**Sunday 16th May 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church**

*Today’s worship for the Seventh Sunday of Easter is focussed on Jesus’ prayer in John 17. A short service for personal communion is included as we remember Jesus praying for himself and his disciples that they may be one as he is one with the Father. He asks that they may be protected from the evil one and sanctified in the truth. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

**Call to worship**

You who are passing through hard times: come!
You who need strength to support those who are suffering: come!
You who are full of happiness: come!
You who are burdened and busy: come!
Come; let us unite in worship
of the one who offers us protection, comfort and joy.

### **A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness**

Forgive us, gracious God,
when we have turned away from your word
and immersed ourselves in the distractions of the world.
Forgive us, when we have sought to belong to the world
and compromised your truth to fit in.
Forgive us, when we have bickered among ourselves
and not shown the world that we are one.
Forgive us, when we have distanced ourselves
from those you have called us to serve.
Forgive us, O God; protect us and unite us.
In Jesus’ name.
**Amen.**

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

Gracious God,
we thank you for the enduring prayer of Jesus for his disciples
which reaches and reassures us today as we walk in their footsteps,
reminding us that we are not alone
but protected, empowered, forgiven,
and surrounded by your grace every step of the way.
**Amen.**

***Our Father ………***



**Song King of Kings Majesty**

[(512) King of Kings, Majesty - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5VutCGsVXE)

**John 17: 6-19** - **Jesus prays for his disciples**

**6**‘I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. **7**Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. **8**For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. **9**I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. **10**All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. **11**I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. **12**While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

**13**‘I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. **14**I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15**My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16**They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17**Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18**As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19**For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. *(NIVUK)*

**John 17: 6-19 - ‘Into all the world.’**

This reading from John’s gospel contains part of the prayer which Jesus prayed at the last supper, the night before he was executed. It is a prayer that is often described as Jesus’s high priestly prayer. Jesus is fulfilling a central function of a priest, praying for the people. In this case, he is particularly praying for those people who have chosen to follow him: **that would be us**. And one of the things we hear Jesus praying for in this prayer, is that we will inherit his name, that we will continue to be identified by others as being associated with him.

One of the functions of a priest is to be a reconciler. We can hear that in this prayer because Jesus is clearly trying to bring God and the believers closer together and to bring the people closer to one another. “Protect them in this name you have given me, so that they might be one, just as you and I are one.” Jesus is endeavouring to reconcile us to one another, to ensure peace among people. Indeed one of his other names that we could reflect on is the Prince of Peace.

A second aspect of the priestly identity of Jesus that we inherit is the one we see in action most clearly in this reading – the pray-er, the interceder. One of the main images in the New Testament of what Jesus is doing now is continuing to pray for us. Just as he was doing in the prayer in John 17, Jesus continues to represent us to God, praying for our well-being, our protection, our strengthening and equipping for the tasks to which he has called us.  So if we inherit that identity, we too will be people who spend time pleading with God for the peace and well-being of the world and its peoples.

We express this in our worship each week, as we offer prayers for the care of the earth, for people in conflict, for those in fear or in suffering, and for God’s people in all the earth. In those prayers, both on Sundays and in our daily prayer, we begin to live up to the identity we have inherited from our great high priest, and as our prayers begin to grow into that identity, so to our actions begin to grow into our prayers. As the theologian Athol Gill used to say, there’s no use praying for something if you wouldn’t be willing to let God use you to bring about the answer.

The final aspect of the priestly identity of Jesus that I want to mention today is very much bound up with the previous two. It is perhaps best expressed in the name used of Jesus in the stories of his birth, Emmanuel – God with us. If we are to grow into our inherited identity as priests, we represent God to other people. In our lives and in our prayers we seek to bring God closer to all those who need to discover the love and mercy and fullness of life that God desires for them.  This is most clearly expressed in our shared life, because it is as we gather to be the church, to hear the word and to share around this table, that we become the body of Christ in the world – the most tangible sign of Jesus’s resurrection presence reaching out in love to a world in need. We express this every week in the closing part of our worship when we commit ourselves to being what we are sent out to be, a community of grace sharing our life with and for the world.

### **Prayers of intercession**

To our sacred world of worship, we bring our secular selves, with all the burdens of the people we know and love; all the burdens of the people we hear of and see; all the burdens of the people we laugh with and cry with.

All-powerful God, who understands our needs before we think and speak, we unload our pains and joys, our sorrows and our celebrations, and bring our prayers before you:
for the hurting and the hurt;
for the loved and the loveless;
for the young and old;
for believers and non-believers;
for those certain of their faith and those who waver;
for those of different faiths and identities from us;
for the ill and those in pain and distress;
for the dying and those whose bodies are etched
with the marks of death and dying;
for the grieving whose minds are bewildered and burdened by grief.

All-powerful God, surround each and every one
with the circle of your protection.
**Amen.**

### *Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .*

**Song How deep the Father’s love**

[(512) How Deep the Father's Love For Us - Austin Stone Worship (Lyric Video) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZSirSqpM54)

**Holy Communion - Prayer of Thanksgiving – John 17: 6-19**

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for you have put your testimony in our hearts
so that we might know that our life is in you.

You created the earth and the heavens
and marked out the way of the upright.
Through the prophets you called us to accept life,
and none are lost to your love and protection
except those who turn to their own ways and reject life.

You sent your Son into the world
and entrusted to him those who accepted your Word.
He made you known to us
and prayed that we might share the identity you gave him
and so be one with each other in your love.
Though he was killed by this hell-bent world,
you raised him from the dead
and through your sanctifying Word of truth
you call us to share eternal life in him.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,
we offer you thanks and praise at all times
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.***

**The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast. I Corinthians 5:7

**The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

*The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:*16

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

### **A sending out prayer**

Jesus sends you into the world to be compassionate.
Jesus calls you to serve the world in humility.
Jesus protects you from the compromises of the world with his power and his truth.
Go and be his hands and feet and voice, today and always.
**Amen.**