

In Nomine Jesu

Psalm 107:1-9

Numbers 21:4-9

1 Timothy 2:1-6

John 16:23-33

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last week you heard about the Holy Spirit. You heard about how He convicts the world concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgement. The week before that you heard about the fact that Jesus will turn our sorrow into joy. Today, you will hear about what Jesus' sacrifice means for you regarding your relationship to the Father. Specifically, you will hear about the fact that now, Christians are able to make requests of the Father in the name of Jesus.

Today is Rogate Sunday. Rogate literally translates as a command, "You all, ask." After hearing our readings and hymns for today you probably aren't too surprised to hear that. Prayer is what connects all of our readings today. Our Gospel reading picks up after the Gospel reading from last week and the week before. It comes right after Jesus proclaims, "You have sorrow now, but I will see

you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”¹

Our reading for today begins:

And in that day you will certainly not ask anything of Me. Truly truly I say to you, that anything you might request from the Father He will give to you by means of the Name of Me.²

Hearing this, some of you might be surprised. Aren't we supposed to pray to Jesus? Well your praying to Jesus certainly isn't a bad thing. But that's not the point that Jesus is trying to make here. Jesus' point is that you are now able to request things of the Father. To put it another way, the Person to Whom Jesus Himself prays is now the Person to Whom you get to pray. You were in fact just given a promise by Jesus. He promised that anything you ask of the Father, He will give to you by means of the Name of Jesus.

Now before anyone starts going all Osteen on me, recognize that Jesus qualifies this statement in the next verse by linking your receiving what you ask for with your asking by means of the Name of Jesus. Jesus is not teaching a name it and claim it type of prayer. So before you all start trying to claim the next lottery ticket, let's move on to the next verse.

¹ John 16:22 (ESV)

² John 16:23

Until now, you did not ask for anything by means of my Name. All of you ask and all of you will receive, in order that the joy of you all is made full.³

The question now is, what exactly does Jesus mean when He commands you to ask by means of His Name? Before we get to that though recognize that this is Jesus commanding His disciples to pray by means of His Name. That means that if you're not praying, you are disobeying Jesus' command. Also, if you are not praying by means of the Name of the Jesus, you are sinning. There's lots of books out there that will tell you how you are supposed to pray in order to get results. Some of them may even have helpful methods and teachings in them. But in our reading today, the expert on prayer, who is Jesus, tells you how you should pray.

Back to the question then, what does it mean to ask by means of the Name of Jesus? It's more than just tacking on, 'In Jesus Name,' onto the end of your prayer. It's also more than tacking on, 'Not my will, but yours be done.' That isn't to say that those words are wrong or misplaced. It's to say that asking by means of the Name of Jesus is more than those things.

To ask by means of the Name of Jesus is to believe that it is only because of that Name that you are heard. It also means to know that it is only because of that Name that the Father grants your request. Your prayers are heard and

³ John 16:24

granted only because of the fact that Jesus died on the cross for you. If you try to approach the Throne of the Most High by means of anything other than Jesus' Name, your request will not be heard.

When Adam fell he fundamentally changed all of humanity. His action barred all mankind from approaching the Father by means of their own names. When Jesus died on the cross, He gave you another Name to use in place of your own. He gave you His own Name. That means that He gave you His righteousness, His own good standing with the Father, to use as your way to approach the Father.

It doesn't matter how hard you pray. It doesn't matter what language you use. It doesn't even matter how you feel when you pray. None of that matters. What matters, is that Jesus died for you. Therefore the Father will hear and respond to your requests. It is when the Father hears you and responds to you that your joy will be full.

This is one of the blessings that you in these New Testament times have that those in the Old Testament didn't have. They certainly prayed and made requests, make no mistake about that. But they weren't able to pray by means of the Name of Jesus yet. Jesus reveals why they didn't pray in this way as our text continues.

This in parables I have spoken to you. The hour is coming when no longer in parables will I speak openly to you, but plainly concerning the Father I will proclaim to you.⁴

You have a divine advantage over everyone in the Old Testament, and even those in the Gospels. Jesus has spoken plainly to you through the words of His Apostles. The Holy Spirit has been sent to help you understand the Truth who has contained Himself in these Scriptures.

