

John 17:1-11a

Easter 7, Supplement Series A, May 28, 2017

Theme: Jesus prays for the Church

I. Glory comes by Jesus' work

II. Comfort comes through Jesus' words

INJ At Jesus' ascension (which we observed this last Thursday) the disciples saw him go away, visibly rising up into heaven, and the clouds hid him from their sight. It was a glorious event, signifying that the Savior returned to the Father in triumphal procession. But the Ascension also left the disciples unsettled. They wouldn't see Jesus anymore. He wouldn't be around to speak with and to ask questions of. When things went wrong, how could they be sure Jesus would be there to help them?

Though we haven't known anything different than an ascended Savior, we have similar unsettled feelings. Right now, Jesus is using all authority on our behalf, but we cannot see it. And it looks to me like Jesus isn't doing things right! So I gripe about it. We gripe about our church problems: People aren't giving enough. Or coming to worship enough. Or doing enough of the chores that need to be done. We gripe about our personal problems, too. How come life is so hard? When will I feel better? Make them say nicer things. Jesus, do something to help me!

I think it is interesting, that when we gripe, our difficulties are always someone else's fault. Right? We never gripe about ourselves being part of the problem. And we never seem to be part of the solution, either! If only Jesus would come and fix things, then we think it would be glorious.

Today Jesus answers our worries with his word of peace. He prays, "Father ... glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you." He isn't promising that our lives will be glorious, but he prays that the Father show us the Truth. Jesus prays for the Church, so we see that glory comes by Jesus' work, and that comfort comes through Jesus' words.

If you were the one in charge, how would you fix the things that bother you? The aches and pains would go away. Money wouldn't be a problem. Probably could upgrade the house and the car. The annoying habits of a spouse or a child or a parent would disappear. Can you dream about how splendid your life would be if you had all authority? Yet, if you could do anything, (be honest) don't you think that selfishness and greed would tend to rule your thoughts? All we care about, is ourselves.

The reality is that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, and he doesn't use it for my selfishness and greed. I wouldn't mind if Jesus made my life glorious. He could make our congregation have different

circumstances. He could change the family dynamics. My life could be comfortably easy! But Jesus doesn't give glory that way. It makes me gripe about him sometimes. When I want glory and don't get it, I can accuse Jesus of being just like I am: short sighted, foolish, stubborn and greedy.

But Jesus is not just like me. Or you. He is the perfect Son of God who was sent to accomplish the Father's will. He came to defeat sin and death and the Devil. He came to ransom sinners. He came to declare us righteous and to reveal God's truth and God's undeserved love. The glory of God is the work Jesus came to do. The glory is that Jesus used all his divine authority to accomplish the will of the Father who sent him.

"Father ... glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. Jesus looks anything but glorious. He is humble and poor and had nowhere to lay his head. Jesus allowed himself to be captured by his enemies. He didn't resist the false accusations and the murderous outcry of the people. Is there glory in suffering and humiliation? Is there glory in the cross? It doesn't look right. Where is the power, the success, the easy life?

The glory God provides us is far better than our small ideas for short-term gain. Jesus glorified the Father by completely fulfilling every detail of our salvation. He had to enter our humanity and humble himself under the law of God. He had to endure every temptation, just as we do, and remain without sin. He had to be betrayed and condemned. He had to die as the Substitute for the whole world. It had to be this way.

It had to be, because of your sin and mine. It had to be bloody and dirty and ugly because that is what we are. It is what Jesus became. Now that he has done it, there is the glory: The Father's plan is accomplished!

True glory is that your sins are forgiven, paid for by the holy and precious blood of the incarnate God. Glory is that Jesus is your rescue from the curse of death, because he rose from the dead. Glory from God is that Jesus has ascended to assure you that you have a home in heaven with him. True glory is knowing Jesus by faith.

But faith doesn't look glorious, does it? We struggle against temptation, and we give in. We intend to do what is right, but we don't. Our God calls us to continually repent, to keep on returning to Jesus for the assurance that he forgives us. He does. The life we experience in this sinful world doesn't look glorious, but the glory is in Christ who worked our salvation for us. Listen to Jesus' prayer: "Father ... glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. For you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have glorified you on

earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me at your own side with the glory I had at your side before the world existed.”

Instead of griping about what seems wrong in church or in our life; instead of griping about what we are or are not doing about our problems, perhaps we should be amazed at what God has done for us. It is a miracle that any one of us believes in Jesus. I am overwhelmed that God gives his grace to me, forgiving my sins. I am amazed that our Savior wants others to come into his Church. When I bring someone to see Jesus, they also receive eternal life by what Jesus did. Isn't that glorious? The glory is hidden, to be sure, but it is there, right where God promised it would be. Look at what Jesus did! Jesus prays for his Church, that we see the glory of his work.

We are so easily distracted from what Jesus has done and instead we pay so much attention to what we do. Consider the lessons we read today. Hannah gives her son Samuel to the work of the Lord. Did you ponder the hardship Hannah must have endured when she gave up her son? Rather, isn't the glory that God brought Samuel to serve him? Through unexpected and undeserved grace, God gave a faithful prophet to his people. Or, in the Second Lesson Paul said, “ I believed; therefore I have spoken.” What catches your attention first? Your speaking, or the glorious gift that is faith?

Where is the glory? Glory comes by Jesus' work. We need to be reminded, again and again of what Jesus did. Especially when we become weary in our Christian life: Daily repentance, constant prayer, the battle against the Evil One. The comfort we need comes through Jesus' words. Jesus prays for the Church that we also receive the comfort of his promises.

The Apostle Paul talked about how distressing his life looked: it took great endurance; there were troubles, hardships and distresses; he was beaten and imprisoned; he did hard work, with sleepless nights and hunger; it was a struggle to maintain purity and understanding and patience and kindness (2 Cor 6). His life and ours are not that different. We need God's comfort so we can bear up under the pressure. We need strength to endure. It won't come from within ourselves! We don't have what it takes. Corrupt and foolish sinners are easily overwhelmed by life.

But listen to your Savior. He has the strength and he has overcome. Stop staring at the messes in your own life, and listen to what your God has done. Paul said in the Second Lesson, “ We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and bring us (together with you) into his presence.” “ Therefore we are not discouraged. But even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far

beyond any comparison. We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”

The things near us are obvious. We see how much energy it takes to live in faith. We see our burdens and our trials. We see the exhaustion. We see the fears that creep up and the dismay that seeps into our heart. What about the things that are unseen? Close your eyes and listen as Jesus prays for his Church. We receive comfort through his words.

Jesus says, “ Father, I revealed your name to the men you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have held on to your word.” Don't you remember the words Jesus gave you? He said, “ I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and he whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” He promises, “ Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

St. Paul writes, “ If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” John comments: “ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but for the sins of the whole world.”

The unseen things, the comfort you need – Jesus gives it to you through his words. The words of Almighty God accomplish what they were sent to do. Jesus prayed, “ I gave them the words you gave me, and they received them. They learned the truth that I came from you. They believed that you sent me.” You believe it, too. With the words of your God, you are strong, firm, and steadfast.

Not that you don't get unsettled sometimes. Fears and worries get overwhelming. What is going on? Where is the glory? You know where to turn: Back to Jesus. Back to his words. I think you will find, too, that there are plenty of people around you who are unsettled. Bring them to Jesus. Tell them his words. What Jesus did – his redeeming work: that is glorious! And we have comfort by his powerful words. Jesus prays for you – and for all who will believe in him. He has ascended to the Father's side, but he has not left us alone. He prays for us, that we know both his work and his words. SDG Amen.