

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – May 24, 2020

In these days between Ascension and Pentecost, we gather with the disciples in the upper room, waiting for the Spirit to transform the church around the world. In today's gospel Jesus prays for his followers and for their mission in his name. Amid religious, social, and economic divisions, we seek the unity that Jesus had with his Father. Made one in baptism, we go forth to live our faith in the world, eager for the unity that God intends for the whole human family.

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

Sing to God, who rides upon the clouds. (Ps. 68:4)

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

Acts 1:6-14

Today's reading is part of the introduction to the narrative of the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. These verses tell of the risen Lord's conversation with his disciples on the eve of his ascension.

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

Our faith in Christ does not make us immune from the scorn of others. Nevertheless, we are to resist the designs of evil when we experience disparagement from others, because we trust God's grace will strengthen and guide us

GOSPEL: John 17:1-11

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus prays to his heavenly Father, asking that those who continue his work in this world will live in unity.

¹After Jesus had spoken these words [to his disciples], he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. ⁶I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Devotion

Continuing the work of Christ in the world . . .

By means of his passion Jesus will return to the Father and enter a heavenly glory that his followers on earth cannot fully perceive, but can hope to see in the future. The prayer traces a movement from glory on earth to glory in heaven; yet the prayer--like the rest of John's gospel--connects glory to the crucifixion itself. When Jesus enters Jerusalem at the end of his ministry, he says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

Hymn writer, Fannie Crosby writes and we sing "To God be the glory, great things He has done! So loved He the world that He gave to us His only Son, who yielded his life, an atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in." By his resurrection and ascension Jesus returns to the heavenly glory that God prepared for him in love, and Jesus prays that his followers will one day join him in the Father's presence to share in this glory and love (17:5, 24-26). To the eye of faith, however, the glory of the exalted Lord is already present in the crucified body of Jesus. If glory defines what the crucifixion is, the crucifixion defines what glory is. The crucifixion manifests the scope of divine power by disclosing the depth of divine love.

In these times of distress and uncertainty, perhaps it is even more imperative that as we gather in a different worship environment we look, as John did, and with thanksgiving and anticipation we await the Holy Spirit coming into our lives as we approach Pentecost. Samuel Longfellow, brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was a Unitarian pastor and poet. His text to *Holy Spirit, Truth Divine*, names qualities of the Holy Spirit: Truth, Love, Power, and Right. He prays that each of these may act in the life of the Christian. May these qualities be our guide as we navigate this storm together. So be it. Amen.

Prayer

O God of glory, your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to your right hand. Unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



