

In Nomine Iesu

Easter 6, *Rogate* 2023

So that the world may know the true God - John 17:18-23

“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose own righteousness is ours by faith. Dear fellow redeemed:

Many of you will remember that some years ago Pastor Obenberger commissioned a coin to be made available to anyone who wanted to buy it. The coin explained in a simple way the two aspects of the righteousness of Christ that is ours by faith. On the one side it showed His passive obedience, that is, that He, having taken on our human nature, bore our sins in His own body, and paid for them by His suffering and death in our place. On the other side it showed His active obedience, that is, that He, having taken on our human nature, lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father in thought, word, and deed in our

place in order to secure righteousness in the sight of His Father for us. Some of you probably still have that coin. Keep it! Keep that coin, because it tells the same truth as today's gospel selection.

I

Let's hear that selection again, time adding the preceding verse, and translating a bit more literally. Jesus had eaten the Passover meal with His disciples for the last time. He had just instituted the meal of the New Testament for the first time. Then He told the Twelve, minus Judas, many things about what would happen after His death and His resurrection. After this He prayed for the eleven who sat there at table with Him, saying: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake **I sanctify Myself**, that they also may be sanctified in truth." (John 17:17-19)

The Greek word translated "consecrate" in your worship folder is the very same word I just translated "sanctify." So, we hear Jesus praying to His Father as His disciples listened, "I am sanctifying Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." As Pastor Gullixson said last Sunday, to sanctify means to make holy. Jesus is making Himself holy so His disciples would be made holy. In other words, He is still actively obeying His Father in all things on this night in which He was betrayed – as He had been doing from His birth - in order that He, our brother in human flesh, will have done all things well, will have obeyed the Father perfectly in thought, word, and deed, so that His righteousness could become ours. He is doing it so that when He would say, from the cross on Good Friday, "It is finished," it truly was finished. Our salvation is complete.

Our righteous is secured. Our entire life is covered by the Holy One who **lived and died** for us.

What is covered? Have you ever failed in time of trouble? Of stress? Of danger? Or at any time? He did not. Do you count yourself more righteous than others? He became sin for us. Have you betrayed a trust? Let down a neighbor, a friend, a child, a parent, a spouse? He betrayed no one, not ever, not in the smallest way. He kept every law great and small of the government under which He lived, even unto death. Have you kept this nation's laws in all points? And what of all the hidden things, which only you know about? And since we just observed Mothers Day, did you always treat your mother as you should? Do you see how deeply comforting it is to our conscience, to our troubled heart, to know that He, our brother, is our Justifier and our Sanctifier, who not only died for us, but lived for us in our place. As St. Paul said, "And because of [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31) This is what Jesus prayed for, saying, "For their sake **I sanctify myself**, that **they also may be sanctified** in truth. (v. 19)

II

Jesus continued in His prayer: "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who **will believe** in me through their word, that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe they you have sent me." (vv. 20-21) The men who sat at table with Jesus the night He was betrayed, the night He prayed to His Father in their hearing, numbered in total eleven. Now, surely there were

many other disciples besides them throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. But for the most part **they** had come to faith through hearing Jesus Himself. But in a little more than fifty days, 3000 would be added on Pentecost, 3000 who came to believe on Jesus through the word of those who sat at table that night for whom He prayed. And to those 3000 would be added many more thousands ... Saul, later called Paul, Timothy and Titus, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos and Luke. Through them thousands would believe. And after that John's disciple, Polycarp of Smyrna, and then Polycarp's disciple, Irenaeus of Lyons, and then Ambrose and Augustine, and then John of Damascus, who would boldly proclaim the same blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ even after Muslim armies had conquered his native Damascus in 634 A.D.

Martin Luther would translate the Holy Scriptures into his native German even as he continued to read the writings of Polycarp, Irenaeus, Ambrose, Augustine, and John of Damascus. Their words, testifying to the same sanctifying truth, would conquer his heart too, and make it one with the apostles' and all those in between. All would sincerely confess, as we do, the words of the Apostles Creed and the Nicene. Untold thousands and millions would come to the same faith and join in confessing the creeds as we do today. And so, we are one with them through time and for eternity; and the world knows who we are and, far more importantly, who Christ is. And because that is so, many more will continue to come to faith, even as Jesus prayed ... and **because Jesus prayed** – for the eleven and for us!

III

We began making our way through Jesus' high priestly prayer two weeks ago, as we heard Him say, "And this is

eternal life, that **they know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) Dear friends, we confess the creeds, the Apostles and Nicene and Athanasian, because to know them, believe them, and confess them is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent into the world for us. In this we are one with all the faithful of the last two thousand years, beginning with the eleven, whose faith is summarized in the creed that bears their name. We are one with God, and with His Son. We are the bride of Christ, the Bridegroom, who sanctified Himself to sanctify us. And through His intercession with the Father, our word has power, power to bring others to faith in the same true God, and with that to know Him and so have eternal life. It is proper then, to think of the bride of Christ, the church, as our mother on this Mothers Day. But the church is not our Redeemer or Savior, no, that is the work of Christ alone. She is not the one who gives us “righteousness and sanctification and redemption,” as St. Paul said to the Corinthians. No. We do not boast of such things as coming from our mother, absolutely do not. No, we boast of such things as coming from Christ, Christ alone. He created the church.

But it is true, as Jesus said in our text today, that we are united in these things. We are one in the faith, in order that the world may know that the Father sent His Son into the world, “so that,” as Jesus said in the last verse of today’s text,” they may know that you sent me and **loved them even as you loved me.**” (v. 23) It is important that we remain in this faith and proclaim this faith, that we be known as a church that preaches, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” By the grace

of God, next Sunday we will welcome into this oneness of faith still more precious souls, and after that more, and then more again. Thanks be to God.

Finally, since we just observed Mothers Day, which is not a festival of the church, but nevertheless one that honors a terribly important part of God's creation - motherhood, let us close today by understanding better what St. Paul was saying to us and to the world about marriage, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Paul wrote: "Husbands love your wives, **as Christ loved the church** and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish ... 'therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and two shall become one flesh.' **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**" (Ephesians 5:25-27, 32) Marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and His bride the church, our mother, with whom He is one.

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This Rogate Sunday - prayer Sunday - continue to pray to Him who prayed for us, that we may be one in this faith, so that the light of truth may shine brightly, so that many more will come **to know the true God**, and Him whom He sent into the world He so loved to redeem all. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria