

In Nomine Jesu

Psalm 51:1-12

Ezekiel 36:22-28

1 Peter 4:7-11

John 15:26-16:4

Listen Closely

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

Today is a day of transitions. It is a day of change. Last Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of our Lord to His throne in Heaven. You can see that the Paschal candle is not lit, and is back in its usual place by the font, illustrating for you that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of our Father. Our readings for the last few weeks have been informing you of exactly what He is doing now that He is up there. Primarily what you have heard is that He will be sending the Spirit to the disciples and to you. You will hear more of this today.

Today is Exaudi Sunday. It is the seventh and last Sunday in the season of Easter. The word Exaudi is a command to the Church. We receive the names of the Sundays in Easter from the introit associated with each Sunday. These last three weeks', and today's as well, were all commands. The Fourth Sunday in Easter is Jubilate, which means, "You all, rejoice!" The Fifth Sunday, Cantate, is

“You all, sing!” The Sixth Sunday in Easter, last Sunday, was Rogate, “You all, pray!” And lastly today, Exaudi, means, “You all, listen closely!”

All of this leads to a conclusion: Jesus has ascended to Our Father, but He is not going to leave you as orphans. He is going to send the Spirit. The Church remembers, that in time, for Jesus’ first disciples, the Spirit is now on His way, for next week is Pentecost. But Today is Exaudi, therefore, all of you, listen closely as our reading begins.

When the Paraclete comes, Whom I Myself will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth Who from the Father proceeds, that One will witness concerning Me.¹

The title, Paraclete, is actually a legal title. A Paraclete is a person who you call on to help you in legal cases. He is a helper, and a comforter, who gets you through the trials that are to come. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit does for you. He will get you through the trials that you are going to hear about a little later. He will help you and He will comfort you.

Notice how He does that. He does it by witnessing concerning Jesus. He will testify to you about Jesus. He will remind you what it is that Jesus has done for

¹ John 15:26

you. He will create the Faith in you that believes in the Man who died on the Cross for the sin of the world, for you!.

That's what the Spirit does for you. But notice also, what Jesus is doing for the Spirit in this reading. (Remember, no Person of the Trinity needs to glorify Himself, for They all glorify each other). In this passage you hear Jesus glorifying the Spirit. He does this by proclaiming that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He is the One who reveals the Truth. He is the One who testifies concerning the Truth. He is the One who is sent by the Truth. He also proceeds from the Father. In this the Spirit is different than, but equal to, the Son and the Father.

Listen closely as you hear the Athanasian Creed declare this truth:

“The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone. The Son is neither made nor created but begotten of the Father alone. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. Thus there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; One Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.”²

This verse in our reading is only one place from where this doctrine is drawn. The truth of the Trinity is comforting on many different levels. One of the most comforting thoughts about it though, is that it means our God knows how to live perfectly with other persons. Right now, you don't know how to do that, not perfectly. But eventually, you will. Right now mankind needs laws to force us to

² *Lutheran Service Book*, pg. 320.

live together without taking advantage of each other. The day will come though, when we won't need laws to coerce us into living together in harmony.

Frustratingly, we will not experience that harmony until we either pass from this world, or until Jesus comes back in His glory. Before we get too much into the coming trials though, there's one verse that you should not miss. Our reading continues:

And also you will witness, for from the beginning with Me you were.³

It's important to not overlook this little verse. Here we hear Jesus informing the disciples of their future. They will all witness concerning Jesus. Some of them will even do this at the expense of their lives. The word for witness here is, as some of you probably suspected, the word martyr. These are the men who Jesus is trusting to witness concerning Himself, most of whom will be martyred, or killed for doing just that.

Hear also though, *why* they are the ones who will witness alongside the Spirit. From the beginning, they were with Him. They had seen everything with their own eyes. They could provide the legal witness in a court of law as to what had happened. It is their testimony that we rely on still today. The Paraclete, the legal Helper, inspired them to witness concerning Jesus.

