

In Nomine Iesu

Easter 4, *Jubilate* 2023

This is eternal life, that they know You - John 17:1-8

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know the truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is one with the Father in grace. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

As Jesus closed that evening in the upper room where He celebrated the Passover for the last time and the Lord’s Supper for the first time, He said this, “Behold, **the hour is coming, indeed it has come**, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the **Father** is with Me. I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:32-33) With that, He stood, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, **the hour has come**; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**” (v. 1-3)

I

It is natural for us to think that for us to obtain something truly worthwhile and good requires us to do or give something in return. That is how everything works in the world. Work is how every earthly good thing comes to us, our community, and our nation. It has been that way since mankind was expelled from the garden of Eden. And that brings us to one of the things that so ails our society today. So many people think that they do not have to work for their food, drink, clothing, home, all that is needed for life, not to mention the fun and enjoyable things we want. Many today seem to imagine that they deserve to have whatever it is they want just because they exist, they breathe. But that is contrary to the word of God. As Paul said to the Christians of Thessalonika: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, **not busy at work**, but **busybodies**. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.” (2 Th. 3:10-12)

Here Paul is of course not speaking of those who cannot work, but those who will not work. It is not hard to see where this attitude comes from. It is because we live in a very wealthy society, where the necessities of life are available much more easily than in any time in history, and are taken for granted; as if such things are

ours by right in any and every case. But that is not true. The truth is that we live in a nation that stands on the shoulders, the hard-working shoulders of those who came before us, who built up this nation out of a pristine wilderness and turned it into a garden. We have much, because they worked much. If it is to continue, we too must work to provide for ourselves, and for those who truly need it.

This is one of the reasons that young people should spend time talking to – **and listening to!** – their parents and grandparents, who must tell these things to them to help them understand the past, and how much we all owe to the generations before us. It is why history must be taught to children: plain, simple, unvarnished history, the good, the bad, and the ugly, so that they learn from it and see the examples they should follow in their own lives. For to live in the present only – as many do today – is to never move beyond childhood, never to be an adult, never to act like an adult, treat other people as a kind-hearted, good-neighbor adult would treat them in accord with the will of God. In other words, like those who came before us treated their neighbors, their children, their grandchildren, and so built this wealthy nation we take so for-granted today. Yes, mistakes were made in our past. Evil was done, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not. And consequences were not always considered carefully, as is often the case with us too. Which is all easy to see if you look backward and think. Which is why we should often look backward.

And as we look backward through history, whether world, national, local, our own family or, dear friend, **just your own personal**, secret history that only you know, what do you see? You probably have done some things well. But other things you have not done well. You made some things not better, but worse. You have spoiled and stained your corner of God's creation. So, if we ask who is responsible for the mess we find ourselves in today, who is to blame? I will let you go home, stand in front of the mirror in your bedroom or bathroom, and answer the question.

There, now doesn't that sound like something an older person would say? Should say. Must say. To build something good, to enjoy all the good and beautiful things life can give, to have what we each need for ourselves and enough to spare to give to others who truly need help, requires work. That we know. That we teach.

II

But that **is not** what Christ, our Lord and Savior, is saying to us here. Here, He is telling us things that natural man – however, intelligent, wise, and hard-working he or she may be, does not know. **Cannot know. Will never know** without knowing the Father in heaven and Him whom He sent into the world, His Son Jesus Christ.

For today and the next three Sundays, we will consider this prayer that Jesus, our Lord, prayed as He prepared His disciples to go out into dark Gethsemane that night that He was betrayed. We will take it one portion at a time, each Sunday.

Thirty years after Jesus said, “And **this is eternal life**, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having **accomplished the work** you gave me to do,” the Apostle Paul famously wrote, “We hold that one is justified by faith apart from the **works** of the law.” (Romans 3:28) Paul had it exactly right: To know the God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son **is to have eternal life, for He has done the work.**

Here we pause ... and listen carefully to what Jesus prays to His Father. Notice, He does not say **know about** His Father. He says **know** Him. How do you get to know anyone? Well, you spend time with them. You listen to them. It is often said that we Lutherans don't do much when we gather in Jesus' name. That is true. We do a lot of sitting, with some occasional standing. For the most part, we come in, take our place, and remain there until we leave. It is very passive. It is something nearly all are capable of, no matter how young or old they may be, how sick or healthy. And if someone truly cannot be here, the pastors of the congregation go to them, to their homes or the hospital where they are; and there too they sit or even lie, and do very little except listen and receive ... eternal life.

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having **accomplished the work** you gave me to do.”

We come here to listen to Jesus tell us about His Father, and about Himself, about the work His Father gave Him to do here among us, work we could never have accomplished. For you see, it is not our calling to fix the world. That is His calling. We only take care of it as best we can until God Himself fixes all things. For that is the calling of the Christ. He has accomplished the work His Father gave Him to do, for that very purpose. And when we leave this mountain called Parkland Lutheran Church where we have by faith seen Him transfigured before us, seen Him glorify the Father by bringing salvation to us, we return to our homes, and continue to do what He has given us to do, our work, which we always do imperfectly, sometimes even badly, but always with trust in Him to accomplish what we cannot. “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

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So, take heart, dear friend, Christ has overcome the world. In Him you have been reconciled to God. All the things you accuse yourself of as you stand before your mirror at home and look at the person who has ruined your life and harmed others, and contributed to the mess we are all in, He has taken upon Himself and paid for. All the good intentions you had that did not turn out good, He has done well ... for you, in your place. Your sins are forgiven you. You have peace with God.

So, continue to sit and listen as Jesus tells you about His Father and about Himself, and you will know Him and have eternal life. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria