

7th Sunday of Easter.

John 17:1-11

HYMNS: 352, 113, 195, 109, 286, 169.

INTROIT: 68:1-10.

P God will arise. His enemies will scatter,
C **so that those who hate Him will flee from Him.**
P As smoke is blown away, You will blow them away.
C **As wax melts before the fire, wicked people will perish before God.**
P Nevertheless, righteous people will be glad. They will rejoice before God.
C **They will be glad and rejoice.**
P Sing to God! Sing praise to His name! Prepare a road for Him who rides through the deserts!
C **His name is the LORD. Be very glad in His presence!**
P God, who is in His holy dwelling-place,
C **is the Father of the fatherless and the Defender of widows.**
P God places lonely people in homes. He leads prisoners out into prosperity,
C **but rebellious people live in a scorched land.**
P O God, when You went out before Your people,
C **when You marched through the wilderness**
P the earth quaked, the heavens indeed poured down rain before God, the One of Sinai,
C **before God, the God of Israel.**
P You caused a plentiful rain to fall,
C **O God. You firmly established Your weary inheritance.**
P It was Your dwelling-place in which they settled.
All **Out of Your goodness, O God, You prepared for needy people.**

COLLECT: O King of glory, Lord of Hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings

1st reading: Acts 1; 12-26.

Epistle: 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11.

Gospel: John 17:1-11.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

The text for our sermon for this morning is written in the book of John 17:1-11. with a special focus on verse 11 which was our Gospel reading before.

1 Jesus spoke these Words, and looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify You! **2** For You have given Him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. **3** This is eternal life, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. **4** I have glorified You on the earth by finishing the work that You have given Me to do. **5** Now, Father, glorify Me at Your side with the glory that I had with You before the world existed! **6** “I have made Your name known to the people whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. **7** Now they know that all things that You have given Me come from You, **8** because I have given them the Words

that You have given Me; and they have received them and learned the truth that I have come from You, and they have believed that You have sent Me. ⁹ I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those whom You have given Me. For they are Yours. ¹⁰ All that are Mine are Yours, and what are Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one!

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Peace be with you.

E Pluribus Unum - from many, "*the*", one. Australia is run many "*the government*", and by the rule of Law, and agreements of men, for the one, our society.

It's not the same for the Holy Christian Church, and the nation of God's people. Here it's the rule of grace, received through faith - "and this not of yourselves, but the gift of God that no one should boast." [Ephesians 2:8-9.]

This is what we learn from Jesus' prayer in today's Gospel. The Apostle Paul knew what he was talking about when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians. This is the one holy Christian and Apostolic Church as we confess in the Nicene Creed - the holy catholic "*Christian*," Church, as in universal or one true Church based upon what we have received from God through a vast cloud and chain of witnesses that connect us to the Church of Acts and the Apostles and to Christ Himself. What We Have Received Makes Us One

"Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one!"

Notice He doesn't pray, Father, cause them to work to become one. He doesn't pray, Father, give them powerful, charismatic leaders that will unite them. He doesn't even pray, Father, make them the same. He prays, "**Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one!**" So how does our Father, whom we should fear, love, and trust above all things do this?

Well, His only begotten Son, whom He has commanded the world to "**listen to**" [Mark 9:7 transfiguration account], speaks to this as he prepares His disciples for His departure ¹³ **However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will lead you into the whole truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but He will speak whatever He hears, and He will tell you what is coming.** ¹⁴ **He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and will tell it to you.** ¹⁵ **All things that the Father has are Mine. That is why I have said, 'He takes from what is Mine and will tell it to you.'**

¹⁶ **"A little while and you do not see Me any more; and again a little while and you will see Me."** [John 16:13-15.]

So, what Jesus is praying about is a unity in teaching, unity that repeats only that which He has first given us, for in that unity is life and that's the farthest thing from legalism. That's a unity of Confession, that is, abiding in the Word of God and Him alone.

This unity He has worked through the Apostles He sent out to establish churches by spreading only the Word and kingdom of God that they first and received from Christ. "**There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope — ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.**" [Ephesians 4:4-6.]

This unity He has worked through "Our earliest Lutheran forefathers [who] had great confidence in the **"living and abiding Word of God"** [1Peter 1:23.] So confident were they in the unfailing power of God's Word that these men confessed before kings and princes their belief that God's Word does its good work no matter what. God's Word does its work even when wicked and unbelieving men preach it and administer the sacraments. Our Lutheran forefathers boldly proclaimed, *'We know that the Word and the sacraments are efficacious [that is, powerful and faith-producing] even when wicked men administer them.'* (Apology VII.19).

"This was Luther's own personal confession as well, as he stated in his Large Catechism: *'Even though a knave should administer it, it is the true sacrament (that is, Christ's body and blood) just as truly as when one uses it most worthily. For it is not founded on the holiness of men but on the Word of God.'* (Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar.15)

Several decades later, the second generation of Lutherans confirmed and repeated this confession that *God's Word and sacraments remain powerful and beneficial for you*, even if your pastor or preacher should only pretend to be a believer but not himself believe:

'Even though a rascal receives or gives the sacrament, it is the true sacrament (that is, Christ's body and blood) just as much as when one does so in the most worthy manner, for the sacrament is not based on the holiness "or even faith" of men but on the Word of God' (Formula of Concord, SD VII.24).

"Our Lutheran forefathers repeatedly made this good confession because there were many Christians in many congregations who had great fears about their salvation. For many years, these Christians had listened to the preaching of men whom they later discovered did not even know what they were talking about when it comes to God's Word of forgiveness and life. These Christians had spent their lives receiving Holy Communion from men whom they later learned did not even believe in Holy Communion; they brought their children to be baptized by men who were, at the very core, deniers of Baptism. These Christians wanted to know, was it all for nothing?

