

“Only in the Resurrection”

John 17:20-26

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

Two weeks ago, we heard earlier words of Jesus which were also spoken in the Upper Room: “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” This glory that both Christ and the Father are to receive does not come from any good works or acts of love or charity that you and I show toward one another. God is not made more glorious by what we do.

These words were spoken immediately after Judas had left the Upper Room to betray Jesus. Jesus is looking ahead to His death on the cross as He speaks of His glorification. The glorification of Christ is connected with an event that appears to all the people who witnessed it to be the very opposite of glory.

Of those who were in the Upper Room, only John will witness the glory of Christ on the cross. But even he will not see it as the glorious event that it is. John watches in silence and his only action is to acknowledge Jesus’ request to care for His mother Mary after He is gone.

Judas has already left. As Scripture records, Judas greets the reality of Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion with remorse and despair – and he went out and hanged himself. And his death was such a gruesome affair with his

bowels gushing out that all the people of Jerusalem knew of this and that place was called the Field of Blood – further evidence of the reality of these events. This was no made up story.

Peter follows Jesus to His trial before the chief priests and elders, but he would end up wishing that he had cowered in fear and silence with the other disciples. For all of his boldness, Peter ends up denying Jesus, even calling down curses upon himself swearing “I do not know the man.”

Jesus knows that these things are going to happen. In John chapter 6, we hear that Jesus already knew who it was who would betray Him. In the Upper Room, Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Him three times before the rooster crows and that Satan desires “to sift you like wheat.” But Jesus says He would pray for him.

He would pray for all of them. Our Gospel reading is a portion of what is known as the “The High Priestly Prayer.” As the ultimate High Priest, Jesus prays for the protection of all His disciples. He prays that we would have a perfect oneness in the way that Jesus and the Father are one.

We hear Jesus pray, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given Me.” Two weeks ago, we heard Jesus say to His disciples, in the Upper Room: “Where I am going, you cannot come.” They cannot endure the cross; they cannot descend with Him into hell to proclaim victory over death and Satan.

So why did Jesus pray in this way? Why did He say, “I desire that they . . . may be with me where I am, to see my glory”? He says this, because, even though it is not possible, it is His desire.

Jesus prays that we have a perfect oneness and unity that mirrors that of the Father and the Son of God. That is God’s desire. This is to be our desire. This will only be achieved in the resurrection.

Last week, I mentioned that the law shows us what we ought to do, not what we can do. God desires for us to keep the law perfectly – in fact, it is demanded. Reality is that we fail again and again. So the Law acts as our teacher—to show us just how wide a gap exists between what we must accomplish to be saved and what we actually accomplish. It is unattainable in this life. It is only achieved through Christ and the resurrection.

Last week, I also mentioned that if someone is sick and their health does not improve, it is not because you didn’t pray enough or pray “hard” enough. In this sinful world, you will never have the health, strength, peace, comfort, and joy that God desires for you. Yet, God desires it for you, and He encourages you to pray. We are Easter people who long for the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. It is only then that we will see all that God desires for us.

There is this ongoing, interesting dynamic that we have with our Father in heaven. Here on earth, we can do nothing that fully satisfies His desire. As St. Paul says, “All my works are like filthy rags.” Yet, because of Christ, I am righteous and blameless in His sight. In Christ, your Father

in heaven is fully satisfied with who you are.

We fail again and again. We come before our Father as poor, miserable sinners begging His mercy and grace again and again. In our weakness, we come before Him in prayer.

Jesus says, “Your Father in heaven knows what you need even before you ask it,” yet we are encouraged, even commanded, to continue to ask. Pray without ceasing. But, this is not our attempt to change God’s will or desire. We come before Him praying the words He has given us; praying with confidence “Thy will be done” – with the desire that our will, our thoughts would become one with God. Yet, we are encouraged to pray in all circumstances, even if what we pray for seems impossible.

Jesus prays that His disciples could be with Him where He is going and see the glory of the cross and victory over Satan – even though He has already said, “Where I am going, you cannot come.”

As St. Paul says, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” His greatest glory is in sending Jesus to the cross. His greatest desire is for you to be one with Him. Now, I think you are all fine upstanding people, but look where we came from. We were born as sinners; hating the things of God; hostile to His Word; totally corrupt children of Adam, yet He loved us anyway, and His greatest desire was to bring us back into that relationship of perfect oneness. This will happen, but it will only happen in the resurrection. Which is why, as Easter people, we proclaim with joy: Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! Amen.