

In our gospel reading for today we have an excerpt from what is often called Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer." He makes this prayer on behalf of his disciples during the Last Supper. It is poetic. It uses rich language and lots of images. It is also theologically deep, perhaps too deep; for we could spend our whole time unfolding the details of Jesus' words and what they mean. At the end we'd might have a deeper intellectual understanding of things, but not come away any stronger in faith. Of what good are such facts when we go to work tomorrow morning? Of what good is knowing the theological intricacies of the High Priestly Prayer in algebra class tomorrow?

For the sake of our worship I want to focus on just two words in the entire thing, and hopefully those two words will give us something from Sunday to take into Monday.

The first of these words is "world." We easily forget that the word "world" in John's gospel, also in Paul's writings, and many places in the Bible, does not refer to the earth or the cosmos. World refers to that which is opposed to God. Theologians will often say, "the sphere at enmity with God." Always remember that, especially when thinking of John 3:16.

For God so loved the world, that is -God so loved that which hates him, rejects him, despises him, wants to hurt him- that God sent the only Son so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

You'll often hear phrases like, "Be in the world but not of the world." Here again, the world is that which is opposed to God. Jesus' prayer for the disciples assumes they will be living in contexts that will oppose them. They are to be in those contexts but not become part of them.

We may not live in a time and place where Christian faith will cause us to be thrown into jail, but despite the centuries difference between Jesus' day and today, the world hasn't changed much... not really.

The way of the world is to be strong, capable, independent. You are to be able to determine your own destiny and work to make it happen. Put down your weaknesses, overcome them. Be successful. This is what we train our children to do every day of their lives. It is what many people live in their work lives. It is the retirement dream of millions of people.

The Christian says something different. The Christian says, "I need Jesus." The Christian knows that he or she is not independent and all-capable.

When I say that Christians say, "I need Jesus," that does not mean that that we are weak, helpless, needy and pathetic creatures. It is actually a recognition of reality. Perhaps here's an example that recognizes that reality.

We've all been inside a Wegmans store. Maybe you shop there a lot or maybe only occasionally. With all due respect to places like Wades, Aldi and others, Wegmans is just in a higher league! Wegmans works hard to give us a good, solid, and varied food supply. They try to bring us sustainable food and food that is grown locally. This fall Wegmans will provide us with a variety of New York apples. But, if some weather disaster: hail, frost, wind or the like were to destroy the New York apple crop does that mean that Wegmans wouldn't have apples for us? No, not at all. Wegmans buyers would bring in apples from Pennsylvania, Washington, or some far off place. We would still have apples, all the apples we could want.

This is a good thing - a dependable supply of good food available to us. But there is also a problem. Subconsciously

we start to think that apples come from Wegmans. But apples don't come from Wegmans. Apples come from trees!

I love our church's garden project. I love farming and gardening and there's a spiritual dimension to it. The potatoes will soon be planted. While humans do the work of tilling the soil and planting the potatoes and pulling weeds and ultimately plowing them out, we don't really make them grow. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians - people plant, people water, but God provides the growth. As humans we have learned to shape the forces of life, but they are not ours to control. Our garden project reminds me of that in a very tangible way every summer.

Ultimately then the neediness we experience as Christians is this sort of neediness. It is this recognition that God is the author and sustainer of all life; all the time. We need God. We need Jesus. The "world," as the Bible puts it, doesn't want to recognize that. The world wants to think that power is its own.

You are in the world, but not of the world. If you go into tomorrow with the recognition of how God's creative and sustaining hand is at work all around you, you will be different from most other people around you. You'll see life and all of

creation as a cooperative stewardship between God, yourself and others. That greatly impacts your thoughts and your decisions.

That takes us to the second word I said I wanted to focus on and where we'll conclude. That word is "sanctification."

How many times in a week do you find yourself using sanctification in a sentence? How many times in a year - or even your whole life have you ever used that word? Jesus prayed, "...for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth."

What does sanctify mean? It is based on the Latin word "sanctus" which means holy. And don't forget what holy means.

If you're like me, when you hear words like holy or sanctified you think of something pure, sin-free, and spiritually superior to other things. But holy really just means "set apart from ordinary use." You may have heard me say before that if a man has a beer glass and he only uses that beer glass to drink beer while watching Monday night football, and he never uses that glass at any other time or to drink anything other than beer, then that is a holy beer glass. It is not a common glass used for water or soda or milk or whatever. It is

set apart for a specific purpose. For that man it is not ordinary. It is holy.

When Jesus says that you are sanctified he wasn't mainly talking about making you sin-free. He was talking about setting you apart. Simply being in the world but not of the world sets you apart. It makes you holy. It sanctifies you.

So, if you find yourself in algebra class tomorrow, what does the High Priestly Prayer mean to you? It does not mean that when the teacher says, "Find the value of  $y$ ," you can answer, "I'm saved by grace through faith, not works of algebra. The value of  $y$  is therefore irrelevant to me." You may feel like the value of  $y$  is irrelevant to you but that's not what I mean. Living The High Priestly Prayer in algebra class means that while your conscious mind may feel like it is being stretched to the limits, somewhere in your subconscious resides a realization something like, "I am a child of God. Life is a gift and my every breath is life sustained by God." You need not be sin-free or super saintly to be sanctified or made holy. You need only recognize the truth of your need for God. That alone sets you apart from the world, and the rest will flow from there. Amen