

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Gospel, Year C

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN

John 17:20-26

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

20 "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Author's Note: After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet, after Judas had left the table to betray him, after Jesus had given the remaining disciples his new commandment to love one another with the love he had given them, Jesus prayed. Part of that prayer, originally spoken by Jesus as he was about to face a cross, is now used as a prayer before Jesus leaves in his

ascension. The ascension is understood in John's Gospel as part of his being lift up—lifted up on a cross, lifted up from death, and now lifted up to be with God the Father.



DIAGNOSIS: The Law Excludes

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): We Include Those Who Are Like Us

The world does not yet believe that the Father sent Jesus, and so the world, Jesus, and the Father are not yet one. The world believes in other ways to be “one” (united), and in other ways to make life worth calling good. The world believes that people have to agree with each other to be one, or that people have to have the same skin color and the same language and the same ethnicity in order to be one. Many find oneness with others by cheering for the same sports team. By being fans of the same team, people believe they are affirming each other's worth. Without saying it, they tell each other, “You are good because

we care for the same sports team. You are worth something because of our team.” That also can happen with other groups united in a cause or a hobby. Those who protest for or against a government action feel that because they stand for a righteous cause, they are doing something righteous, and with those with them, they are all righteous. That is their glory.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): We Trust Qualifiers for How to Be Included

When we make our preferences clear, those preferences become the standard by which we judge each other. But we want to avoid such judgment. We fear not belonging or being alone. We want to be included, because being excluded means we have failed to demonstrate our worth. Being excluded can threaten a person with existential death.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Death Includes All

When we experience exclusion, whether we know it or not, we experience God—even if what we experience is God’s absence. God excludes those who trust other things to be their god; God excludes those who trust in the things of creation instead of trusting the Creator (cf. Romans 1). Death is God’s ultimate exclusion.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus’ Promises Include All

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus Offers Inclusion to All



On the cross, Jesus was excluded from life. He was not one with God his Father. But Jesus rose from death so that all can be included in his new life. Nothing can separate people from the love of God when they are in Jesus, for Jesus has overcome death. To be included with Jesus is to be included with God, with life, with forgiveness, with mercy, and with grace.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Those Who Trust Jesus Are Included

Jesus prays that the glory of his cross will be the glory of all people. Not that people are attracted to someone who has died on a cross. It's shameful. It's uncomfortable. It's painful. But Jesus wants his cross to be given to all people—the cross that contains his promise to include all people in his resurrection. As Jesus and the Father are one, never judging the other, never excluding the other, but working together to bring life to the

world, so Jesus prays that all people be given his life, eternal life, a life of mercy and forgiveness. Trusting in Jesus is to be one with him and with the Father. To trust Jesus is to say that we trust being included with him is the most important thing in our life.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Our Words of Mercy Include All

Our trust in Jesus and being included with him, changes how we include others. We do not depend (trust) on the things of creation—sameness of race, skin color, language, ethnicity, enthusiasm for a sports team, or anything else—to be the criteria (judgment) for how we include others with us or they include us with them. Jesus is the new measure for including others. We include others for Jesus' sake. We include others by acts of mercy for Jesus' sake. We include others in experiencing grace for Jesus' sake. We make them one with us, one with Jesus, and one with his Father by grace, by mercy, by forgiveness, by hope. Nothing can exclude anyone from being included with Jesus. So we include all people in the love Jesus gives to us so we can give his love to all others, to make them one with Jesus and the Father. It is our inclusion—words and actions of mercy and forgiveness and welcome for all—that gets others to believe in Jesus.