

Easter 7A: May 28, 2017

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Acts 1:6-14

Jesus ascends to the right hand of God. All devoted themselves to prayer.

Angels said, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" The call was not to wait for heaven to arrive, but go to work to bring glory to God.

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

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he might exalt you in due time.

John 17:1-11

Jesus' High Priestly prayer; "I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me." "This is eternal life, that they may know you." "Protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

On Jesus' last night with us; after the foot washing, after the Last Supper, and after Judas had been told 'do quickly what you are going to do', Jesus prayed to the Father what we now call Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. In it we have the written record of Jesus giving 3 reasons for his life on earth. First, **he is our intercessor**.

Jesus: John 17:11, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me."

A Baptist pastor once told a study group I was in that one of the highest callings we can have is to be an intercessor, praying for the needs of somebody else. It is a serious responsibility; it puts us between God and that person [L. inter=between; cedere=to go]. When we intercede, we are sharing the load with the person we intercede for. I never forgot that lesson. When I take on intercessory prayer for someone, I mark my calendar; I sent a text if possible; and sometimes I send flowers or a card.

We offer prayers of intercession every Sunday. And privately, we intercede for the people we love. This coming week we are celebrating the completion of the preschool year for 38 3, 4, and 5 year olds. No one will celebrate the end of school more than their moms and dads, who have completed another year of meetings and emails with teachers, helped with special projects and field trips, and provided personal school bus service for their child. When we intercede, we share the load.

Jesus' life and death were about taking the load of our sins from us, and in his High Priestly Prayer, he claims for himself the role of intercessor between God and us.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:34, "Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

So Jesus not only DID intercede for you and me by his crucifixion, but HE CONTINUES TO intercede for us today. That is what he has been doing in heaven since he ascended there.

The second element of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer is that He prays for **God to be glorified**; for **himself to be glorified**; and for **us to be glorified**.

God's purpose for creating us, God's purpose for sending Jesus, and Jesus' purpose for coming to live among us: are to bring glory to God.

In a couple of weeks we will celebrate with Tristan Wahl on his graduation from High School. Of course that transition out of High School is huge; certainly because it signifies reaching maturity in academics; but it also marks reaching maturity in life. Our graduates are not children anymore. We pray that this milestone in maturity includes their growth in faith from recognizing the Bible stories about the Garden of Eden, and the Flood, and Moses delivering the Ten Commandments, and the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus – taking those stories and molding them into a firm foundation for a lifestyle of faith.

When our children succeed in reaching that level of maturity, it brings us parents glory. In this same way, **our** living out God's desire for **our** lives brings God glory. You and I bring glory to God when we live our lives in a way that fulfill the purpose we were created for.

The third element of Jesus' Prayer is that the **unity** he and God share also defines our **unity with Jesus**, **our unity with God**, and our **unity with each other**. Our unity as a faith family brings glory to God. That is the higher purpose of what we do here; it is the source of our special relationship; it is the reason we risk just being ourselves, wearing no masks, and trusting that we are loved just for being ourselves. Rejecting division is a sacred duty.

This Sunday is called 'Expectation Sunday'; the Sunday between Ascension Day and Pentecost Day. Our Bible lessons bring focus to the works and mission of Jesus; the works of intercession, of living a life that brings glory to God, and making life decisions that reflect being part of a sacred unity: intercession, glory, unity.

May it be that our families, this community, and the world can experience God's glory through us.

Amen.