**“The Proposal”**

John 17

April 2, 2017, David M. Griebner, Riverside UMC

During Lent we are spending our time here in worship in the Gospel of John. Today we have arrived at John 17. Let me set the context. It’s the last night of Jesus’ life. They’ve already finished the meal we call the Last Supper. Soon Jesus will lead them out to Gethsemane. And by this time tomorrow He will be dead, crucified. These events are all familiar to us, but what Jesus is doing here may not be so familiar. What’s He doing? He’s praying. We know from the Bible and the Gospels that Jesus prayed a lot, sometimes spending a whole night at it. But this is the one place where we have access to what He said, to how He prayed. We’ll look at the prayer in a moment, but first I’m going to tell you a story that helps me to understand what this prayer is all about, and I hope will help you to see it too.

This is a true story. It comes from a wonderful believer, speaker, storyteller and all around crazy person named Bob Goff. Some of you have read Bob’s book, *Love does*, and so you may remember this story from the book. Bob and his wife have a hone on the water, somewhere in California. At the edge of their backyard there is a path along the water where people walk. Bob and his wife often sit on the porch and the people walking by often wave at them and they wave back. And usually that’s it. But one day this young man waved and they waved back. Then he waved again and they waved back again. Bob is the kind of guy who is always curious about what Jesus might have in mind in a random encounter with another person so after a few minutes he walked down from the porch to talk to the kid. He learned his name was Ryan and Ryan was in love, really in love. He was planning to propose to his girlfriend and the reason he was standing there was because he was wondering if he could propose in Bob’s backyard. I don’t know what he expected Bob to say, but this is exactly the kind of thing Bob is always up for and so he immediately said “Ryan that sounds like a fantastic idea!” “Really,” said Ryan. “Sure, go get your girl and let’s get you two engaged.” Ryan bounded off down the path. A couple days later Ryan came back. Alone. “I was wondering,” he stammered, ‘If we could have dinner on your porch before I pop the question?” “Ryan! That’s a great idea” Bob said, “What can I make for you?” Ryan never heard the question. He was back down the path, feet hardly touching the ground. A few days later he was back. “Would it be possible for me to have some friends of mine serve us when are having dinner on your porch?” “How many?” Bob asked. “Twenty,” Ryan said kind of sheepishly. “What a great idea, Ryan! Twenty it is!” A few days later he was back again. “After dinner could we maybe put some speakers on your porch so we could dance a bit?” “Speakers it is!” And off he went. A few days later Ryan was back. “Do you have a boat?” By this time Bob was cracking up. “Well, actually Ryan, I do!” “Can I borrow it?” “Okay Ryan,” Bob said, “The boat’s yours! I’ll take you and your girlfriend out on my boat after dinner at my house, after twenty of your friends finish serving you, and after you dance together on my porch. You can pop the question to your girl on the front deck of my boat.” So everything was all set. But what Ryan didn’t know is Bob decided to one-up him. He called the Coast Guard and told them the story. And they hatched a plan too. So the night arrived and everything was perfect. The girl was a little confused and wondered whose house they were at and if this was ok but she went along. Finally they got in the boat and the moment he has so carefully arranged arrived. Ryan barely got the words out before she said yes. Bob cued the Coast Guard who had snuck up with their boat and they shot off an arc of water from their water cannons.

Now what does this have to do with John 17? Well, it all depends on who we are in the story I just told. And my first thought is we’re the girl. According to scripture we’re the bride. From before the beginning of time the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, have been putting together a plan infinitely more outrageous, infinitely more audacious, and infinitely more important to propose to us, to show us how much they love us and invite us to say “Yes” to this love. And while there are many things going on in Jesus’ prayer in John 17 I believe this is what is at the heart of it. See if you can see it too.

In verse 1 He says, “the hour has come.” And in verse 4 He says He has “finished the work” the Father gave Him to do. It’s all ready. The moment has come. The crazy, audacious, plan put in place before the world began is about to come to fruition. Jesus is going to die. He is going to die for all the sins of the world. He is going to die and rise again so that we can know without any doubt that we are loved beyond our wildest imagination. This is the greatest proposal ever conceived.

Now a proposal comes with either overt or implied promises. So what kind of promises does Jesus make? There are at least three of them. One is **protection**. In verse 11 and 15 Jesus prays for protection. And He tells us that He’s praying not only for the disciples who are in the room with Him, but also for all who will believe in Him because of them (v.20). So the prayer is for us too. Think about it. Where do you need to know Jesus is praying for **protection** for you or for someone you love right now?

Another is **joy**. In verse 13 Jesus prays that we might be filled with the full measure of His **joy**. Come to my party, He says, accept my invitation He says, say “Yes” to my proposal, so I can fill you with my joy. What difference might it make if more of our moments were filled with the knowledge that at that very moment Jesus, the King of King’s and Lord of Lord’s was praying that we would be filled with His joy – joy that saw the world being born, joy that shares perfect glory with God? What if every morning you reminded yourself that Jesus longs to fill the day with His joy?

Another is **intimacy**. In verse 20 and following Jesus prays that we would all be “one.” But this is no ordinary oneness. This is no ordinary familiarity. Jesus prays that we would be one with each other and one with Him, *just as He is one with the Father.* (v.22) Jesus wants to put all of us on a path in this life that leads to the very same kind of intimacy and fellowship that He enjoys with the Father. How easy it is sometimes for us to feel alone, especially in regard to our deepest feelings, our deepest hopes, and our deepest fears. Jesus wants to change that too.

This is what Jesus is praying for; this is His proposal. So what’s left? What’s left is our response. Of course, part of our response is to say “Yes” to Jesus, yes to who He is and yes to what He offers. But that’s not all; and in fact in many ways it is only the beginning. Jesus longs for us to accept His proposal SO THAT His love will flow through us to others. As He has loved us so we should love others. So here’s my proposal. As you leave this place and go into your week and beyond, watch for an opportunity to love someone else with the kind of love Jesus has offered you. Do something crazy. Do something anonymously. Do something out of your comfort zone. Think back to the story I told at the beginning. A few moments ago I suggested that if we want to understand John 17 we should see ourselves as the girl being proposed to, and that’s true. But Jesus wants us to be Bob and Ryan too. Let’s pray…