You get to know that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Before He and the Spirit revealed that, people weren't able to fully understand this reality. That's why Jesus goes on in our reading and says:

In that hour, by means of the Name of Me you will request, I do not say to you that I will ask the Father concerning you all. For the Father Himself loves you all, for you all have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and came into the World, again I am leaving the world and journeying to the Father⁵

I'm going to read that again, because it's important:

In that hour, by means of the Name of Me you will request, I do not say to you that I will ask the Father concerning you all. For the Father Himself loves

⁴ John 16:25

⁵ John 16:26-27

you all, for you all have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and came into the World, again I am leaving the world and journeying to the Father.⁶

The amazing, and yes even awesome, reality that Jesus teaches you about here is that you, by means of the Name of Jesus, are able to approach the Throne of your Father in Heaven and personally make requests of Him. Praying in the Name of Jesus, does not mean that you pray to Jesus, who then prays to the Father for you. It means that each and every one of you and all of you together, have been and will continue to be granted audiences with the Creator of the Universe.

(Pause)

Now, how does that fact fit in with the fact which Paul informs you of in the Epistle reading, the fact that Jesus is our Mediator? Well, let me put it this way for you. Jesus isn't the type of Mediator who only passes along your message. Jesus is the type of the Mediator, who takes you, dresses you up in the right clothes, His righteousness, gives you the right words to say, the Lord's Prayer, and then presents you before the King allowing you to use His own Honor as your own. That is what Jesus is promising you in these verses.

⁶ John 16:26-28

Now continuing along with our illustration, how do you think that the King would react if you refused to accept the Mediator's work and did things your own way? He'd probably throw you out of His court. That's what God will do anyways.

The Father loves you Himself, *because* you have loved Jesus and have believed that Jesus came from God. (As a quick translation side note: this is *phileo*, or brotherly love, in both cases.) It is only possible for you to love, *phileo*, Jesus and believe that He came from God because the Spirit convicted and convinced you. If you try to approach the Father when you don't love Jesus and do not believe that He came from the Father, you can fully expect to be ignored and booted out of the palace.

I tell you this, because it's very easy to fall into the trap of relying on your own name. The devil is the one who sets this trap for you. He's the one who will tell you, "You're a decent person. You go to church every Sunday. You give plenty of your time, talents, and treasures to the Church. God has to listen to you." No He doesn't. You cannot be a decent enough person to be granted an audience with the Father. You could be in church every day, and still not be good enough for Him to hear you. It doesn't matter how much or what you give, nothing can earn you a place in God's court.

Nothing, except, for the Name of Jesus. The devil might alternatively try to trick you into thinking that even the Name of Jesus isn't good enough to grant you an audience because you are such a bad person. This is just another way of him tricking you into relying on your own name rather than the Name of Jesus.

Pray by means of the Name of Jesus, which you have Faith in because the Spirit creates it in you. Believe in the Name of the Jesus and rely on His promises. This is the only way that you will be heard, by covering yourself with the One who died for you.

Sadly the disciples got a little distracted and kind of missed that point. Remember they don't have the Spirit helping them out yet. Our reading continues:

The disciples were saying, "Behold, now with plainness He speaks openly, and parables He does not speak. Now we know that You have known all and You have no need for anyone to question You. In this we believe that from God You came."⁷

So do they believe that He came from God in more than just His knowledge? They are really excited that He is finally speaking plainly, but the fact is that they still are not able to endure even Jesus' plain words. They still do not

⁷ John 16:29-30

have the Spirit, and without Him, they cannot believe in the way they need to. Jesus tries to warn them of this as our reading concludes.

Jesus replied to them, “Now you believe? Behold the hour is coming and has come that you will all be scattered each on their own and you will leave Me alone, but I am not alone, for the Father is with Me. This I have spoken openly to you in order that in Me you have peace. In the world you continue to have suffering, but be courageous, I have conquered the world.”⁸

There’s been a lot of Law in this sermon. That’s because this particular section happens to have a lot of Law in it. It’s mostly been the third use of the law, using the law as a guide in your lives as Christians. As you all know, you cannot be perfect in doing this. You will not always pray by means of the Name of Jesus. You know that. You know that because of your own failures and because of the sins of the whole world you will continue to have suffering.

In response to this fact, Jesus tells you this, “Be courageous.” Jesus exhorts, or encourages, you to be courageous. Be brave, be bold, for He has conquered the world. When He died on the cross He opened the Heavens to you. He gave you access to the Father. He conquered the devil who sets traps for you. He conquered the world which hates you. He conquered your own sinful nature

⁸ John 16:31-33

which constantly fights against your new self. He even conquered death itself. You have nothing to fear from this world, for you have been forgiven. You have been given the courage of Christ. Therefore let us pray boldly the last verse of our hymn of the day.

“Amen, that is, so shall it be.

Make strong our Faith in You, that we,

May doubt not but with trust believe

That what we ask we shall receive.

Thus in Your Name and at Your Word

We say, ‘Amen, O hear us, Lord!’”⁹

Now may the peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Easter 6
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Vicar Christopher M. Craig
Soli Deo Gloria

⁹ Martin Luther, *Lutheran Service Book*, #766, stz. 9.