

# Made for Harmony

A Reflection on John 17:20-23

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Let us listen to scripture taken from the Gospel of John 17:20-23

## THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE

*Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Holy Father, I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. (Jn 17:20-23)*

Dear friends, a very good evening to all of you. We thank God for giving us this beautiful Word from the Farewell Discourse of Jesus in John 17:20-23, which I think is intrinsically linked with the First Letter of St John (1 Jn 1:1-4). The Farewell Discourse has a genre of its own when you study scripture, and it has the intention of a teacher, master, patriarch or matriarch, a great person who is now coming to the end of their physical life and is preparing the disciples or the family or those who will continue the business of the master in the way that the master has shown. So, in this part of the Farewell Discourse, Jesus is praying to the Father, and we see his intimate connection with the Father. Look at the words, 'Jesus raised his eyes to heaven'. Raising his eyes is not just a physical stance or disposition; he is focusing on the Father, is intimate with the Father. That's what we do in meditation, we express our intimacy with God, and that's why meditation is so important to us. In meditation we connect with the Father, we repeat the mantra to remain focused on the Father.

In his Farewell Discourse, Jesus is not just speaking off the top of his head. He is sharing with the disciples what he is saying to the Father and what the Father is revealing to him. In this particular moment of the Discourse, Jesus says to his Father, 'I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me (Jn 17:20)'. Jesus is praying for all his disciples, for all people of good will, for all people who are connected with God in one way or another. That is the meaning of 'believe in me': people who are connected with God in faith. Jesus prays, 'May they all be one (Jn 17:21)'. This is the great prayer of unity, of oneness of harmony. Harmony is what our teaching is about.

Why is harmony important for Jesus – 'may they all be one'? If you look at the Book of Genesis, the purpose and meaning of creation and the deeper meaning of human life become clear. God made man

and woman, humans, to be in harmony with him, with one another, and with creation. That is why God made man and woman, as in the story in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. And this harmony is what gives man and woman the deepest joy, peace, meaning, and fulfilment in life, because that is what man and woman are called to build. We are made to be in harmony at the triple dimensions of God, fellow man and woman, and creation.

In Genesis chapter 3, however, sin enters. Man and woman got distracted, tempted. They got attracted to something else that seemed to be better than what God had created them for. And from that moment of sin – discord, broken harmony, broken relationships – we see misery, pain, suffering, evil of all kinds come into the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that God, who made man and woman for harmony, didn't want to desert them in their sin. He made a promise to break this discord, to crush the head of the one who causes this discord, to bring back harmony, that oneness, that unity of all men and women with him, with one another, and with creation. And so he sent Jesus, his Son.

The whole purpose and mission of Jesus was to restore this harmony, to bring man and woman back into proper relationship with God, with each other, and with creation. And therefore Jesus says, 'May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us as you are in me and I am in you (Jn 17:21).' That's the kind of unity, of harmony God wants for us. As Jesus and the Father are one, so you and I are called to be one with God, with each other, and with nature because, as Jesus prays, there is a purpose in that oneness: 'so that the world may believe it was you who sent me (Jn 17:21)'.

So it's very important that you and I build this harmony by the way we live at home, at work, in the community, in society, wherever we may be, whatever we may be doing. We have to do this work, so that the world may believe Jesus was sent by God to restore harmony to a broken and divided world, a world so materialistic and self-centred that it causes pain and misery of every kind to people. So Jesus says, 'I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one as we are one (Jn 17:22).'

Jesus has given us that glory. That was God's purpose in the Incarnation as we read in the gospel of John (Jn 1:1-15) and in his first letter (1 Jn 1:1-3)

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...  
And the Word became flesh and lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory that is his  
as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:1-15)*

*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen  
with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of  
life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the  
eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we  
have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is  
with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn 1:1-3)*

This is the wonder of Christmas: 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us so that we can see his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).' That is why Jesus can say in his great Priestly Prayer, 'I have given them the glory (Jn 17:22)', meaning he has given them himself, he has given them the Father. He has shown them the way, he has given them everything they need so that they may be able to be in harmony with the Father, with one another, and with creation. And we are able to do this, as he concludes his prayer, 'with me in them and you in me (Jn 17:23)'.

That is our intimacy with Jesus, with the Father, and in meditation we deepen our intimacy with God. We want nothing to interrupt or come in the way of our intimacy with him, not only during prayer, meditation, but all the time as we live our life. So it is not about *just* practising meditation; our

meditation practice must be linked with our way of being. What happens after the half-hour meditation is over is important. That's when the doing happens, the living in the way of Jesus happens. A faithful practice of meditation helps us to live harmoniously. The experience of God's unconditional love helps us to grasp his purpose and live it out in our daily life. And so Jesus in his resurrection appearance says:

*'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'* When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, *'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'* (Jn 20:21-23)

He gives us his spirit, the Holy Spirit, his harmony. That's your work my dear sisters and brothers, that's my work, that's our work.

We need to reflect on Jesus' heartfelt prayer, 'with me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one,' and ask ourselves: are we *so completely one* with God, *so completely one* with people around us, *so completely one* with creation? This is not an easy question with an immediate yes or no answer. The question takes a way of life to answer fully. Since meditation puts us in that state of harmony with God, it must also put us in harmony with our fellow men and women and with creation as Jesus prays: 'May they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.' This love of God makes us one. And as we experience God's unconditional love in meditation, we are moved gradually to oneness with the Father, and so to oneness with our fellow men and women, and with creation.

Let's conclude with these beautiful words of Jesus and let them resound in us. Let us make it our purpose in life to make this great desire of Jesus happen today:

*May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us as you are in me and I am in you. Father, may they all be one.* (Jn 17:21)