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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Year A  
May 28, 2017  
Text: John 17:1-11

### “Jesus Prayed”

I am always amazed at how God works.

On day earlier in this past week, I arrived home after a very full day. For some reason I felt like a hamster or gerbil that had been on one of those spinning wheels way too long. Knowing that I needed to wash some towels I pulled the ones from the bathroom and added them to the washing machine. I went back into the bathroom to put out clean towels when my lower leg brushed up against something. I looked down to see what had been there all along-my prayer quilt. I kid you not, but that prayer quilt has been in the same spot ever since I moved into the apartment but for some reason it was if the quilt said “Look at me! Remember me? Pull me out!” So I did. And when I took it out I held it close and drew it to my face. After all these years, the faint smell of incense and cologne filled my nose and I felt a sense of peace wash over me. Maybe this is how Linus felt holding his light blue blanket-safe and secure.

You see, that quilt was given to me during a crazy time at the Cathedral when I found myself to be the only full time clergy person left on staff. One day a parishioner came into my office with a package and said, “Rev. Renee, I made this for you. I hope you like it. I hope you know how much you are loved and appreciated.” I opened the package and out tumbled the quilt that he himself had made by hand. After I brushed away a tear (you know me) and thanked him, he went on to explain to me how he had chosen a design especially for me. He had chosen colors of light blue and a light green and cranberry. The first two colors that often reflect serenity and yes, calm. Then he told me that as he fashioned the quilt he wanted to reflect something that he knew was important to me. So using his creative eye he had taken panels of plaids and polka dots and tiny delicate flowers and mimicked kente cloth-a type of African fabric in honor of my African American heritage. And then scattered amongst squares and triangles are bits of red yarn. “Those bits of yarn,” he said, “aren’t just decoration. These are knots made by other parishioners who prayed for you as they tied those knots. We want you to know those prayers are for you and we want you to know that this quilt is

full of love and prayers so whenever you get tired or feel stressed, know that people around here love and support you.” Somebody prayed for me.

This would not be the last encounter with prayer quilts. It started with one quilt and before we knew it, it had become a full blown ministry. Each quilt was carefully made by hand and with a lot of thought and prayer behind it. On the back would be the person’s name, the date it was completed and the words, “Quilts bring families together, prayers make families stronger.” When a quilt was completed it was laid upon the chapel altar. And parishioners and strangers alike would come forward and lay hands on it and then prayerfully a tie knot before it was handed to the recipient. Sometimes this precious gift was made for someone recently widowed or a person just diagnosed with a complicated illness or a student going off to college. Or someone who was simply going through. We, as a church, prayed for each other.

On this 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Jesus sits among his dearest friends to share a last meal and to bid them good-bye. To them Jesus was more than a teacher. Much more than a friend. He was someone who gave them purpose and identity. He was the one who helped them realize that they too were part of God’s plan, part of a movement that was to continue long after he was gone. Still, their pain was real and so was his as he looked to find words to both comfort and reassure them for his hour had come.

It was at his last meal at Passover that according to the other gospels, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, and then gave those simple gifts to his friends to remember him by. He said, Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. And likewise, he took the cup of wine and said, Drink this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is given for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.

Jesus gave them this meal to remember him by in future days, a meal to remind them of all that he did, all that he had said and taught them. And this they did, believing in his presence each and every time they shared bread and wine. A meal that even to this day, the Church continues in remembrance of him.

Many times with a great meal comes great conversation. And as we’ve heard over the course of the last three Sundays, Jesus had a lot to say in John’s Gospel. Serve one another. Love one another. He told them that he never leave them orphaned but promised another Advocate to be with them and guide them.

And then we are told that Jesus prayed.

If we were to open up bibles this morning, we would see that the whole of the seventeenth chapter is Jesus' prayer, a conversation between Jesus and God the Father. It is a prayer meant to be overheard by his closest companions and all of us who have ears to hear.

This is what Jesus says: "All are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 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."

Sisters and brothers, our lives are interwoven with each other and everyone else's. And Jesus' life is bound together with ours, within this fabric of life. Like a handmade quilt we are joined as one within God's amazing love story that began ever since the moment the first human being took in breath.

At times it is hard to believe in this love story-that we are all part of the same story. When there are those, it seems, who have little to no disregard for life or for creation. When lives are taken all too soon. When we hear stories of bombings at concert halls and people being mowed down in the streets. When we witness or read of continued hatred and bigotry toward those who may be different. When livelihoods and aid to the underprivileged are threatened.

But thank God, there are those times when the best of humankind shines through. When neighbor has helped neighbor in times of tragedy and loss. When those who have voice have cried out for the voiceless. When food pantries are being filled. When mistakes and missteps have been forgiven. When we remember to pray for one another just as Jesus prayed for us.

God has woven us all in; perfect and imperfect, with all the messiness that comes from being human. God loves us all and calls us to God's self in order that we might reflect his glory in all things and in every way.

There is a song that says in part:

*Somebody prayed for me; had me on their mind.  
Took the time to pray for me.  
I'm so glad they prayed. I'm so glad they prayed.  
I'm so glad they prayed for me.*

*Oh Jesus prayed for me; had me on his mind.  
Took the time to pray for me.  
I'm so glad he prayed. I'm so glad he prayed. I'm so glad he prayed  
for me.*

Jesus still intercedes and prays for us. He is praying and entrusting us to God's loving care and protection. Praying that we may find a deep and abiding connection with our Heavenly Father. Praying that we may find that same deep and abiding connection with each other. Praying that we may be one as he and the Father are one-one in the fabric that will lead us all to everlasting life.

Amen.