

## Worship Resources - *Torn*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoD0lC7hovw>

*In sanctuary - Live Stream Video on YouTube*

**Easter 7, Year B,**

16<sup>th</sup> May, 2021

**1 John 5:9-13 NRSV / John 17:6-19 MSG**

**Prelude** *The Love of God* played by Annie Center - (no video - Played live)

### Welcoming Guests/Announcements

**Pass the Peace**      **Passing the Peace interlude - *Lamb of Glory***  
played by Annie Center - (no video - Played live)

**Opening Music**      ***Praise to the Lord, the Almighty***      **37**  
played by Annie Center - (no video - Played live)

**Hymn Video**      ***Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, The King of Creation,***  
Music at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, used with permission

<https://youtu.be/hFV7y3jH8dY>

### Call to Worship (Responsive )

One: From comfortable pews, from tricycle seats, from easy chairs in front of TVs:

**All: God gathers us in to give us the words to proclaim the gospel.**

One: At kitchen sinks, at laptops and blackboards, at nursing stations:

**All: Christ calls us to share in serving all creation.**

One: In communities gathered to pray, in memories of those who served,  
in families grilling in the backyard:

**All: The Holy Spirit fills us with God's joy.**

### Invocation

Mysterious God, You reveal yourself in Jesus, your Beloved Child who gives us a glimpse your glory and invites us to share in the unity of all that is Holy: the holiness that is You, your creation, your people, united in the Spirit that breaks through all boundaries of fear and injustice.

Meet us here today, O Unity, and teach us to be one: One in love for each other  
One in understanding with all who find in Jesus the Way to You One in peace with all  
who find other paths to your Truth. We ask all this in the name of Jesus, whose  
fervent prayer was ever: "May they all be one." Amen

## **Epistle Reading 1 John 5:9-13 NRSV**

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the  
testimony of God that he has testified to his Son.

Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who  
do not believe in God[a] have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that  
God has given concerning his Son.

And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have  
life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you  
may know that you have eternal life.

**Hymn**                    ***For We Are Strangers No More***                    **322**

**Hymn Video**    ***For We Are Strangers No More***

<https://youtu.be/2VWtVUxtqKo>

## **A Time of Prayer**

### **Joys and Concerns**

This morning let's keep Betty DeBon in prayer as she recently developed heart failure and is  
currently weak and bedridden at the rehab center in Edmonds. Also keep George in prayer  
as he has been transferred to an Alzheimer Care facility in Lake City.

Also remember JoAnn and Bill Shoemaker as he recently reluctantly was moved to Assisted  
Living as JoAnn continues to slowly recover from her systemic issues.

Also keep Matthew Schultz in prayer as he recovers from COVID.

## Pastoral Prayer

Jesus, just as you prayed for your disciples so long ago Pray for us, Pray for our wellbeing, Pray for our protection. Pray for your joy to be made complete in us. Pray for our spiritual growth. Pray for your truth to be made complete in us.

Jesus, we often do not know how to pray, So pray for us, Pray with us, That we may be one with you, One with each other, and One in ministry to the world.

Jesus, Pray for your weak ones, Your strong ones, You ones who are have illnesses, Your ones near death, Your ones who breeze through life, Your ones who struggle in life.

Jesus, Pray for those who have lost loved ones, Those who have especially loved ones in past wars. Those who have lost ones in the present wars. Those who fear theirs may die in these wars.

Jesus, We join you in these prayers for all your people, Amen.

## Gospel Lesson – John 17:6-19 MSG

I spelled out your character in detail To the men and women you gave me. They were yours in the first place; Then you gave them to me, And they have now done what you said. They know now, beyond the shadow of a doubt, That everything you gave me is firsthand from you, For the message you gave me, I gave them; And they took it, and were convinced That I came from you. They believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I'm not praying for the God-rejecting world But for those you gave me, For they are yours by right. Everything mine is yours, and yours mine, And my life is on display in them. For I'm no longer going to be visible in the world; They'll continue in the world While I return to you. Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life That you conferred as a gift through me, So they can be one heart and mind As we are one heart and mind. As long as I was with them, I guarded them In the pursuit of the life you gave through me; I even posted a lookout. And not one of them got away, Except for the rebel bent on destruction (the exception that proved the rule of Scripture).

