

May 8, 2016 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter and Mother's Day

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Acts 16: 16-34

Responsive Reading: Psalm 97

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Revelations 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21

Gospel Reading: John 17: 20-26

Sermon Title: THIS IS PERSONAL

By Rev. James A. Gardner

In the movie Lethal Weapon 2 Mel Gibson has just found out the accident that took his wife's life about 10 years before was not an accident but an attempt to murder him and now the same people had murdered his girlfriend. He calls his police partner and says, "I'm not a cop any more, this is personal!"

Revenge is personal, not usually good, but always personal. Revenge is personal and so is protecting family.

When I was about 5 or 6 and my sister was 11 or 12 we were on a hay wagon. Now my sister had hay fever but on a family farm, if it was not a matter of life and death, you worked through discomfort.

The bails were stacked high and I was sitting on the wagon floor. As long as Sandy could keep the bails at an arm's length

they did not bother her too much. Then we hit a wood chuck hole and the stack of bails started falling toward me. Sandy stepped over me and started to push the bails away from me, getting hay chaff in her face and eyes and down her shirt. She could have just stepped aside and saved herself a lot of misery but she had to protect her little brother. It was personal.

In our first reading today from Acts, Paul orders a spirit out of a slave girl that was bringing her owners large profits with fortune telling. To them this was not a miracle or funny this was costing them money. This was personal, so they took Paul and Silas to the authorities and had them whipped and beaten and thrown into jail.

In Revelation Jesus says that he is coming back and it is going to be personal. He is going to personally reward those who have been faithful to him. It will be personal.

Then comes the Gospel, and things really get personal.

When most people think of the Lord's Prayer, they think of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples and the one we pray in every church service and also when we feel the need to talk to God in those words that he gave us.

For those of us who study Jesus and the Bible the Lord's Prayer is John 17. This is where Jesus prays his guts out for his disciples and for all the disciples that will ever believe in him.

John does not even mention Jesus asking that this cup could be taken from his hand. John treats that as the elephant on the couch. *Ok I have to ask but I know the answer so on to more important things.*

Did you catch that? Jesus is about to die the most terrible death known to mankind and it is more important to pray for his friends and his friends yet to come, than for his own life.

Now we get to the crux of the message.

THIS IS PERSONAL

This is personal to Jesus and this is personal to you. I do not mean you in the plural sense of the word. I mean you, to you the individual.

If you can wrap your head around this concept it will nearly paralyze you with awe. The idea that God and Jesus want a personal relationship with you that is so personal that you are more important to God than God is to himself.

God is God. That is a given and nothing is going to change it, but what is God to you and what are you to God?

Let's look back at the first part of John 17.

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,

2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

3 And this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.

5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

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.

Up till this point Jesus is talking about the 12 including Judas the only one he could not save so that the scriptures might be fulfilled.

Now comes verse 20. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word."

From here on Jesus is talking about you and me.

Because Jesus is God and was, and is, and always will be the terminology gets a little confusing.

Now when Jesus talks about "those you have given me", he is talking of people that will not be born for thousands of years.

When he talks of, "The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that we may be one, as we are one." Now he is talking about what his life and his being the word has already started. All that will happen in Christianity has already been ordained and is as unstoppable as water in the mountains going to get to the sea.

Because Jesus lived and because Jesus started the disciple thing we will all hear the word and have the opportunity to be one with Jesus and with God.

If right now the world population was one, and you were that one, then Jesus would have died for you alone and would have begged his father in Heaven to care for you and protect you forever.

**THIS IS PERSONAL**

It does not get any more personal than this

As the summary says, "God did not just create Adam. He created every human that lived and he created every human that will live. Jesus did not only choose the twelve, Jesus chose every human that would ever believe. Before God created the world Jesus chose you."

Hallelujah and Amen!