

# “Now, But Not Yet”

1 John 3:1-3

As we celebrate All Saints’ Day, we are reminded that we live in the “now, but not yet” of our eternal life. You are counted among the saints. You are holy, because holiness is all about proximity (closeness) to God. You are covered in Christ’s righteousness. You are filled with His Holy Spirit. God has chosen you and placed His name on you.

This is your reality right now as a baptized child of God. But not yet have you joined with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven lauding and magnifying God’s glorious name in God’s eternal presence. What we have here in God’s kingdom of grace – His church on earth is fantastic. Yet, we continually pray “Thy kingdom come” because what God has promised to you is joy which words cannot describe.

Our life in Christ means that we live in the “now, but not yet” of God offering promises and answering prayers. And His answer is always “yes” in Christ, just like His promises are always complete in Christ. Have confidence that we will see the fulfillment of His promises or see the answer to our prayers. The issue is not whether or not we will see this – “When” is always the issue.

“How long? O Lord,” is the repeated cry of the prophets of God and David in the Psalms. How long until you answer my prayer and deliver me? And these are the words of the select few to whom chose to speak face to face. “How long O Lord?”

Like God’s saints of all generations, they yearned for the day when they could find peace, joy, comfort, and freedom from fear. They prayed for this day for themselves and for all the people.

When you pray for peace – and I am not talking about an end to war overseas so that our military can come home; even though that would be wonderful. I am talking about peace, calmness in your life. A day without stress; a day without anxiety of any kind; a day without worry for tomorrow; worry for the safety of your children; worry about getting a job or keeping your job.

When was the last time you experienced true peace? Perhaps not since you were in your mother’s womb, and even then you were conceived in sin, as Scripture says. We pray for peace. We pray for calmness and contentment – whether we have need or whether we have plenty, as St. Paul said, he had learned the secret of contentment here on earth. However, Paul says, “I desire to die and be with Christ which is better by far.”

The answer to your prayer, is it in this life or in the life to come? Yes – on both counts. God does give you peace and calm. Imagine the chaos of your life without Him. The “now” of today would be unbearable. However, not yet do we see the fullness of what the answer to our prayer will be.

We pray “But deliver us from evil.” Luther nails the explanation of this petition. *What does this mean?* We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

We pray that our Father would rescue us from “every” evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation. “Dear Father, help us get rid of all this trouble entirely.” These words are directed against specific evils that come from the devil’s kingdom: poverty, dishonor, death; any misery or heartache; any shortage of daily bread or misuse of God’s name to which we are subjected.

We boldly ask for this. When will it be answered? In this life or the life to come? Yes. The completeness of how it is answered cannot be seen by the saints in the church on earth, but only by the saints in the Church Triumphant. God answers you now, but not yet. If only you knew how much God was protecting you right now from what Satan wanted to do to you right now. Luther said that we would probably die of fright if we knew all that Satan wanted to do to us right now.

Have confidence that God is answering your prayer right now. Have confidence that His delivering you from evil will be complete “when our last hour comes,” and He gives you a blessed end, and graciously takes you from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

Even if your life seems unbearable, like what we see happening these days to the Christians in Syria and Iraq: Have confidence in the promises of God. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The promise is sure. Their prayers will be answered. God will deliver them from evil. This does not mean that their earthly life will be spared. It simply means that He will deliver them – one way or the other.

The promises of God and the answer to our prayers are always “Yes” in Christ. The answer to the problem of evil in the world is only found in the cross of Jesus Christ who took away my guilt and yours.

The prayers of the saints are always heard. You are counted among the saints. You are holy, because holiness is all about proximity to God. You are covered in Christ’s righteousness. You are filled with His Holy Spirit. God has chosen you and placed His name on you in Baptism. He feeds you with the flesh and blood of Christ Himself. He hears your prayer and delivers you from evil.

Have confidence in the promises of God here and now. Be filled with an even great hope that the best is yet to come. Amen.