Now I'm returning to you. I'm saying these things in the world's hearing So my people can experience My joy completed in them. I gave them your word; The godless world hated them because of it, Because they didn't join the world's ways, Just as I didn't join the world's ways. I'm not asking that you take them out of the world But that you guard them from the Evil One. They are no more defined by the world Than I am defined by the world. Make them holy—consecrated—with the truth; Your word is consecrating truth. In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world. I'm consecrating myself for their sakes So they'll be truth-consecrated in their mission.

## Message – *Torn*

“In this world but not of this world.” That’s a phrase I’m sure we’ve probably all heard at one time or another. In the Brethren world, it’s a pretty common sentiment. In fact, for many years of our early history, we tried to make our lives fit that sentiment in a very literal way. Along with our Anabaptist sisters and brothers, the Amish and the Mennonites, we lived in intentional communities with the most minimal contact possible with the so-called “English” world around us. We dressed plainly and lived the most simple lives possible, sharing by our example what we believed to be the ideal Christian life. But over time, we slowly moderated that approach to our faith walk, and gradually integrated ourselves into the world around us. For good or ill, that notion is now just an historical memory, or a tourist attraction in the primarily Amish areas of the country that still remain. That does beg the question, were we right in the notions of the past, or are we right in the way we live our lives now?

There were certainly advantages to the old ways of doing things. Living in and for the community, making decisions as a community, and upholding our interpretations of the ideal Christ-like life were all positive ways to go about living out one’s faith. Likewise, integrating into culture, being a part of society’s fabric, makes it possible for us to have an influence on those who are not part of our faith tradition, and can be a much more intimate witness on those we interact with in our daily lives. So which is the right approach? Or is either way correct?

Jesus’ prayer in John 17 touches on some of this dilemma. While it’s structured as a pastoral prayer to God prior to his departure from this world, the function is better understood as instructions and guidance for the first disciples that he is leaving behind. John’s gospel really focuses on the relationship between Jesus the son and God the father. From the first chapter where Jesus is presented as the logos, or Word, or reason for being, he is often portrayed in John as being almost synonymous in many ways with the Father. His words are God’s words, he is next to God and almost indistinguishable from God at times, in the way John portrays who Jesus is. Yet he is also human.

When we hear in liturgies the phrase the “mystery of faith,” that is part of what’s being referenced, this notion of incarnation, of God in human flesh, of the Divine in the profane. As confusing and mysterious as that concept may be, Jesus ups the ante in today’s reading by saying that we, like he, also “do not belong in the world.” The key word in the Greek in this passage is “kathos” which translates as “just as.” So we don’t belong in the world, “just as” Jesus doesn’t belong in the world. If we really think about it, that phrase can be very problematic. Jesus doesn’t belong in the world because he is the Incarnation, God made flesh. Jesus has Divine origins that are not tainted by the corruption of the worldly realm. Yet we are fully human, born and bred in this world, fully subject to all the imperfections it contains. But is that an accurate statement?

In Genesis we are told that God made humankind in God’s own image. So can we be completely bereft of all divinity? Or do we all have a Divine spark within us, that piece of

God that reflects God's nature within each one of us. That can be an uncomfortable thought for many. For centuries, we have put such an emphasis on our capacity for sin, on the doctrine of original sin, that we often become so obsessed and guilt-ridden over our potential for brokenness, that we lose sight that we are created to be something different. Buried deep within each of us is that wisp of the Divine that has been in each of us since the dawn of Creation. We reconnect with that spark when we realize the Spirit at work in our lives as we choose to follow Christ. So in that sense, like Christ, we too have an intimate connection with God, and also do not "belong to this world."

But what do we mean exactly when we say "of this world." Do we mean this physical world around us? Or are we referencing something else? Often, when we think of being "of the world, but not in the world," we are thinking in terms of two worlds, one of perfection which we think of as "heaven," and one that is sinful and corrupt, our earthly home.

Yet, going back to Genesis, God not only made us in God's image, God also ordered Creation itself to mirror divine perfection. It is through sin that this world became corrupted. How we think about these concepts has a great effect not only on our outlook, but our actions as well.

If we think of this world as symbolic only of sin and corruption, and heaven as the solitary alternative, then our focus is largely on the individual self, concerned first and foremost with ensuring we have our own ticket off this world, and then, hopefully, ensuring others get their ticket as well. But then we tend to lose interest in the fate of this world, and can develop tunnel vision only of the world to come. That is the drawback of the choices our Brethren forebears made.

