

# Read

John 17:1-26

# Consider

This Sunday we are celebrating our 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. How shall we celebrate? Are there examples in the bible about how God's people celebrate memorable occasions?

There is in 1 Kings ch.8 the dedication of the temple of the Lord. Standing in front of the whole assembly of Israel, King Solomon spread out his hands toward heaven and prayed for Israel. Offering prayers and all kinds of offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings and fellowship offerings, Solomon and all Israel consecrated and dedicated the temple and they celebrated for fourteen days. The vast assembly of Israel from near and far "blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the Lord had done" (1 Kings 8:66). Then in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, there is the dedication of the second temple which was rebuilt by those who returned from exile to rebuild and resettle in Jerusalem. We are told that after they restored the temple, all the people assembled as one man and listened attentively to Ezra the priest as he read aloud the Book of the Law. And Nehemiah told the people, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8:10) Their joy was very great as they celebrated day after day, reading from the Book of the Law of God, feasting, praying and giving thanks to the Lord.

What could be more fitting than for us to celebrate our anniversary with feasting, praying and reading from God's Word? Feasting may be out of the question in this pandemic time, but we can certainly reflect on the words of Jesus in the bible. In John 17, Jesus prays what is commonly known to us as the High Priestly Prayer. Here we find Jesus praying for all who have heard and accepted the good news, who believe and know the only true God and Jesus Christ his Son. Let us examine what Jesus prays for:

- v.12 Protect them and keep them safe by the name of Jesus – stay safe, firm in faith
- v.15 Protect them from the evil one – do not fall into the schemes of the devil
- v.17, 19 Sanctify them by the truth in God's word, they be truly sanctified – be holy
- v.11, 21, 22, 23 All of them may be one, brought to complete unity – be united as one
- v.23 In unity let the world know God and God's love – be united in witnessing
- v.24-26 They be always with Jesus, see his glory and know his love – abide in Jesus

Do you notice that Jesus' prayer is not so much about you, me or other Christians separately as standalone individuals, but more about you and me in plural together with other Jesus followers corporately as one body on earth? Jesus is praying for us the

Church, his body. Read the above verses slowly again, replacing 'them' with 'us' and 'they' with 'we', and reflect on what they mean for us today. Pay attention to the clues about 'how', for example, "by the name of Jesus", "by the truth in God's word", "brought to", and consider why they are important. Ponder on how Jesus sees his church and on how you see your church.

*Deacon Dr. Josephine Chow*

## Pray

O Sovereign and almighty Lord, bless all thy people, and all thy flock. Give thy peace, thy help, thy love unto us thy servants, the sheep of thy fold, that we may be united in the bond of peace and love, one body and one spirit, in one hope of our calling, in thy divine and boundless love.

*Liturgy of St Mark, 2<sup>nd</sup> Century*

## Diving Deeper

On our 34<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary, let us:

- **Give thanks** – for Christ's redemptive love, calling and gathering us into his church
  - for all those who have gone before us in the history of SCBC
  - for God's rich provision and protection of his church
  - for all staff and volunteers serving in Church ministry
  - for fellow brothers and sister, young and old and children in our community
- **Confess** – our sins, weaknesses, mistakes, misunderstandings, faults... all that falling short of God's glory
- **Pray** – follow Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17:1-26 in praying for ourselves and our Church