

In Jesus' name. Amen.

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said:] "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

...“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for **the Father Himself loves you**, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God....” (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Christ is risen, **He is risen indeed.** Alleluia!

Dearly beloved, whom “**The Father Himself loves.**”

How do you know with certainty that **the Father Himself loves you**?

Is it because of a feeling in your heart?

Or a ray of sunshine that bursts out in front of you on the way home?

Is it because your career is taking off? Or your investments are booming?

Is it because your family seems to be in an ideal position? Or your health is tip-top?

I pray that you have been taught and trained here better than to trust in these for your certainty.

If these were the signs that you relied upon to know the Father's love for you,

then what would it mean if your heart felt depressed or you were edging on despair?

Or only rain clouds loomed ahead on your way home, as it often does in western WA?

What would it mean if you lost your job, or your investments tanked?

Or your home life was mostly struggle or your health was failing?

If such things were the basis for your certainty of the Father's love for you,

such situations would be devastating, and reason for despair.

Jesus knows that there are good times and bad times.

He knew the joy it was to have His Father say of Him,

This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased.

The context in which Jesus spoke these words was the night that He was betrayed.

The next day, He would utter those horrible words, **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**

As He hung there feeling the full wrath of the Almighty Judge,

He was not relying upon His feelings, but His Father's words, to know that His Father loved Him, and thus, even in the greatest misery ever felt and experienced by man,

He continued to pray “**My God, My God...**”

And when the atonement of our sins was all finished, He trustingly cried,

“Into Your hands I commit My Spirit.”

So Jesus certainly knows the depths of the human experience, as well as its heights,

but He trusted neither the heights nor the depths to convince Him of God's pleasure or disdain. Instead, He trusted the Word of His Father, and so spoke to Him at all times of His joys and needs. We see this throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, that He was in constant prayer with His Father.

The disciples saw this conversation, this dialogue, happening in Jesus' life.

The evangelists who recorded the 4 Gospels each mention Jesus departing by Himself alone, or with the company of 3 of His disciples to spend time or even a whole night in prayer.

I suppose you could say that it was His habit, but for Jesus it wasn't so much a habit, like we often consider the term, as in a practice that He did simply by force of habit, It was not more a force of habit than one would say a child speaking with his mother is a habit. Prayer for Jesus was simply speaking to His Father.

It was His part of the divine dialogue; as Jesus listened to His Father speak to Him in Scripture, He desired to respond, to tell His Father of His needs, His desires, His concerns for the world; and to thank the Father for His provisions, His mercy, and His care.

And now that Jesus was preparing His disciples on this evening of His passion, He desired to teach them a new way to pray: **In His name.** That is, by faith in His redemptive work.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you.

Until now you have asked nothing in My name.

Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Think about this, until now, they have prayed as Old Testament believers.

They prayed to the Father, as Jesus had taught them in the Lord's Prayer, but it was not in Jesus' name, or on account of Jesus' sacrifice which He was about to accomplish.

As the Emmaus disciples show, they believed Jesus was the Messiah, but even after Jesus' death, did not understand the work of redemption that Jesus was to go through. They didn't understand that it was His righteousness by which they could stand before God in prayer; that it was His atonement and death that gave them a favorable hearing in God's court.

Jesus' was now preparing His disciples for the time after His death and after His ascension when He would no longer walk among them visibly and speak with them.

As they had so freely spoken to Him, now He was directing them to speak to their heavenly Father. As little as they feared speaking to Jesus, they could speak without fear to the Father.

Oh that many of our Christian brothers and sisters would take this to heart,

those who have been taught to pray to the saints because the saints' petitions on their behalf will supposedly receive a more favorable hearing from our Father.

But Jesus here teaches that this is not the case **For the Father Himself loves you.**

By faith in Jesus' atoning work, you have the highest favor there can be.

And Jesus promises you that the Father will favorably hear and mercifully and wisely answer your prayers **in His name.**

But our brothers/sisters who pray to the saints aren't the only ones that need to dwell on Jesus' words.

How often have you felt such shame for your sins that you feel as if you cannot speak to your Father?

And so you show that there still clings to you some misbelief that you appear before Him

on your own, rather than with Jesus' blood covering you in righteousness.

How often have you withheld your prayers because you considered the matter too small to bring before your heavenly Father? You don't want to bother Him.

And so you betray a belief that the Father can't love you so much as to care about such trifling things.

How often have you neglected to bring your major concerns to your Father because you felt that it was expecting too much of Him?

Doesn't this display a lack of confidence that He is gracious or almighty?

And yet the Lord has done many mighty/unexpected works on account of the prayers of His people.

How often have you considered prayer more to be a habit that you need to get into, rather than a continuing dialogue with your heavenly Father?

Take a lesson from young children. Many will talk and talk and talk your ear off.

Sometimes they do it without actually listening to what you say in response

(perhaps more like us in our relationship to God than we would care to admit),

but they do it because they have an audience with a very important person, their mom, their dad.

They will tell you about the most trivial things and about the most important things and everything in between.

Why? Because you care about them.

How much more than does our heavenly Father desire to hear your prayers, because He cares for you. You see, the Father Himself loves you.

At Jesus' death, the Father Himself tore the temple curtain that marked the separation between you and Him.

He now unites Himself to you through His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He sent **into the world**.

and has received Him back in full approval of His work of atoning for your sins.

He has washed away your negligence in prayer.

He has forgiven your lack of confidence in His care and compassion for you.

There is nothing that can make you more pleasing or favored in His eyes than Jesus' righteousness.

There is nothing that can bring you closer to your heavenly Father, or bring Him closer to you than the blood of Jesus, His Son, that cleanses you from all your sins.

And there's nothing that communicates this better, more perfectly, than His Word, the Word made flesh, that comes to you in the spoken Word, read and preached,

that comes to you with His body and blood in and with the bread and wine.

Such love calls for a response, for prayers of thanksgiving.

Such compassion inspires more prayers for mercy... in Jesus' name.

And so, taught by our Lord, and taught by the Church, we continue this Divine Service with such prayers in response to His great love to us in Jesus.

In Jesus name. **Amen.**

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Soli Deo Gloria