By isolating themselves in insular groups, they withdrew from actively seeking to redeem the world around them, making sure they were living the way they needed to get their own tickets to heaven. I'm sure they prayed for the redemption of others, but their focus was on themselves and their little individual communities of faith. The problem with that viewpoint is that it ignores the first part of probably the most quoted scripture of the Bible, John 3:16.

We like to focus on the "shall not perish but have everlasting life" part, but we tend to forget the "For God so loved the world" part. As Jesus says in our scripture today, he was "not of this world" but he was sent to this world with a mission, to redeem God's creation in this world. Likewise, we now share that same mission. In Christ we no longer belong to the world that distances itself from God, that lives against God's will for us. We are in this world to redeem it. To seek to bring it back in line with the way God envisioned it, with the way Christ preached it should be.

Jesus did seek to show us the way to salvation, but that salvation was more than just reciting the sinner's prayer. That salvation involved sacrifice, and serious work. Like Jesus, we are servant leaders. Our commitment is to seeking to ensure the abundant life God provides for, is realized by all, not just a few. It's seeking to restore the perfect balance in nature that God designed, being true stewards of the bounty of nature, instead of scouring the land to feed our greed. It's showing hospitality to the stranger, and treating the other as

ourselves. It's a pretty big job in today's world, considering how far this world has strayed from God's plan; it's impossible for the individual disciple. But that's why Jesus prays for us to be of one community, to work together.

It's interesting that this prayer only appears in John's gospel, the last of the gospels to be written. One has to wonder if there were already tensions building between the churches established by Peter, and by Paul, and John and the other apostles and evangelists. Were theological and doctrinal differences already dividing the young church? Was the writer of John inspired to include this prayer to help keep the focus on staying together as one body? It stresses the importance of this community set apart within the larger world community.

The assembled disciples that are not of this world, but have a mission in this world. It's through the Spirit present in community that we can bridge both worlds, the world that should reflect Christ and God's intentions in Christian community and the world that draws away from God, without finding ourselves torn in two. It's through the servant leadership and fellowship of that community that we find our way to be active in the world, but not of the world. It's through that community that we display an alternative to the values of the world that conflict with the values Jesus taught. Finally, it's through the combined strength of that community that we can change the corrupt structures and practices of the earthly world to restore God's created order, step by step.

The events of the past year have shown us how important community is. Most of us found ourselves isolated and alone, separated from community and social interaction. We've had to find ways to be a community from a distance. For many, this past year has meant loss of income and livelihood, loss of health, or loss of loved ones. Our faith community has also struggled with losses similar to those we have faced as individuals: loss of income, loss of health, and even beloved members of the community. We've had to find a new way of being community without gathering in a building. The important word being community. We've all realized the importance of real interactions with others, real community. The question we face today is can we change and adapt to be Christ's community in a much changed, post-pandemic world. Can we be the blessed community that is in this world but shines a love light not of this world, willing to reach out to make a difference around us. That is what makes us relevant and inviting, that is what we are called to do,. I hope and pray we seek to be that community at work in this world, instead of choosing to quietly fade away, waiting to use our ticket to the world that is to come. Amen.

## **Call to Serve**

Like the trees planted by streams, God provides us with the opportunities to share the fruits of our labor with each other. And in that sharing we become closer to embodying God's Beloved Community together!

As we listen to the following music from Annie, let's reflect how we can use our talents and fruits to be God's community in the here and now, with the resources and talents we've been given, here and now.

## **A Time for Reflection**     *I Will Serve Thee*

Played by Annie Center (*no video - Played live*)

## **The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Fruitful God, may these gifts nourish your beloved children with wisdom, compassion, and creativity so that your Beloved Community is deepened and recognized: eternal life made manifest in the here and now. Amen.

## **HYMN**             *In Christ there is no East or West*     **306**

### **Hymn Video**     *In Christ There Is No East Or West*

<https://youtu.be/TpITJOShix0>

## **Benediction**(Resources)

May God protect you through your time of trial.

May the love of Christ,  
seen in what he did, and  
heard in what he said,  
fill you with joy and hope.

May the Holy Spirit advocate for you,  
leading into all truth,  
lighting the way of faith, and  
strengthening you to follow Jesus,  
so that you will become  
growing deep and  
bearing much fruit.  
Amen.

## **Postlude - Blessed Assurance**

played by Annie Center (*no video - Played live*)