn't true. Then God's name would be tarnished. Just in case there is a mistake, it is better to not use God's name.

Later Jewish tradition extended that to say that God's name can never be said in any circumstance. Whenever God's name appears in scripture, the reader would substitute God's name by usually saying *Adonai*, which is translated in English as Lord. Somewhat surprisingly, that tradition carried over into the English translation of the Bible commissioned by King James I. Jewish tradition was written into a Christian tradition.

Jesus, once again, breaks a Law of Moses. Jesus makes God's name known to the disciples. This is a subtle transfer of a little bit of God's power to the disciples. They know God's name. Of course, if they read the Hebrew scriptures, it would be there for all to see. But the disciples have more than just a name to be read. They know God, because Jesus made God known to them through God's name and God gave them to Jesus.

Knowing God, they know that everything Jesus has was given to Jesus by God. Knowing God, they know that Jesus' words are from God. Of course, the disciples believed that God sent Jesus. Otherwise, they would not have stayed until the end.

There are times in the gospels, especially the synoptics, when the disciples are seen in a bad light, particularly Peter. Peter has a knack for not getting it and not keeping his ignorance to himself. There is an impression that they

got it after the resurrection. Still, Christianity, as religion, owes its existence to those disciples. They had to be exceptional people. Jesus even says that he was glorified by them. Jesus believes that his ministry was made possible by having these people around him.

Jesus is no longer in the world. The disciples continue to be in the world. Jesus is concerned about them when they are on their own. The world killed Jesus. The world will not be kind to the disciples. Jesus asks that they be protected.

I think most of us have seen video of rocket launches where the natural human instinct is to look up as the rocket climbs in the atmosphere. People will gawk even after they can no longer see the rocket, when all but just the vapor trail is left behind.

In our church year, the Ascension was last Thursday. So, Jesus is gone. This is an in-between time – a time after Jesus leaves and before the Holy Spirit arrives. God is sort of absent. The disciples see Jesus floating up in the sky and disappear from sight. They continue to gawk up into the heavens. Two men in white robes, presumably angels, ask them what they are gawking at. They remind them that Jesus is gone, but he will come back. So, they head back to Jerusalem. They wait. They act only after they receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is no longer in the world, but they and we are in the world. Even in the in-between time, God is there even though it may not be felt. Though details diverged at times, they spoke as one in sharing the Jesus story. They were one just as Jesus and God are one. The oneness of God in divine and human form was the model for them to be one as they dispersed into the known world.

The success of the Jesus movement depends on some protection for the disciples. Granted, as far as we know, all but two of the apostles were martyred. They would not be martyred if they were unsuccessful or incompetent in spreading Jesus' words. To preach and teach Jesus' words provoke change. There are some people who would rather silence an opponent than evaluate the veracity of their own beliefs. Jesus' apostles and disciples threatened the prevailing worldview.

Jesus was able to protect the disciples while he was with them. Judas was the exception, but that was Judas' choice. Jesus, the leader, took the heat from the authorities. They ran when Jesus was arrested, but there doesn't seem to have been an attempt to arrest any of them.

Jesus says that the disciples will have joy when he is gone. Well, there probably wasn't much joy at the time of the crucifixion. After the resurrection, there was a mixed bag of feelings. There was joy, bewilderment, apprehension, fear, disillusionment, anger, and awe. With the Ascension, there was a lack of direction. But after Pentecost, hope and joy sent them into throughout the empire and beyond.

Yet even with this joy and hope, the world will hate the disciples as they hated Jesus. The reason is because they are no longer part of the world. The world represents violence, hatred, and fear. The disciples represent peace, love, and joy.

The disciples are to be sanctified in truth. God's Word is truth. Some in the world will hear and believe in the truth. Many will reject the truth and they will do violence to the disciples out of fear and hatred. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they will represent Jesus to the world.

How we view people different than us will express, or not, how we represent Jesus to the world. There may be differences in skin color. There may be differences in culture. Yet we are all human beings and as human beings we are all beloved by God.

Old Testament priests were sanctified by observing the law of Moses. Jesus is sanctified by being God and teaching God's commandments. Now the disciples are sanctified because they know God's commandments given by Jesus. We are Jesus' disciples. We are sanctified by observing Jesus' commandment of love. Let us be sanctified. Let us live in love.

Text: **John 17:6–19** (NRSV)

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. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 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. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on

behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that^b you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost,^c so that the scripture might be fulfilled.¹³ But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.^d¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.^e¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.¹

^b Other ancient authorities read *protected in your name those whom*

^c Gk *except the son of destruction*

^d Or *among themselves*

^e Or *from evil*

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Jn 17:6–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.