

Every sermon preached in a British Columbia church today must refer to a lesser or greater extent to the Canucks and the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Isn't it great that the home team is doing so, so well. In this their fortieth year, wouldn't the cup look super cruising along Granville Street in a convertible. Now Victoria had its turn when the Cougars won in 1925. In 2011 sadly, no residents of Victoria have the right to bring it home. This year, regardless of who wins, the cup will travel to Newfoundland and other places throughout North America as team members connect their triumph with their home communities.

It's fun to feel part of something larger and seemingly more significant than ourselves, even for a brief time. Sadly, the euphoria won't last and for the good of the game, and the profit of team owners, sports media and card traders, the game will continue with a new season next year, now with a team returned to Winnipeg.

I wonder aloud, how the Church and Jesus might come to the Canucks aid. Our roadside sign today reads GO CANUCKS GO and will continue so for a few days yet. I thought BOO BOSTON would be insensitive and JESUS LOVES VANCOUVER was opportunistic. There may however be a helpful connection between the *Christ of faith* and the *passion of the Canuck*.

Wouldn't it be nice if there was a way we could all feel part of something huge, all the time, in every place, permanently! Its great to be a proud member of the Canadian Forces or a fire-fighter, especially after 9/11. It was once a good thing to be a member of the Federal Liberal party; Liberals now hope for better days, as New Democrats hunt for the washrooms on parliament hill. It was once a positive experience to enter a room and say "I'm Ken, I'm an Anglican Priest." Now people simply look puzzled, just like our elderly Labrador Retriever.

Likewise when Jesus told His disciples he was about to leave them, well they were not impressed. In calm, re-assuring words Jesus helps His disciples leap from this world to the next, from life as they have experienced it with him in city and town, to life, eternal life in a heavenly city which still includes the earthly city. Jesus introduces them to a new experience of social relationship by showing how He and the one He calls Father, that is God, are ONE. What is possible for the one if then possible for the other:

(N)ow I am no longer in the world, but (the ones you have given me, O Father) are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.**

Now when I hear the word “ONE” I think to myself, how can this be? *Organically one*, as Hydrogen and Oxygen combine to become water? *Socially one*, as students in a class will one day graduate together? *Musically one*, as harmony and melody and rhythm combine in an affect we call music? Language and logic break down when we humans try to understand one-ness.

Unity in argument usually involves elements of winning and losing in arguments rather than a true integration of thought and sharing of experience; just ask your favourite lawyer. *Unity of purpose* is often expressed through the charisma and insights of a talented leader rather than a perfect manifesto - just ask Karl Marx. *Unity in creation* becomes a composite of microscopic organisms, chemical reactions, and physical effects. Look up DNA in Wikipedia and you’ll understand what I am saying. *True unity, or one-ness is hard if not impossible to find.* So Jesus takes us into uncharted waters when he sums up his ministry, in the language of relationships, as he prays:

Father, **protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.**

If his ministry has been all about a political victory over the Roman Empire, this has not happened, and it was not meant to happen.

If his ministry was all about eliminating sin from the world, this has not happened, and it was not meant to happen.

If his ministry was all about convincing everyone of the rightness of his cause, this has not happened, and it was not meant to happen.

If his ministry was all about drawing people into a life-giving relationship with God-as-creator, so that those in the midst of a heavenly community here on earth might feel protected, supported and loved, this is his particular accomplishment and for this he is revered and worshipped.

Christianity is not about *knowing everything about God* but *welcoming everything that is God*. We do so by joining *our experience of community* with *our desire for God's community*. Our selfish desire to be part of something larger or more significant than ourselves is admittedly a vain hope but with a positive and life-giving result. If we hear that the special relationship between Jesus and God can be enlarged to include us, our hearing is good. If we can begin to appreciate that the special bond between Jesus and the One he calls Father can be replicated between ourselves, our hearing further improves.

If we find ourselves wonderfully entertained, and socially motivated through joining the Canucks parade, this is great fun! Bring it on! As players flagellate each other on the ice, we watch the television from our arm chairs eating Cheezies, and cry out with each goal: WE DID IT! What Jesus points us to, is something more serious, more responsible, more costly, more enduring, more life-giving, more sure, more Holy, and believe it or not, more real!