

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 you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, 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. 14 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. 16 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.

I wonder if a squirrel believes in God. A chipmunk, a woodchuck, a cow. Does my cat have a sense of a being that has given life to all or am I the greatest power my cat knows? Does the robin feed her young because of knowledge that life is not pointless but held together by a loving Father in heaven?

"It really does not matter," you say, "whether the robin believes in God or not." God watches over even sparrows, Jesus taught. Even if the sparrow has no idea that God is watching, I would add.

Could the same be true of you? Jesus taught that the Father in heaven makes the sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. What God does is not controlled by what we do or believe or pray, what kind of a person you are or I am. It is God who has created humans, not humans who have fashioned God as some idol might be fashioned. It is God who rules over humans, not we who rule over God through our praying and our speaking.

Our gospel begins with this portion of Jesus' prayer to his Father: "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours and you gave them to me...." Jesus is praying about the

disciples. Now they may have thought that they had chosen to follow Jesus but Jesus says that they were given to him by the Father.

In the catechism Martin Luther teaches us to confess, “I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and sanctified and kept me in the one true faith.” Today in America where we think that we should choose what we want – even when it comes to churches – this idea that God is in charge of the choosing and not we seems false. For we would like to believe that we are lord even over God. But God is the one who chooses and sends sunshine and rain and not because of rain dances nor thousands of prayers. God is God.

Jesus prayed, “I have made your name known to those you gave me from the world.” What does it mean to make a name known?

At the burning bush a god unknown to Moses made God’s name known: “I am what I am.” In Hebrew the name is Yahweh.

Jesus did not give some new name for God - some secret name - some name never used before. Father is how Jesus addresses God though God was seldom spoken of as Father among the people of Israel before Jesus.

But near the beginning of this gospel John wrote: “No one has ever seen God, the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.”

When Jesus says he has made God’s name known he is saying that he has made God known - the very heart of God shown in this world in Jesus, in his words and in his deed. In this prayer Jesus prayed of his disciples, “Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 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.”

What they received from Jesus they received from God - every word and every deed from God. Indeed at the beginning of this Gospel Jesus himself is spoken of as the word made flesh. Jesus himself is God's word in flesh and blood.

In Jesus prayer we are witnessing not simply the request of one person to God but the prayer of God to God – this prayer is our glimpse into the very heart of God. What does Jesus pray for for those he loves?

“Protect them in your name that you have given me, so they may be one as we are one.” Jesus prays for unity in understanding God, unity for the disciples.

Throughout Jesus time with them the disciples were not always one. The gospels tell of rivalries.

Within the church we are not always one.

“Protect them in your name,” Jesus prayed. We will not find our unity in being alike, voting alike, looking alike. Unity comes from receiving the word Jesus speaks and Jesus is and being shaped by that word.

“Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth,” Jesus prayed. Again Jesus is praying that his disciples will be kept in him. For Jesus is the truth, Jesus is the word.

All of this comes together in our second lesson. There we read: “God gave us eternal life and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God is everything for us. He is God for us. He is life for us, he is the word of God for us, he is truth for us. Believe in him, trust in him, cling to him and trust that he will never let you go.