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“I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you” (John 17:11).

*Acts 20:17-27; John 17:1-11*

The last chapter of the final discourses in the fourth Gospel is devoted to what is called the “Priestly Prayer” of Jesus. In it, he describes the intimacy he possesses with the Father, a shared identity and continuous exchange of knowledge and love. Jesus’ prayer is that his disciples will also know and share this intimacy. As the Father loves him and he loves the Father, so he has loved them and wants them to remain in his love by loving each other. As the Father sent him, so he is sending

them to extend this core mystery underlying all of reality, the created universe, its purpose and goal as human life is concerned. The Holy Spirit will come to validate this mystery in them and in their experience of building up the church.

These scriptures may seem like they are only for mystics, but if we distill them down into personal terms, what Jesus wants his disciples, us, to understand is that God is about relationships, an ever-expanding web of relationships. If we were exploring an old family trunk and found the love letters of, say, our grandparents, in which they express their desire to be together, their hopes and dreams for the future, we would realize that their love is why we are here. Their priestly prayer was for us. It is because they loved each other that we exist at all. Our children, grandchildren and everyone they influenced during their lives are part of their love story as it extends into the world and into time.

While we are living out our lives day to day, we probably don't need to think about the larger mystery that we are part of, but we can still feel grateful that love is the path and the underlying pattern of who we are, why we are here and where all of this is leading. Past generations are cheering us forward and future generations are depending on us to protect and pass along the love that holds all life together.

It has been said that the resurrection of Jesus was the end of the story appearing in the middle to show us the future we are called to accomplish in this world. What Jesus revealed by his life, death and resurrection is now imprinted on our hearts and instilled in our imaginations to keep us on track. While Jesus' moment in time is complete, he is now the timeless memory that reveals our future. He continues in time and in the world, embodied in us by the Holy Spirit. This is why we look forward to Pentecost.

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