"In answer to their fears, our Lutheran forefathers declared, 'No!'

"'We know that the Word and the sacraments are efficacious [that is, powerful and faith-producing] even when wicked men administer them.'" (Apology VII.19). And wicked men will administer them. it has always been so. This is no new thing or teaching listen to what it says in Psalm 146: ³ **Do not trust in noble people, in a descendant of Adam, who cannot save!** ⁴ **When his spirit departs, he will return to his earth. On that day his plans will perish.** ⁵ **Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help! His hope is in the LORD, his God,** and Isaiah 64: ⁶ All of us have become like something that is unclean, and all our righteous actions are like a filthy garment. All of us have withered like a leaf and our wrongdoings carry us away like the wind. It also says in Jeremiah 23: **"Look! The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch, who will reign wisely as King. He will establish justice and righteousness on the earth.** ⁶ **In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This will be His name, which people will call Him: 'The-LORD-Our-Righteousness.**

Yes the LORD, and Him alone is our righteousness. He makes and keeps us one, even as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one. Therefore, if we are indeed to be one, we must pray, as did Jesus: **"that God's will be done.** For there will be strange events if we are to abide in God's will... We shall have to suffer many thrusts and blows on that account from everything that seeks to oppose and prevent the fulfillment of the first two petitions. No one can believe how the devil opposes and resists these prayers. He cannot allow anyone to teach or to believe rightly. It hurts him beyond measure to have his lies and abominations exposed, which have been honoured under the most fancy, shameful uses of the divine name.

As in Luther's great hymn v's3, he rages as a fierce enemy with all his power and might. So he provokes the world against us, fans and stirs the fire, so that he may cause us to fall, and again bring us under his power.

"If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies. They will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing. And let nobody think that they shall have peace. We must risk whatever we have upon earth-possessions, honour, house and estate, wife and children, body and life. This hurts us no end to think of it, it hurts our flesh and the old Adam within us. The test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assaulted, and to let go whatever is taken from us." [THE LARGE CATECHISM, THE LORD'S PRAYER paragraphs 61-63, 65-66]

You see, oneness must come from oneness. Unity cannot come from the diversity of hearts, minds, desires, and abilities that men possess. Oh, God will use them - even mightily, as we see in the case of David - but He works unity not because of them, but despite them. Joseph said to them, However,: **"Do not be afraid! For am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Although you planned evil against me, God has planned good to come from it, in order to accomplish what is so this day, the preservation of the lives of many people."** [Genesis 50:19-20]

So amongst all the evil of the devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh, God intervenes by the power of His Word, making us one in Baptism; in the speaking and teaching of the same Word that has been proclaimed *"though by wicked men"* throughout the generations; in the one loaf of Christ and His teaching and one cup of His suffering that is also His cup of blessing. By the grace of God, not of men, this is what you have here in our Parish. And as long as you hold on to the Liturgy, the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God for the forgiveness of sins, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper according to Christ's command, you will always have it and be able to pass it along to another generation for the salvation of their souls.

This is what it means to confess, to repeat and abide in only what God has first spoken to us - to repeat and abide in everything God has first spoken to us. This is the Rock on which the Church has been built. For Jesus says, **"Whoever acknowledges *"confesses"* me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."** [Matthew 10:32.] This may not be easy, but it is rewarding. **"Do not be afraid at all of the things that you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil is about to throw some of you into prison in order that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Continue to be faithful until death, and I shall give you the crown of life."** [Revelation 2:10.]

Yes, What We Have Received Makes Us One. God grant that even as our Lord has prayed for us, so will it be done among us for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life - in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

3rd Hymn: 195.

Prayer of the Church 7th Sunday of Easter

P Let us pray to our Father in heaven, who keeps us in His name and hears our prayers for the sake of Jesus.

Brief silence

P Lord God, Ruler of all, protect and defend Your Church from every attack of the devil who prowls and seeks to devour. Where he tempts, strengthen Your people to resist his seductions and terrors; where he gains a foothold with false teaching or ungodly living, call them to repentance and holiness; and where he incites enemies against Your Word and Church, preserve Your saints in the faith so that they might rejoice to share in the sufferings of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Almighty God, as You provided Matthias to replace the departed Judas, so provide for Your Church pastors and missionaries today, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be proclaimed to all nations. Protect them and their families from every attack of the evil one, console them in trouble and keep them steadfast in the faith. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Holy God, faithful Creator, remember all who suffer illness, affliction and injury [*including* *J.* Grant healing and recovery according to Your will, strengthen their faith, and protect them from every assault of the evil one upon body, mind and soul. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Holy Father, Your Son prayed for His people before His death, that they might be sustained in life and faith. Hear our prayers on behalf of all our pastors and their families Bless their future endeavours, be with them in success and adversity, and preserve them in repentance, faith and hope all their days. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P O King of kings, You arise to protect Your people and scatter Your enemies. Have mercy on all those who serve in Government or in the armed forces as Your instruments for our peace and safety. Protect them from all evil, sustain them in times of anxiety and violence, and grant them repentant hearts that rejoice in the peace won by Christ in His victory for them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Our Father, Your Son prayed that Your people might be one, even as You and He are one. As You have gathered Your people into the one faith by one Baptism, so grant them a united confession of Your truth as they receive Jesus' body and blood this day. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Heavenly Father, as the first Christians devoted themselves to prayer and worship following the departure of Christ Jesus by means of His glorious ascension, preserve us in the same until we are raised up with all the saints to Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

4th Hymn: 109.