³ John 15:27

Here Jesus is affirming their witness, but He is also affirming their Office, which is the office of an Apostle. The word apostle means one who is sent. The Apostles are the ones who Jesus Himself chose and sent to build up His Church. They are the ones who the Spirit worked through to create the Body of Christ in this world. This is why their teachings, wherein they testify and witness concerning Jesus, are so important to us. This is why we confess and hold to the Apostolic Faith. They are the eyewitness testimonies and the teachings of Jesus given to us through His sent ones.

In saying this, He is also setting up the witness of those Apostles to be the rule by which we measure all theological teachings. They were the ones who were there. They were the ones who saw what happened. They were the ones that Jesus sent to the people of the world in order to deliver Salvation to them by telling them what Jesus had done.

Jesus goes on and tells them why He has told them of this future reality.

This I have spoken openly to you in order that you not be made to sin.⁴

Jesus knew that the apostles themselves were still fallen human beings. He knew that they could fall away. He knew that they would still sin. He also knew, as He states later, that He was leaving them.

⁴ John 16:1

Therefore He left them with some promises. He left with them with His Word which they could rely on when things start getting bad. He also informed them that He was going to send to them the Paraclete, Who was going to help them and witness with them. They would not be alone in their calling. The Spirit will be with them, working through them, and making them effective. This would be extremely significant for them considering the trials that the disciples are about to go through. Some of which Jesus tells them about, as He says,

You will be thrown out of the synagogues, and the hour comes that all those killing you will think they bring service to God. This they do for they do not know the Father nor Me.⁵

Jesus declares that things are going to get bad. The Apostles are going to get thrown out of the synagogues. They are going to get excommunicated, or removed from the communion of the Jewish religion. This was necessary, but it certainly would not be enjoyable. Those very people who they long to save the most, their own countrymen, will believe that by killing the disciples they are bringing service to God.

This of course shows that they know neither the Father nor the Son. Scripture declares that neither Jesus nor the Father wants the death of anyone.

⁵ John 16:2-3

Because God is a just God, He cannot let sin go unpunished, but that does not mean that He desires to punish. God kills when He must, but only because the wages of sin is death, this we call is alien nature. To put it another way, if you cut yourself off from the source of all life, you should expect that eventually Life will leave you.

On a human level, things don't appear to be going particularly well for the Church at large right now. However, do not be misled into thinking that this is an unusual situation for the Church to be in. The Church has been in the midst of conflict for literally its entire existence. God allows this in order that His truth might be declared to the world. Sometimes it came from outside the church, sometimes from inside. There is always someone trying to destroy you. But when such enemies of the Church come, remember what Jesus says as our reading concludes.

But this I speak openly to you in order that when the hour comes all of you remember what I spoke to you. But this to you from the beginning I did not speak for with you I was.⁶

⁶ John 16:4

Jesus knew this was going to happen. Jesus knows everything that is going to happen. He knew the conflict and difficulties the Church, you, would face, and because of that, He gave you the tools that you needed to get through it.

He gave you the Holy Spirit. The disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. You who have been baptized received Him in your baptism. In your baptism you have been given a concrete time and place to which you can point and say, "There, that's when Jesus sent the Spirit into me, and washed me clean of all my sin."

But Jesus knows that you are weak. He knows that you need something on a regular basis as well as something concrete in the past. Therefore, He gives you His Body and Blood every week here in this place. He gives you a place where you know that you can come and receive Him and know that He is here with you now.

He also gives you His Word. He gives you the very teachings that He gave to His Apostles, and through which the Holy Spirit works. He allows you to learn about Him, and to learn about what He did for you. He lets you get to know Him, and get to know what kind of a God He is, by telling you about His death on the cross. There He earned your salvation for you. At your Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and through His Word He delivers that Salvation to you.

Jesus knew the trials that you all would face. In response to this, He gave you a gift. He gave you the thing which the Holy Spirit built through His own witness and through the Apostles' witness recorded in Scripture, guarded by God for right transmission throughout the ages. He gave you the Church, His own Body here on earth. As we move forward from the season of Easter into the time of the Church, remember to listen closely, for Jesus has the words of eternal life, and He has given them to you.

Easter 7
May 17th, 2015
Vicar Christopher M. Craig
Soli Deo Gloria