

ASK THE FATHER – HE WILL GIVE IT TO YOU!**Sermon for the 6th Sunday of Easter, 2019****John 16:23-33**

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 today is part of our Gospel read before, John 16:23-27: ²³ **In that day you will not ask Me any questions. Truly, truly, I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.** ²⁴ **Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete!** ²⁵ **I have been telling you these things in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures of speech but shall report to you plainly about the Father.** ²⁶ **In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall ask the Father on your behalf.** ²⁷ **For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and because you have believed that I have come forth from God.** ²⁸ **I have come forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.”**

²⁹ **His disciples said, “Look! Now You are speaking plainly and are not speaking any dark saying.** ³⁰ **Now we know that You know all things and do not need to have anyone ask You questions. By this we believe that You have come forth from God.”**

³¹ **Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³² Look! The hour is coming and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and you will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.** ³³ **I have spoken these things to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have distress. Nevertheless, have courage! I have overcome the world.”**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

To the untrained eye, there can be a misunderstanding when we hear Jesus say, **“Truly, truly, I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.”** It really does sound like this is a guarantee that if we want anything and everything, then we simply ask God the Father who will grant our every wish.

Of course, *we can ask* the Father for anything in Jesus’ name, but what makes this so difficult to understand for so many people is that Jesus was not promising that we shall get everything we can conceivably pray for. Jesus was not promising that anything we ask for would automatically be given as much as He was promising that every prayer would be answered, that God the Father was listening to our prayers, and wanted to hear our prayers, and that we could count on God the Father just as we have counted on Jesus Himself. Asking the Father in Jesus’ name would be as good as asking Jesus in person.

When Jesus walked this earth, we can only imagine the things He spoke about to His disciples. It was to His disciples that He was speaking the words of our text today. The disciples were accustomed to Jesus, in the flesh, but now these words come in the middle of Jesus warning them that He was going away, that they would no longer see Him, and that their hearts would know sorrow on account of that. These disciples were accustomed to asking things of their Master - and receiving something in response. They were not accustomed to asking for things like goods or wealth, but when they asked Jesus a question, He answered. When they wanted to eat, they got to eat - now and again they even ate miraculously.

Jesus now tells His disciples that when He would leave them, they were going to have the same relationship with the Father that they had with Him. They would pray to the Father, who would deal with them just as they expected Jesus would. The Father would answer. Whatever it was that they needed, God the Father would provide. Jesus even made the point that He wasn’t going to have to intercede with the Father for them, in order to get what they needed, but the Father Himself would listen and answer their prayers because *He* loved them! Jesus said, **“²⁶ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall ask the Father on your behalf.** ²⁷ **For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and because you have believed that I have come forth from God.”** In that day, the disciples of Jesus would also begin to pray in the name of Jesus. However, Jesus wanted them to know He didn’t mean He would then bring their requests to the Father. He wouldn’t have to. Because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice, they would have the Father’s direct attention as a loving friend ready to listen and help. The Father so loves everyone who loves Jesus and believes that He has come from the Father. We have direct access to the Father through Jesus. Meanwhile, Jesus also pleads our case with the Father without our asking.¹

¹ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1

Jesus tells us these things for our comfort and our peace of mind because life isn't comfortable at all times. Sometimes we are tempted to despair, yet Jesus tells us of the Father's love for us so that we shall be able to approach any situation with faith in Him. However, more than just that, Jesus says He wants us to know this "**so that your joy may be complete.**" Our joy is filled up by knowing what we know, and by making use of what He teaches us.

What we know is the Word of God. We know both the Law and the Gospel. We know the reality of sin. We know how frequently we go our own way and feel as if we can handle life without considering Jesus. While the Law convicts us of our sin, we also know the Gospel which tells us of our Saviour. The verses that preceded our text today, our Gospel reading from last Sunday,² talked about how the disciples would have sorrow while the world would have joy, but then that sorrow would be turned to joy. Jesus used the image of a woman in labour; the pain before, and the joy afterwards. That is how the complete Word of God, both Law and Gospel, works in us and for us.

