

O Lord Jesus Christ, who after being lifted up upon the cross and rising again from the dead did gloriously ascend into heaven: Grant us the aid of Your loving-kindness, that according to Your promise You may ever dwell with us on earth and we with You in heaven forevermore, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit You live and reign one God forever and ever. Amen. (Parish Prayers, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 96, adapted)

So [Jesus] said to [the unbelieving Jews] again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill himself, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins." So they said to Him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but He who sent Me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from Him." They did not understand that He had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own authority, but speak just as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." As He was saying these things, many believed in Him.

In Christ Jesus, the One lifted up to the glory of the Father and for our eternal benefit, dear fellow redeemed:

The words of Jesus spoken immediately as Judas received the morsel of bread from Jesus and left the upper room can be somewhat puzzling: Jesus said: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'"

This is a direct quotation from our text, but we hardly think of Jesus being glorified in what lay immediately ahead for Him by the betrayer handing Him over to the earthly authorities. However, God is glorified in this great work of salvation rendered by the Son and consequently Jesus would be glorified when He would be lifted up upon the cross, drawing all men to Himself as their Savior and when He would raise Himself up from the grave. Rightly understood the ascension of our Lord began upon the cross and continues today at the right hand of God the Father. Therefore **Trust the Ascended Lord - on the Cross, then at God's Right Hand.**

I

The heavenly Father is glorified in all the work of His Son in our behalf, even when it appeared to be most inglorious. Are we not glorifying and praising God every time we sing the *Agnus Dei* with the body and blood of Jesus present for our eating and drinking in holy Communion? We sing: "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ...*" It is that very body of the Lamb roasted in the fire of the Father's wrath toward all our sins that we are singing about. It is the same with that blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins.

However with the disciples left in that upper room they could not follow Him to where He was now going in His suffering and death. But with the unbelieving Jews in our text, at that point they could not only join our Lord in those horrific places of His suffering and death, they could not also journey to heaven because currently they were dead in their sin. They were unbelievers and condemned in their sin. They were from below and in their sin they would return to realms below.

You and I my fellow redeemed began in that same place, as children of Satan and servants of his kingdom of darkness. But by God's grace for us in His Son we have been rescued. Yes, our bodies in death will return to the ground whence they came, but our resurrected and ascended Lord will not forget us. He will return and bring these same bodies of His believers to the place where He now is at the right hand of the Father.

You trust in Jesus as the holy One lifted up upon the cross for you; trust Him now at the Father's right hand. He is ruling all things for your benefit and the benefit of His entire Church on earth. Are you worrying about the condition of the world, our nation, our community these days? Stop it. Yes, as God's people in this world, we are to be doing all we can in our many vocations in our little corners of the world to effect good influences as best we can, but to worry and fret is to forget that the Lord of the Church is the King of all kings and lets nothing happen that will not in the end be a blessing to His Church.

II

You see, here is the very present danger for us, just as it was with the unbelieving Jews in our text. If we lose sight of who Jesus is, that He is the Christ, the Son of God, who came to rescue us from this sin-ravaged world, we will be lost in our sins too.

The unbelievers said: "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning ..." They did not understand that He had been speaking to them about the Father. So

Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own authority, but speak just as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

They wanted to imagine they believed and trusted the Father, but rejected Jesus as the Son. Their sinful actions of lifting Jesus up on the cross would actually cause them to show forth that truly Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, sent by the Father to save them. First, many of them would marvel as they stood looking up at that grizzly scene. They were witnessing what was prophesied 1,000 years before by King David in Psalm 22. Secondly, like bookends, the crucifixion was Jesus' dialog with the Father in heaven. It began: "Father, forgive them" and it would end with "Father, into Your hands I commend my soul." In the middle Jesus would cry out in agony to His Father, using the opening words of that Psalm.

Turn now to Ps. 22 on page 175, as you hear it read consider how even Jesus' enemies knowing this Psalm was a prophecy of the suffering of Christ, saw its fulfillment before their very eyes when He was lifted up on the cross before them. Listen to how their own taunting and jeers were recorded a millennia before. Listen to how Mary, our Lord's mother, standing there as well, would have recalled these familiar words to her as He would speak of her care so tenderly. Listen also to how this Psalm transitions from our Lord's great suffering to His ascension:

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?*
 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
 And in the night season, and am not silent.
 But You *are* holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.
 They cried to You, and were delivered;
 They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.
 But I *am* a worm, and no man;
 A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
 All those who see Me ridicule Me
 They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
 "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him,
 since He delights in Him!"
 But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust
while on My mother's breasts.
 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb

You *have been* My God.
 Be not far from Me, For trouble *is* near; For *there is* none to help.
 Many bulls have surrounded Me;
 Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.
 They gape at Me *with* their mouths, *Like* a raging and roaring lion.
 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint;
 My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.
 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My
 jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.
 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has
 enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;
 I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at Me.
 They divide My garments among them,
 And for My clothing they cast lots.
 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;
 O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
 Deliver Me from the sword,
 My precious *life* from the power of the dog.
 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen!
 You have answered Me.
 I will declare Your name to My brethren;
 In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob,
 glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
 Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
 But when He cried to Him, He heard.
 My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
 I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
 Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
 Let your heart live forever!
 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
 And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You.
 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations.
 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship;
 All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him,
 Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
 A posterity shall serve Him.
 It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation,
 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will
 be born, That He has done *this*.

And so just as the thief on the cross came to faith while hanging next to our Lord having also been lifted up and fulfilling the will of the heavenly Father, so it happened for many in our text, we read: “As [Jesus] was saying these things, many believed in Him.” So you my fellow redeemed: trust the ascended Lord - on the Cross, then at God’s right hand. All your fears, doubts and worries are forgiven by His shed blood for you and Jesus’ perfect trust in His Father is part of that righteousness credited to you through faith in Him.

By God’s grace at work in you, you are given the confidence that He was lifted up on the cross and ascended to the right hand of Father for you, so that the One who is from above will come back to take you to be with Him. As our advocate, His dialogue with the Father continues in our behalf. Hosanna to the Son of David who fulfills the will of the Father for us perfectly and eternally even to this day. Allelujah!