

In today's reading from the Gospel of John, we have the amazing gift of hearing Jesus pray for his disciples on their last night together. Today's text is the conclusion of this most intimate and loving prayer.

Some people call this prayer a sermon, and if it is, it's a long one, as it runs to 4 chapters – but what might be a better description of Jesus' prayer is to describe it as a love song – a love song for his disciples in that room with him 2,000 years ago...and also Jesus' love song for us gathered around this Table today.

In this love song, this tender, passionate and confident prayer, Jesus calls his disciples – us – friends...intimate companions he trusts to know his heart, companions in whom he has every confidence to carry on his work of healing and wholeness in the world.

Jesus trusts us, his friends, to know his heart. As this prayer begins, the beloved disciple – who is that unnamed friend in John's Gospel – is resting his head on Jesus' chest. The beloved disciple can hear not only Jesus' voice as Jesus prays, but can also hear Jesus' heartbeat...his very heartbeat.

It's a powerful thing to consider and envision – leaning on Jesus' shoulder, hearing his heart beat.

John is clear that the term “beloved disciple” is not synonymous with “favorite disciple.” In John's gospel, Jesus creates a *community* of beloved friends, named and unnamed, who lean in close to Jesus' chest to hear that life-giving heartbeat and have it reverberate through their own minds and hearts and lives and ministries.

The beloved disciple is *any* friend who seeks to know and follow Jesus' heart. *Each of us* is the beloved disciple. Together we are the beloved community of friends who know Jesus' heart and for whom his heart prays with great love and without ceasing.

As I have reflected this week on Jesus' love song, I offer you two simple thoughts. The first is this:

- **Keep all your senses alert to God.** The world came into being through Christ, John's Gospel tells us, and God became human in Jesus to be part of all the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures of the world we know and experience:

all the wind and rain and sunshine and warmth and snow and cold. *Notice* God through the physical stuff of this life, including your imaginings of lands far away and the heartbeats of loved ones we live with up close.

The second is this:

- **Trust this community of Jesus' friends.** There is no complete "sheet music" for how to walk through each day as God's beloved disciple. We are given a heartbeat, a musical key, and sustaining grace, but then we must improvise...create our own melody. We need each other's calls, presence, voices and ministries to keep on task, focused, courageous and joyful in the work God calls us to.

On this Sunday after the Ascension, this day given to hearing Jesus' love song, Jesus' farewell sermon, may you feel the heartbeat of God coursing in a fresh way through your days and through the lives of those you love and encounter. AMEN.