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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Seventh Sunday of Easter (Series A)

May 28, 2017

Text: John 17:1–11

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

After every sermon, there should be prayer. Once we have heard God's Word, we should immediately begin to seek that it may do its saving work and produce the fruit of faith and good works (Luther, LW 69:15). This pattern of preaching and prayer is established by the Lord Jesus Himself. Our Lord's sermon – sometimes called the Upper Room Discourse – began in John 13. He preached this sermon on the night in which He was betrayed, the same night He established the Lord's Supper. During this great sermon, He preached about His death and resurrection, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, and described how our Spirit-filled life connects us to Jesus as branches are connected to a vine. And Jesus preached about our ultimate victory over the hatred and scorn of the world. Our Lord concluded His sermon with this triumphant note, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Having spoken these words, Jesus prayed.

That's where we are today in John 17 – living in the prayer of Jesus. That fact alone should embolden us. We are living in the prayer of Jesus, the prayer He offered for His Church just hours before He overcame the world and achieved her (i.e., the church's) salvation and ultimate glory. This past Thursday, we celebrated our Lord's ascension to the Father's right hand in glory. According to Romans 8 and Hebrews 7, the ascended Lord always intercedes for us to the Father. We live in the prayers of our mighty Lord.

Today's reading in John 17 is only a portion of the prayer our Lord prayed that fateful night. The first section (vs. 1–5) is about the work Jesus is about to accomplish for His Father's glory. The second section is a prayer (6–11) specifically for His Church.

Jesus begins His prayer to the Father with a petition for Himself. "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (vs. 1). Jesus came to do His

Father's will in all things. The great fulfillment of God's will was about to begin. In what would transpire over the next few hours – remember our Lord's betrayal, arrest, and suffering death are about to take place – the saving knowledge of God's love would be revealed to the world.

The time of glorification had come, a glorification through suffering and crucifixion. For God the Father to be exalted Jesus must be exalted on the cross. The Father is exalted in the Son for the Father would raise the Lord Jesus from the dead, cast the devil beneath His feet, and make him King and lord over all creation. This glory would be proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel into all the world. Thus, the Easter proclamation of Christ's being risen from the dead must be made to know to the ends of the earth (Luther, LW 69:22).

In the preaching of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, God the Father is glorified. Through preaching, the world discovers how God is able to help and save amid weakness, shame, and death and to bring life, glory, and power out of them. The glorification of the Father began when Christ went to the cross, died, and came forth from death into His glory, ascended into heaven, and gave the Holy Spirit. This preaching, the Holy Spirit, causes to go forth into all creation until the Last Day. For this is the office of the Holy Spirit to reveal through the Gospel what a great and glorious work God the Father has done through His Son, the Lord Jesus: He has redeemed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil; taken us into His grace and protection; and given Himself entirely to us. Through preaching, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son, and wherever the Son is glorified, the Father is exalted and the Church is strengthened (Luther, LW 69:23).

The Son does not take this task on His own initiative. The Father gave Jesus authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom the Father had given to Him (vs. 3). The work that Jesus does on your behalf is the work of the Father. You belong to God and the Lord Jesus is given the authority to bring you to your eternal inheritance. This is but another way of saying that your present and eternal life is in the hands of Jesus, and no one can take you from Him. This saving authority is given to Jesus. So rest confident, dear saints of God, you live in the life, love, and prayer of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus alone accomplishes and secures Your eternal glory and hope. So turn away from the wisdom and teachings of man that would draw your attention away from Jesus. Look not to your own good works, nor to the false and pseudo-spiritualities offered by so many. The glory of the Father and of the Holy Spirit is found only in the preaching

and teaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected for the salvation of the world. Our Lord Himself declares in vs. 3–4 that eternal life is found only in knowing the Father, as the true God, and Jesus, the One sent by the Father to accomplish His work and bring glory to the earth.

To know God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is to believe and trust in Him as He is revealed in God's Word. Christ gives eternal life to all who believe in Him through preaching (Luther, LW 69:32). For He is sent by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring God's saving glory to us here on earth. That is the work Jesus accomplished (vs. 4) on Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension. The Holy Spirit constantly draws us back to the work Jesus did for us and for our salvation.

The second section of the Lord's prayer in today's reading is a petition for the Church especially focused upon the ministry of the apostles. "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your world...For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them..." (vs. 6–8). These men represent the Church and her on-going ministry of reconciliation. They were ordinary, sinful men. But the Lord called them, revealed His name to them, and gave them words to preach.

Jesus knew the hardships His disciples would face in the world. And so He prays for them directly and explicitly. The world will hate them because the world hated Jesus. There is caution here for us today. The Church of Jesus is established upon the foundation of the apostles. Through their preaching and teaching, we have received God's name and God's Word. We are baptized into the Name of God and believe His Word to be true and sacred. We are in the world but not of the world. That will bring hostility and scorn from the world. Remember how Jesus ended His Upper Room sermon, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The opposition comes when we reject the works and ways of the world. When we say that we will not be greedy for earthly gain, that pleasure seeking for the sake of pleasure seeking is an evil, that lying, self-indulgence, gossip, and pride are corrosive to life, home, and society. The world hated Jesus for preaching and living this message. We can expect to be treated no differently.

But the Lord prays for us. “All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them...Keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (vs. 10–11).

God’s name and His Word are the only shield that withstands the onslaught of our spiritual enemies of the devil, the world, and our own sinful selves. Our only protection is the Name of God, bestowed in our Baptism, and His Word that covers us with the blood of Christ, and the intercession of Jesus for His Church. This is our protective shield against everything that would cause us to doubt God's goodness in Jesus. Guarded by God’s Name and His Word we are unshakably defended, because you are covered with the glory of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the cleansing of His blood, and the power of His name.

Finally, Jesus prays for our unity, “that they may be one, even as we are one.” The unity that Jesus is speaking of is not an outward, organizational unity or a political unity, but a unity of faith in Christ. It is the unity of a people gathered around the font, the pulpit, and the altar. There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all. There is one holy ministry that gives out Christ’s gifts, one Holy Supper, one holy Church. (thanks to Rev. Cwirla for the last two paragraphs.).

In the unity of this Church and in the glory of Christ’s victory, we live out our lives of faith and obedience. Love for God and love for our neighbor are the hallmarks of God’s people. For we are one in Christ, who brings us to the Father through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Our glory and victory is secure dear saints of God. The reason? Christ prays for it. He won it in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. We, as God’s redeemed people, live in the glory of Christ, now and for all eternity.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.