

Here we are, the seventh Sunday of Easter, and the last Sunday of Easter. Next week is Pentecost and the season of green.

Our gospel today is considered “the High Priestly Prayer”. It is Jesus final intimate prayer before his crucifixion. It is the longest recorded prayer offered just before Jesus arrest and crucifixion. It is a prayer for the **glorification** of God through his sacrifice, the protection and **sanctification** of his disciples, and the absolute **unity** of all future believers to demonstrate God’s love to the world.

Jesus prays that his upcoming death on the cross will glorify the Father, fulfilling his mission on earth. He defines eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ. Then Jesus prays for his disciples, asking the Father to protect them from evil and set them apart (sanctify) through the truth of his word

Our Gospel-comparison detail is that Jesus’ prayer to the Father before his arrest in the Gospel of John is not off alone somewhere with clutched hands praying on a big rock while the disciples nap. It is sitting around a table, after a meal and an extended conversation, with the disciples hearing every single word that Jesus says.

It really is nothing short of astonishing to imagine this passage as a model for prayer. Remember, in the Gospel of John there is no, “teach us how to pray” followed by the Lord’s Prayer. This is the Lord’s Prayer according to John.

It’s not often that we get a straight forward definition of eternal life, but here it is, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (17:3). How many times have we heard this depiction of eternal life? I would wager rarely, if at all. On this last Sunday of Easter, in the season of the resurrection, here is an idea about eternal life that just might stand out and mean something beyond the empty tomb and the lilies and “Jesus Christ is Risen Today.”

Eternal life is to know God and Jesus. What if it is that simple? How would that change what we imagine in this life? How would it affect our thoughts about and beliefs in our future life with God? How does this alter even our picture of God? Of course, what it means to “know” God is key, and to know God in the Fourth Gospel has no connection to cognitive

constructions, creedal consents, or specified knowledge about God. Rather, knowing God is synonymous with being in a relationship with God.

As the seventh and last Sunday of Easter before the festival of Pentecost and the beginning of the long, green season, Jesus' closing words, at least in this chosen pericope, are more than a fitting finish. "And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." What if this blessing was that which provided a theme for the entire season of Pentecost for your congregation?

It is, perhaps, one of the most relevant and truthful definitions of what Pentecost is supposed to be as disciples of Christ. Jesus is no longer in the world. The incarnation is over. Jesus has been resurrected. He ascended to the Father from whence he came (1:1). But we are still in the world, Jesus' works are now in our hands and Jesus is counting on us to be his presence in the wake of his absence.

What if we imagined that the resurrection of Jesus was just the beginning and not the conclusion of the Gospel? That the promises of the resurrection are, in part, ours to fulfill? How would a life of discipleship, of witness, of love, between Pentecost and Advent, be different were we to trust that Jesus meant what he said, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." We are in the world now, the world that God loves.