

One for All and All for One: we know that phrase from the Three Musketeers and their swashbuckling battles. But it has deeper roots that are more relevant for us today.

In the late 1500s and early 1600s in Bohemia, what is today the Czech Republic, lived the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, Rudolf II. For almost 100 years, the Catholic rulers had not imposed their religion on the state, allowing the Protestants to do their thing. But then the Catholic families wanted more power and so they just decided to name Rudolf's brother, Matthias, the ruler instead. The brothers began to fight for power. To increase his hold on his throne, Rudolf issued the *Letter of Majesty*, which granted Bohemia's largely Protestant estates the right to freely exercise their religion, essentially setting up a Protestant Bohemian state church controlled by the estates.

Eventually Rudolf died and Matthias assumed the throne.

Now the conflict truly begins because those who brought Matthias to power began to put their associates in power. Now the power struggle spreads outside of the family into the region. At a meeting of Bohemian, Catholic, and Protestant communities in Prague, the Protestant group interpreted the Letter of Majesty differently from the Catholics and in response they read a statement saying that in the face of the Catholic threat of Protestant execution, "We would stand firm, one for all and all for one... [and agree to] loyally help and protect each other to the utmost, against all difficulties."

All for one and one for all is a phrase not of swashbuckling drama, but of steadfast loyalty.

Jesus said, "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me

*because you loved me before the foundation of the world."*

Steadfast loyalty. One for all and all for one.

As I noted last week, this is Jesus' final discourse, his message to the world as he was leaving. Last week he prayed for the immediate community – the fledgling church of which Jesus was the beginning, the Alpha. This week, in what is known as the High Priestly Prayer, he prays for the all those who will come to believe – the future community, with Jesus, the Omega, as the Head. He prays:

"that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us"

"I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Steadfast loyalty. One for all and all for one.

The last thing Jesus said to the disciples was a call for unity. When you want someone to remember something, you make sure it is the last thing you tell them. Unity.

Unity seems so impossible. I listened to a podcast yesterday called Hidden Brain, a weekly show about brain science. I learned that scientists have determined that we are genetically predisposed to think liberally or conservatively (and I am not talking only about politics). How we view the world – either as a place to explore or a place to defend – is genetic. You know what that means, right?

I can talk and offer all my own logic to you, and you will never think the way I do.

You can talk and offer all your own logic to me, and I will never think the way you do.

How are we ever supposed to find unity if we won't ever be able to think alike? How will we find common ground?

Steadfast loyalty. One for all and all for one.

Note that Jesus does not pray that we all think and act alike. He does not pray that we all agree or that we ignore injustice. He prays for us to be one, as he and the Father are one. He prays that we be in relationship with one another. But it's hard, really hard, and it's not going to get easier.<sup>1</sup>

“I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me *and have loved them even as you have loved me.*”

“I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, *so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them*, and I in them.”

Love is the unifying force.

The longing of Christ is that we who live in so many forms of separateness should turn and step into the Light, the one Light, in which we are all unconditionally, everlastingly, and beautifully held, and that we recognize each other in it, and in new ways move toward each other in it. We are one because the one love of God surrounds, permeates, and connects us. The secret of our oneness is not that we are alike, but that we are *loved alike*. As each of us consents to be gathered to that love and abide in it, we are inevitably gathered to each other.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/living-word/june-2-easter-7c-john-1720-26>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blogs.baylor.edu/truettulpit/2016/04/25/john-1720-26/>

Lest you think that to just say “love” is too amorphous, let’s consider that M. Scott Peck, the author of *The Road Less Traveled*, defines love *extending yourself for the purpose of the good of another*.

Not what I want, but what you want.

Extending yourself for the purpose the good of another.

Perhaps being “one” involves drawing the circle bigger and wider, setting more places at the table, and celebrating the gifts we all have to bring and to share. We may not agree on the fine print, but there is much common ground among us — surely enough to find firm footing. With Christ as our foundation, the Spirit as our advocate and guide, and with God’s love enfolding and keeping us, we are one even if we choose not to acknowledge it.

Maybe a place to start is developing deep relationships with individuals around us,

Remember deep relationship means being real and true with each other – losing our New England individualism and private guardedness. Deep relationship is showing up and heart-to-heart emotion.

We can listen and learn from one another – learning doesn’t mean converting; it means consideration of and honoring differences

breaking bread, especially in communion with one another

and sharing life’s journey together.

If we can drop our preconceived notions and prejudices, remembering the prayer that Jesus prayed on our behalf, and if we can look at the other as an equally beloved child of God, then there is a good chance we can journey toward unity, one baby step and one relationship at a time. Indeed, we have one Lord for all, and we are all created for unity in one God. *One for all and all for one*.

Ongoing choices are required: to serve each other, listen to each other, pray for and with each other, give ourselves to each other, bear witness with each other, and above all, seek union with Christ alongside each other.

That is central. Our focus is not on straining to make it work with each other, but on the love of God as known to us in Christ, which embraces all of us together. From this, all else will flow, and the Spirit will show us how.<sup>3</sup>

We think somehow that we can find unity through our own efforts. But Jesus pointed us in a very different direction when it comes to our unity. Jesus called the disciples to a unity that is

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<sup>3</sup> <https://blogs.baylor.edu/truettulpit/2016/04/25/john-1720-26/>

grounded in the unity of love between Father and Son. What creates a real and lasting unity in the church is the love of the God among us.

Given the wide variety of personalities, cultures, worldviews, and expectations among those of us who actually make up the church, it seems reasonable that the love of God is the only thing that can possibly unite us. As we turn our attention away from all our efforts at promoting unity and focus on the love of God that binds us together, then we have the opportunity to become a community that lives in such a way that the world may believe.<sup>4</sup>

Steadfast loyalty.

Our steadfast loyalty toward God.

God's steadfast loyalty to God's trinitarian self.

Steadfast loyalty to this church and to each other, living God's love shared in Jesus and in us, will result in seeing what it is like to heal the world.

It might be uncomfortable at first; it takes practice, spiritual practice. But if we can relax our grip on what we individually want, recognize that we are indeed one in the Spirit and one in the Lord, and hear where God is leading, then we are indeed One for All and All for One.

Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com/2013/05/that-world-may-believe.html>