



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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## Sermon for Sunday, May 13, 2018

*The Seventh Sunday of Easter*

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Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 | Psalm 1 | 1 John 5:9-13 | John 17:6-19

One of the difficulties in dealing with any passage in the Gospel of John is that John would rather sing a poem than recite facts. This passage is so woven with repeating words and themes, it is hard to pick out any individual thread without unravelling the whole tapestry. The passage we just read from John 16 also consists of private words of prayer overheard in a public setting. Perhaps the best way to understand this prayer is by comparing it with another prayer Jesus gave us, which is familiarly known to us as the Lord's Prayer.

In the prayer found in John 16, Jesus addresses God as "Holy Father" and seems to revel in the close intimacy of that relationship. By calling God his father, Jesus was setting forth a close and intimate between a parent and a child. Gender does not come into it. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us we too can begin our prayer by calling God "Our Father." We too can expect the same intimacy that children expect from parents.

Jesus then expands the circle by praying: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." This word "sanctify" is the same word used in the Lord's Prayer when we pray: "Hallowed be your name." When we ask that God's name be hallowed, we seek to hold God's name in sacred awe. We also pray that we may be sanctified and set apart so that we can be chosen vessels in which the truth of God can be received. Thus, we seek to reflect back to God God's own sanctity as a mirror reflects back the light that shines down on it. When we seek to glorify God, God will also be glorified in us. This is what it means to hallow God's name.

Jesus then expands the circle again. "Now they know everything that you have given me is from you for the words you gave me I have given to them. They have received them and now know in truth that I came from you." When we open ourselves to hallow God's name, we acknowledge that everything we have been given comes from God. It is easy and natural for us to then also pray: "Your will be done and your kingdom come on earth as in heaven." What we have been given, we now put into practice.

Jesus expands the circle even further. The Lord's Prayer continues: "Give us our daily bread." Giving and receiving gifts is repeatedly woven into Jesus's prayer in John 16. Some form

of the word occurs in every sentence. Everything we have received from God has been given to us. God gave the disciples to Jesus. Jesus gave the disciples the Word, the Truth and the Name of God. Jesus also gave the disciples back to God and asked God to protect them when he leaves. Thus Jesus tells us the past, the present and the future are a gift from God, belong to God, come from God and will return to God.

Our daily bread—our physical food—comes from God so that we can work to advance the realm of God in our daily live. Our daily bread—our daily faith—comes from the One who is himself the Bread of Life so by it we can work to advance the realm of God in our daily life. Even our daily work is a gift from God. Properly done, it will nourish us and sanctify us as our daily bread.

Jesus expands the circle still further. In his prayer in John 16, Jesus repeatedly asks God to protect the disciples. "I protected them in your name that you have given me." Jesus knows that there were and probably still are many who refuse to accept the words he came to give. "He came to his own," the Gospel writer stated at the beginning of his Gospel, "and his own would not receive him." This is the name that, in the Lord's Prayer, we vow to hallow. When we hallow the name of God, we ask the glory of God to come down to us and so fill as we seek to do God's will and advance God's kingdom that it may be for us a shield to protect us from going astray. This is why Jesus tells us to pray: "Save from the time of trial and deliver us from the evil one."

One of the principal ways in which we are saved in the time of trial is by admitting our sins, our shortcomings and our failures. This is why Jesus teaches us to pray: "Forgiver us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." When we have the honesty and the humility to admit we need God's forgiveness, we open ourselves to God's grace. When we open ourselves to God's grace, we can also forgive the sins done against us. This is how we hallow or sanctify God's name. This is how we do God's will on earth as in heaven.

Jesus asks God: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." Notice clearly that Jesus does not ask God to take us out of our problems, difficulties, temptations or trials but asks that we

be given the strength to withstand them. This is how we resist the temptations to hold grudges, nurse resentments or think we know better how things should go. Perhaps that was Judas' problem and why he fell into the power of the evil one.

This is crown and climax of Jesus' prayer. "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth." By his life, death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus opened himself up so that the glory of God could come down on him. God was thereby glorified by Jesus and Jesus thereby glorified God.

And this is also how we finish the Lord's Prayer. With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, we also vow to sanctify our lives by giving them to God as a living sacrifice, consecrated and acceptable to God. We vow we will not let the world squeeze us into its mold but ask God to remold our bodies, our lives and all that we are or hope to be so we may discern the will of God and to know what is good, acceptable and perfect. In so doing, we end our recital of the Lord's Prayer by praying: "Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory now and forever."

Perhaps this is why the lectionary has us read this passage today. Next Sunday is Pentecost, when we, like the disciples, are sent out into the world. Let us go forth into the world, therefore, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. Alleluia. Amen.