While we live in this world, we have the joy of the Gospel, yet we still **have distress**. We have the distress of the hatred of the world, and the distress of our own sinful flesh longing and lusting for sin. We have the distress of guilt and of the knowledge of our sins. The world, on the other hand, has no problem with sin. It rejoices in sin. The world loves to lead us to sin for it understands on a primitive level that sin separates from God.³

When we speak of the world, we are talking about the society of men under the guidance of the "*ruler of this world*," as Jesus described the devil.⁴ Men have consciousness and intelligence, and so does the leader of all who lives without Christ. He leads and plans, and so do those who follow him. That's where persecutions come from.

In our country, we see a growing hatred towards Christians coming from mainstream media, social media, certain politicians, and intellectual elites. It is growing. Strong language and slanders are aimed with increasing frequency and energy at just-plain-old-fashioned Christians. We are called ignorant, demented, backwards, dangerous, and bigots. Our intelligence is questioned in speeches and in print and in our entertainments, like TV and movies. We are accused of doing things we don't do, of trying to commandeer the country and force our values on the world. We are accused of being insane, and pictured as an enemy that must be eradicated - and this by people who think that Islamic terrorism is really not a big problem in the world.

Those who spew such hate language at us is **the world** of which Jesus says, "**you have distress.**" The world has effectively removed historic Christianity from the public square in our culture, and wants to silence anyone who may bring a Christian perspective into the arena of politics or government policy or education. The world has likened the humble confession of the Christian faith - or Christian-based morality - to terrorism. It makes the lives of God's people difficult and bitter, and much of it leads to distress.

The distress we know and feel is the distress of our sins, and the sins of those around us, and the displeasure of the world - even that part of the world that calls itself our friends, our family, or fellow Christians. The joy they know is the joy of seeing the influence of Christian thought and morality diminish.

It is in the face of these pains and pressures that Jesus reminds us that we are not alone, nor are we bereft of any help. He comforts us by saying, "**Nevertheless, have courage! I have overcome the world.**"

Just as Jesus would stand up for His disciples and speak against the hostility of the world toward them, and give them peace, and provide for them - so will the heavenly Father. Jesus also gives us the promise that God the Father will listen to us and answer any and every prayer. "**If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.**" That is, He will listen to every prayer, and answer it just as Jesus would - not necessarily giving us every single thing we may think to include in a prayer, as though He were a catalogue service, but guiding us, blessing us, protecting us, providing for our needs, and helping us in every trouble and in every circumstance.

Our joy now is that we are never alone and never without resources. We have the Lord standing there, ready to hear, eager to answer, promising help and supply in every need. He promises all of that to us because **the Father Himself loves (us)**. He loves us particularly because we love Jesus, we believe in Him and hold to Him and serve Him and call ourselves by His name, and stand with Him for blessing, or for the abuse and hatred of the world.

Although, really, how could we do anything other? We are filled with Him. We are in Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus is in us, and we stand in the world as Christ, with His holiness and His glory, and with His power. We have His Word. We eat

² John 16:12-22

³ Isaiah 59:2

⁴ John 12:31

His body and drink His blood. We love with His love, and we suffer the hatred of the world for Him, and the heavenly Father loves us and desires to help us stand faithfully in Him and in His love.

Of course, our joy will finally be made complete on the great day of the Lord, when He will bring us to Himself, body and soul reunited and outfitted for eternity. In the meantime, He gives us this privilege and power of prayer so that we may stand and finally taste that ultimate joy. Therefore, knowing the truth of all of these things, the theme for this morning is, *pray!*

Use the gift of the Lord and call upon Him in every need, and never doubt that He desires your prayers. He will listen, and He will answer with everything you need, and all that will be of blessing for you. After all, it's part of your birthright and inheritance as a child of God in Jesus Christ. It is a comfort when you need it. It is power when you need that. It is the source of wisdom and a fountain of strength and protection from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in a world stacked against you.

