

Sermon for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" (John 17:20-21).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

In these first words of our Gospel reading this morning,

Jesus does not "ask for these only" (John 17:20),

but also for those who would hear and believe in Him *through their Word*.

Jesus was praying for His disciples, or more specifically, His Apostles who would be tasked with revealing His glory for the life of the world.

"These" for whom He prays were the ones who were with Jesus on that night when He was betrayed -

on that night when He had told them, "The world will hate you (John 15:19);

they will persecute you (15:20); they will cast you out and perhaps even kill you (16:2).

You will weep and lament (16:20);

you will suffer and be scattered (16:31);

In this world you will have tribulation...

But take heart; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Jesus had no doubt the victory was His.

He was making all things new.

By His death and resurrection, God was reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19) -

re-uniting us with Himself -

not only paying the price for that reunion by His own death on the cross,

but now literally entrusting His
pastors with this message of reconciliation, so that all who would hear
His Word and receive His gifts through this Office of the Holy Ministry
would be gathered into Communion with Him and
with the Father for life everlasting.

Before His death (John 15:16-17)... after His resurrection (Mat 28:18-19)... and
even after His Ascension (Rev 22:6-7),

Jesus made it clear that the saving benefits of His death and resurrection would
be given out by His angels - His messengers -

His Apostles and all those pastors who would follow to reveal His glory for the life
of the world.

And so He prayed, *“not for these only,*

but also for those who will believe in Me through their Word (v20),

that they may all be one, just as You Father, are in Me, and I in You,

that they also may be in us... (v21).

[For] the glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one
even as We are one” (John 17:22)...

Still pretty confusing... right? -

all the more so if you don't really understand what this “glory” is that Jesus keeps
referring to...

I mean, what is this “Glory of the Lord” that somehow unites us
with Jesus and with one another just as intimately as the Father and

the Son have been united from all eternity?

Well, if we go to the OT, we get a hint. For there, we find in Hebrew the “Kavoth Yahweh,”

which in English is “The Glory of the Lord” -

which, in a nutshell, always refers to the touchable, seeable, hearable, witnessable self-revelation of God WITH us to save us.

The “Glory of the Lord” is what God “looks like” when He is revealing Himself and His salvation for us -

God WITH us -

God reconciling us to Himself, that we may once again have that union with Him and IN Him for which we were created.

The first place we find this “Glory of the Lord” is in Ex Ch. 16 where Moses says to Aaron,

“Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold,

the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud” (Exo 16:9-10).

Soon after, the “Glory of the Lord” appeared as the consuming fire over Mt. Sinai from which came the Covenant and the 10 Commandments (Ex 24:16-17).

Next, the “Glory of the Lord” would fill the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, to guide the Israelites throughout their journey to the Promised Land (Num 9:15-22)

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And in time, the “Glory of the Lord” would fill His temple (1 King 8:11) in order to dwell with His people on earth and to provide His blessings.

In other words, the “Glory of the Lord” is the divine revelation of God’s presence with us to bless us and save us -

in the Cloud, in the tabernacle, in the temple...

In the flesh...

For the Word who was with God, the Word who IS God (John 1:1) - became flesh and dwelt among us,

and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14).

For ultimately, it is Jesus who reveals God with us to save us -

Jesus who makes His love known for us -

Jesus who comes for us and unites Himself to us, paying the price for our sin and receiving us back into that everlasting relationship with Him for which we were created.

In fact, if you want to see God in His greatest glory,

see Him there where He gives His life for yours -

there in flesh and blood on that cross -

there in that very hour when the Son of Man is glorified...

For there IS no greater glory -

there IS no more spectacular, visible manifestation and revelation of God in His love for you than in that moment of His death on the cross.

Indeed, it is in Christ - NOT in cloud, not in fire, not in thunder or rock or temple made by hands,

but in Christ crucified and risen that we see God reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19)-

paying the price for our sins and saving us, re-uniting us, re-communing us -

restoring us to all that we had before the fall into sin.

Yes - Thanks be to God!

For left to ourselves,

we would never be one in relationship with God or with one another.

Rather, because of our sin -

because of our hell-bent determination to live alone in that exclusive little community of "Me, Myself, and I,"

we would remain eternally separated from God and lost forever in that lonely darkness outside of His kingdom.

For sin is nothing other than our divorce from God.

In fact, when we sin, it is not communion with God or community that we seek, but gratification for ourselves alone.

We fail to show our children and our spouses the love that would bring peace - we fail to show our parents the respect they deserve.

We murder one another by our anger and hatred,

and we tear one another down by our words on social-media or that ruinous gossip that delights in the failures of others and provides such delectable comfort for ourselves.

In the meantime, we never seem to be content with the things we have been given-

We never seem entirely happy with the way things are going for us -

and so we covet and complain and grumble for more...

always looking out for "Number One..."

always wrapped up in that little community of "Me, Myself, and I,"

always going it alone, separating ourselves from God and from one another by our sin,

destined to suffer alone, die alone, and remain alone for all eternity.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is what we are being saved from...

For God has not abandoned us to our lonely, self-centered ways,

and He has not forsaken us, despite the evil we have done.

Rather, He has made it clear from the get-go that He does not desire the death of the wicked – not even you and me –

but wants you back with Him in that relationship for which He created you–

the relationship of which marriage in this life is merely an image –

the relationship of *perfect* love

and communion and oneness and wholeness with the Father and the Son that surpasses anything we could imagine in this fallen world.

And for that reason, God reveals His love – His glory –

His saving presence to forgive you, to provide for you,

and to gather you to Himself for life everlasting.

And I guess the question is, where, now, do we find this “Glory of the Lord?”

Where do we find God with us in a touchable, seeable, hearable, witness-able way to forgive our sins and gather us back into Communion with Himself?

We find Him exactly where He said He would be –

With us always – in the Office of the Holy Ministry – in His Word and Sacraments until the end of the age. (Matt 28:20)

And when you turn from your sin –

when you leave behind the little world of

“Me, Myself, and I” to receive the gifts Christ pours out for you here in His Body and Blood,

then you are indeed part of the fellowship – the koinonia –

the body of Christ in Community with Him

and with one another as you take your places at the feast in His kingdom that has no end.

Of course, those who insist on going their own way may still do so...

Those who love and practice falsehood -

those who reject the "Glory of the Lord" and His Real Presence in the gifts He gives -

who continue in the way of the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters can remain in the darkness "outside" the community if they chose.

But blessed are those who treasure God's Word (Rev 22:7).

Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Blessed are those who take the water of life without price and who receive from the tree of life the fruits of the cross.

For the Lord is coming soon, and He will repay everyone for what he has done (Rev 22:12).

And when you have turned from your sin to stand in the radiance of His glory and receive the gifts He pours out for your forgiveness, life, and salvation,

then you are even now united with Him in His glory to reign with Him forever and ever (Rev 22:5).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Preached by Pastor Holowach

Sermon text: John 17:20-26