

## Weekly Sermon

### Seventh Sunday of Easter – John 17:1-11

*The Venerable Jim Nolan*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen

*‘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.’*

I wonder how many of you people think that you understand this gospel? If you do, maybe you would like to volunteer to preach this sermon. Some gospel stories are not as easy as others. Jesus is teaching after the resurrection and is at pains to try and help people to understand the relationship of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is one of the deepest spiritual mysteries of all time. We will delude ourselves if we think we are going to be able to ever understand it totally. I think it is extremely important that we come to realise the fact that we will never comprehend it fully. Even Jesus struggled in trying to put it into words that the disciples would be able to understand.

When Jesus says, *‘I and the Father are one’*, he is meaning it very literally. What one thinks and feels, the other thinks and feels also. This sometimes happens in a minor way in human communication. Many people will say things like ‘that was just what I was thinking’, but that does not mean that we understand each other in any sort of permanent or total way. The oneness of the Godhead is a theological fact which is beyond our total understanding. The fact that Jesus often went away by himself in order to pray to the Father, in other words, speak with the Father, somehow emphasises the relationship that they have. We can only imagine having a relationship with God along those lines.

We are called to oneness with God. This oneness is totally in God’s control except for the fact that we have free will. Very few of us can really let go when it comes to highly personal things, and relationships are highly personal. **Jesus desire is for a church that is at one with God and the members at one with each other.** I think we only achieve this in a very small way.

I have lived in communities on four occasions in my life. The first one was a boarding school, the second was a Missionary Training College, the third was is the Mission Field itself and the fourth was is a Theological College. In all these experiences, there were some very serious friendships made, but also with some, there were tensions. It is very difficult to get a number of people to live together in harmony for prolonged periods of time. The Godhead is the only example where this works perfectly. Even in a marriage, there are times when people step away from each other, have different opinions and would like to change the things that are happening. This is very normal. People who live in the community of marriage have their own unique relationships with each other. It is especially important for us to realise that each and every one of these

relationships are different. None of them work perfectly. Even when a welcomed child arrives, that welcomed child can change the dynamics of the relationship. Friends, neighbours, acquaintances also have an effect, and each one of us understands what I am saying. The fact remains that within the Godhead, there is total cooperation, total love, and total harmony in all things. This stems from the perfect nature of God, a perfect nature that we chose not to share when we accepted our own free will.

Some certain situations allow for more oneness than others. There are many great examples of teamwork where the team itself creates the safety within it. A very good example of this is the Fire Brigade, a dangerous occupation that requires everybody to keep an eye on each other. Police Force, Ambulance etc. have the same type of needs. One of the particularly good examples is the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. We see teams of people working together in an appropriate way and they will be able to win against teams of individuals, all trying to do their own thing. I have often said that cricket matches are not won by good players but by good teams.

I spent a year in a high school and during that year we were allowed to join the town tennis fixtures. 'Team 1' of course, were the champions, and the also-rans were part of 'Team 2'. The interesting thing was, that 'Team 2' worked together much better than 'Team 1' and at the end of the competition, 'Team 2' came second. In the ratings 'Team 1' came last. I learned a valuable lesson from that. None of the people in 'Team 2' could have beaten any of the people in 'Team 1' but because we combined better as a team, we were able to come second in the competition of approximately 6 or 8 teams.

What the Godhead does it does perfectly, and it does it all the time. We are invited into that oneness. We will not always achieve what is required to totally accept that invitation, but from time to time will see evidence that we have succeeded. How did you go about your lives this week? I pray that you will find oneness with God and also with the people who you love. It is very important that we are able to live in this way. May God bless you all in all your endeavours, and may He be with you in all the things that you attempt in life, in order to become at one with Him. Amen