

triumph and glory He desires to share with His bride. Those who have died with Him will rise with Him. Those who have shared His tribulations will share His joy. Not only the Apostles, but all who believe in Jesus because of the Apostolic witness, are to receive these blessings. That is what Jesus asks for His Church.

The book of Hebrews calls Jesus our great high priest. People have called this chapter in St. John's Gospel "the High Priestly Prayer". It is a prayer of intercession and it is also a prayer of consecration. It is not a one-time prayer but an ongoing activity of the risen Christ. What I do at this altar, and what every priest does all over the world, is to reflect and embody on earth the continuing action of the Lord in heaven. I intercede for you, and I offer gifts your behalf. God blesses those gifts. So our Lord in heaven intercedes for us and offers us as His gift to the Father. And God blesses us.

It is that ongoing act of consecration that makes the Church holy in spite of all our human defects. And it is that consecration, reflected in the Holy Eucharist, that enables the church not only to survive but ultimately to prevail.

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St. David's Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

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¹ This sermon was originally written on the Second Lesson for Morning Prayer on the Sunday after the Ascension, according to the American lectionary of 1943.

² *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 44 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxix (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxviii (CIPBC 1963).

³ Ezekiel 34:17-end (KJV).

⁴ Ezekiel 37:15-end (KJV).

⁵ St. John 17:1-end (KJV).

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER The Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity¹

The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Rector

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the seventeenth Verse of the thirty-fourth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Exekiel.³

“... And as for you, O my flock, thus saith [SETH] the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they

shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD.”

Or,

Here beginneth the fifteenth Verse of the thirty-seventh Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.⁴

“The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

“And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew **[SHOW]** us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim **[EE-frih-*eam*]**, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

“And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith **[SETH]** the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any

cert because they contribute their uniqueness completely each to the other. Anything one achieves is the achievement of both. Anything that hurts one hurts both. That, at least, is the ideal. That’s how marriage is supposed to work. And that’s how the Church is supposed to work as well.

We Americans are so familiar with corporate structures and mergers that we automatically think of Church unity in the same terms. But that’s not what Jesus prays for. He prays that we may be one as He and the Father are one

The second blessing that Jesus desires for His Church is protection from evil: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one].”

As long as the Church is in the world, it will be subject to the same pressures, the same risks, and the same problems as any other institution. Furthermore the Church is comprised of sinners and is constantly looking to add more sinners to its membership. So you have to expect that there will be scandals and arguments and that the Church will fall short of the vision that Jesus has for it. But Jesus has asked the Father to preserve us in spite of all that.

To keep us from the evil one is not to keep us from contact with him or from being victimized by him but simply to keep us from falling under his control.

The history of the Church demonstrates that this prayer has been answered. The Church has survived persecution, internal corruption, heresy and schism, neglect, worldly affluence, worldly poverty, and public scandal. Yet, the Church continues, propped up by the power of God in spite of herself: “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.”

Finally Jesus asks that the Church may be blessed with everlasting joy. The source of this joy is Christ Himself, whose

The second thing is that He revealed the nature of God, not to everyone, but to the Apostles: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world"

The third thing is that He secured the faith and obedience of that community: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me."

So the establishment of the Church, which many believe to be a kind of optional extra to, or by-product of, Christianity, is actually the most important achievement in the ministry of Jesus, according to His own assessment. It is that achievement that He offers to the Father in the hours just before His death.

Then, having offered the fruits of His labor, Jesus asks the Father to bless that offering. Offering the fruits of one's labor to God and asking Him to bless those fruits is the essential action of the Eucharist. I might also observe that what Jesus is offering here is the body that will continue on earth after His own physical body has been offered on the Cross. In other words, He is offering us as a living sacrifice, and asking God to bless us.

The first blessing that Jesus asks for us is that we may be one in the same way that He and the Father are one. Note the qualification.

The persons of the Trinity are one and yet each is unique. They are equal but not identical. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not interchangeable. They always act in concert because each of them constantly gives Himself completely to the others.

The nearest thing we have on earth to that kind of unity is the bond of Holy Matrimony. A man and his wife become one flesh, but remain two distinct individuals. They act in con-

more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the seventeenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.⁵

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;

and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

The New Testament lesson for today is often called “Our Lord’s High Priestly Prayer”. It includes our Lord’s intercession for His disciples whom He is leaving behind, and also for those of us who have become part of the Apostolic community through the teaching and preaching of the Church. It is, in a sense, the first prayer for the whole state of Christ’s church. It is not a prayer for the world. It is a prayer for the Church.

The prayer is long and rambling and a bit repetitious—not at all like Jesus’ public discourses, which are organized and compact. But prayer and preaching are two different forms of communication. I do not pray the way I preach, and I do not preach the way I pray.

Jesus begins by summarizing His ministry on earth. He rehearses His accomplishments, not with the idea of boasting but rather with the idea of offering them to the Father. In the process, Jesus gives us an insight into what He Himself considers to be the most important aspects of His mission.

Various people have their own ideas about the most significant accomplishments of Jesus. Some cite His moral teachings. Some cite His challenges to the prevailing culture. Some cite His apparent pacifism and non-violent attitude. Some cite His association with the poor and the outcasts. Some cite His willingness to forgive everyone and everything. But here are the most important things that Jesus has done according to His own judgment.

The first thing is that He glorified God: “I have glorified thee on the earth.”