So, pray. Pray often. Pray with confidence. Never give up on prayer. Take advantage of the love of God for you - because that is precisely what He wants you to do. Take all your cares, sorrows, and joys to the Lord, for He always lends a listening ear to your prayers. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER.

Lord, our God, You alone know the plans that You have for us and our world, but we rejoice and worship You because we know that they are loving plans. In Your goodness, You spread life, love, beauty, and joy throughout Your creation. In Your grace, You lighten the misery of our sinful lives, and bless us with pardon and peace. If it is your will that we must pass through troubles, enable us to turn them into opportunities, for Your glory.

We give You our warmest thanks for the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus, whom You have sent that we may have life in all its fullness. We praise You that He has humbly come into our world, has taken on Himself our sins, and has carried them to death on the cross. We glorify Your name for our release from the power of death, and for our sure hope of heaven through His resurrection.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being Your spiritual priests, as we pray in Jesus' name. We thank You for Your promise to hear all our prayers. Keep us close to Jesus each day in faith and love, gladly hearing His Word and following Him, wherever He leads us. Send Your Word out into the whole world, that it may achieve what You have planned for it. Let us as Your representatives, whom You have called out of darkness, proclaim Your light in this dark world. Give us the courage also to speak Your word of judgment when people reject Christ, the Cornerstone.

Bless Your Church on every continent. Renew Your people to be a loving fellowship of believers, a family of trust and prayer, and people who are ready to serve the needy in love. Continue to bless the work of the AELC and ULMA.

Lead all the nations of the earth along the ways of justice, righteousness, and peace. Look with special favour on our country. Give to our Prime Minister, to the Premiers of each State, to our cabinets and parliaments, to our police and to our courts, such qualities of heart and mind that they may carry out their duties earnestly, wisely, and fairly. Frustrate all efforts to promote abortion and gay unions. Protect us from all enemies, both within and without our country. Remove all strife from us. Inspire obedience to all law and order. Fill all citizens with love of holiness and moral purity. Grant that all who work in industry may find joy in their work and receive proper rewards for their efforts. Give satisfaction to those who work in the professions, as they work for the good of all. Give those who farm the soil favourable weather. Bless their work of feeding the world.

Bless all our loved ones, and make our homes places of peace. We remember especially the sick, the troubled, and the bereaved. In Jesus' name free them from the burdens of their pain and sadness.

Keep us standing strong and steady in faith. Since serving You is never useless, give us the opportunity to be busy in Your work. In Jesus' saving name we offer You these prayers. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 16:9-15

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia, who was standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia, and help us!" ¹⁰ As soon as Paul had seen the vision, we immediately looked for a way to go to Macedonia, since we concluded that God had called us to tell them the Good News.

¹¹ After we had put out to sea from Troas, we sailed straight to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a city belonging to the first part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We continued to stay in that city for some days. ¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside of the gate and along the river, where we thought there was a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. ¹⁴ There was a woman by the name of Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, who came from the city of Thyatira, and who was a worshipper of God. As she was listening, the Lord opened her heart to take heed of the things that were being said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her family had been baptised, she urged us, "If you are convinced that I believe in the Lord, come to my house and stay!" She urged us strongly.

Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who were holding the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and told me, "Come! I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

¹⁰ He carried me away in the Spirit to a large, high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It had the glory of God. Its brilliance was like a very precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, with twelve angels at the gates. Names had been written on the gates, and they are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east side, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations; and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb...

²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was made of a single pearl. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² I did not see any temple in the city. For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city also does not need the sun or the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God has given it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth bring their splendour into it. ²⁵ Its gates will not be shut at all by day. For there will be no night there. ²⁶ People will bring the splendour and wealth of the nations into it. ²⁷ Nothing that defiles, and no one who does anything

abominable or tells lies will ever come into it, but only those who have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

John 16:23-33

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