

June 23, 2019
Second Sunday after Pentecost

First Presbyterian Church
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VALEDICTION

Acts 20:17-24
John 17:20-23; 26

The chapters of John's gospel from 14-17 are commonly called the 'farewell discourses'. What we are about to hear, wraps them up. Jesus turns from offering information and begins to offer intercession for his disciples. He offers a prayer for the disciples. It has often been called his "High-Priestly Prayer. It is a prayer that looks to the future. And it is a prayer that focuses on unity -- on all being one. Jesus' prayer hangs suspended in that thin space between earth and heaven, between time past and time present and time yet to come. It is a prayer for continuance, continuity, one-ness. In ordination to word and sacrament – we are on that continuum in baptism, the sacrament of communion, and proclamation of the word. Be attentive to this Gospel witness.

20 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that 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. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I 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. ²⁴Father, 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. ²⁶I 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.'

Prayer for Illumination

In this season of extended daylight, splendid breezes, and fields of plenty, teach us in this growing season, about planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born—

Valediction

Goodbye, drive safe, call us when you get there girls!" we will say to our daughters when they head out. "Goodbye, Sutherland or Mendon High School said the graduates we recognized last week. We all say, "Goodbye, house;" "Goodbye, job;" "Goodbye, friends and relatives;" "Goodbye, known," as we venture out into the unknown; Goodbyes are ubiquitous aspects of our existence.

A psychologist once summarized for me two decades of counseling experience by saying that there are really two basic skills that humans need to learn: how to say hello and how to say goodbye.

The term Valediction is not a whimsical, made-up word from the lexicon of 'Jeffrey speak.' Is a derivation of the Latin *vale dicere*, "to say farewell"), or literally in English, 'complimentary close'. *Valediction* is "the act of saying goodbye, especially formally, or a formal speech in which someone says goodbye". Which is why we have Valedictorians at commencements. Consider this a commencement address of sorts about continuity, a continuum, a one-ness.

The wisdom of the Old Testament's Ecclesiastes tells us: "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven." There is a time and a season for good-bye's and hello's; a time to mourn our good-bye's and to celebrate our hello's; a time to let go of the known and to embrace the unknown especially as we say goodbye to Carrie.

Religious author, Joyce Rupp, (*Praying Our Goodbyes*) says a goodbye "is an empty place in us. It is any situation in which there is some kind of loss, some incompleteness, when a space is created in us that cries out to be filled. Good-byes are any of those times when we find ourselves without a someone or a something that has given our life meaning and value....¹

Personally, I don't much like Goodbyes, but I'm big on making sure our goodbyes are healthy, wholesome and give way to the green shoots of growth.

Edward White points out in the book *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors*:

"Often it is the transitions of life that are the greatest occasions for growth. In addition to appreciating what we are leaving and what we are moving to, we can learn many secrets of the Spirit by monitoring the experience of the transition itself. We can discover new things about ourselves and about the God who is with us in the transitions."

Relationships are not severed, they are transformed. They are re-cast apart from ecclesiastical roles. The more intentionally and clearly those role shifts are made, the sooner the pastor and members alike can establish healthy new ways of being one.

Jesus gives us some clues and cues, as he knew what it was like to say goodbye. At birth he and his parents had to flee from Israel. They said goodbye to familiar surroundings and went down to Egypt to seek safety from Herod. He had to say goodbye to Egypt when they went back to Nazareth. He had to say goodbye to the products that came out of the carpentry shop from which he got slivers, and into which he poured sweat. As he grew up, like us, he had to say goodbye to his childhood and adolescence. He had to say farewell to relatives

and friends who moved away or died. When he began his ministry, he said goodbye to the familiar. As an itinerate preacher, he said his fair share of farewells.

Out of the darkness of His final goodbye on the cross Jesus burst forth the brilliant light of "HELLO" from an empty tomb. Christ's resurrection is the ultimate "Hello."

Literary great T.S. Eliot writes:

"What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

Goodbyes are not forever,
They are not the end;
it simply means I'll miss you
until we meet again.

Which is why Charles Dickens wrote: "The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again."²

Says Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

Goodbye, farewell, Auf Wedersein, Tuss, Bid u adieu, bonswa, adios, vaya con dios, chio, see ya, peace out (girl scout), TTFN – (ta ta 4 now). 'Goodbye', is an adaptation of the phrase 'God be by you.' It is the contraction for *God be with you*; and that is exactly what we wish for you. It was a long while ago that the words 'God be with you' disappeared into the word 'goodbye,' but every now and again some trace of them still glimmers through – like today.

There is One baptism, one loaf, one call, -- One continuum of call – in the ministry of word and sacrament that we share. As we send you forth, our sadness is tempered by gladness.

May you have wisdom in heart and mind;
success in every challenge you find;
courage to seek life's purpose for you;
belief in yourself to make it come true;
strength to do your best and endure;
and the guiding light of faith to ensure
that wherever you go, whatever you do,
God's love will always see you through³.

I'm going to paraphrase, (and maybe take a few liberties with) a traditional Celtic blessing:

We wish you not a path devoid of clouds,
nor a life on a bed of roses,
not that you might never need regret,
nor that you shall never feel pain.
No, that is not our wish for you.

Our wish for you is that you might be brave in times of trial when others lay crosses upon your shoulders.
When mountains must be climbed and chasms are to be crossed;
when hope scarce can shine through.

That every gift God gave you might grow along with you.
And let you give the gift of joy to all who care for you.
That you may always have a friend who is worthy that name.
Who you can trust, and who helps you in times of sadness.
Who will defy the storms of daily life at your side.
One more wish we have for you:
That in every hour of joy and pain you may feel God close to you. This is our wish for
you and for all who care for you. This is our hope for you, now and forever.

¹ Joyce Rupp, *Praying Our Goodbyes*, p.26.

² Charles Dickens (Nicholas Nickleby)

³ ~ written by Lisa O. Englehardt.