

Sun. May 12, 2024 — **Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year B**

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts please you, O Lord.

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You may have noticed our first reading skips over some verses. I'm sure this bothers some of you. I think I saw some of you reaching for your Bible to read the missing passages. Don't bother, the skipped verses just contain the gory details of Judas' death.

Many of us think that Judas got what he deserved. After all Judas betrayed Jesus.

I remember my middle school religion class. Sister Rosemary asked the class if we thought Judas was in heaven or hell. A large debate ensued, and I remember seeing Sister Rosemary smiling. I think she was happy we were thinking for ourselves and expressing our opinions.

Some said yes, Judas was in hell where he belonged because he led the Roman soldiers and religious authorities to where Jesus was. As if without Judas no one would have ever found Jesus.

Some said no! Judas should be in heaven since he was doing God's will and Jesus' crucifixion led to the salvation of the world and the forgiveness of sin.

I assure you I do not know, but I do fall in the second camp.

I was talking to some friends last week and one mentioned that he had seen an alternate telling of the Passion story told through the eyes of the women. In this version Judas was captured and beaten until he agreed to betray Jesus. But Judas vehemently refused and was eventually released into the night.

Judas went to Jesus to warn Him that Roman soldiers and some of the religious authorities were plotting to kill Him. What Judas didn't know was that he was followed. And when Judas found Jesus to warn Him, that's when Jesus was arrested.

Portraying the whole betrayal as an accident.

This would certainly cause us to look at Judas a bit differently, perhaps with some sympathy. Maybe Judas didn't deserve to die the way he did. Maybe Judas was really an innocent fool.

It's all a matter of perspective.

Jesus came into the world to show us God's Love, that we may have everlasting life. Jesus teaches us to Love and calls us to Love one another as He Loves us. This is incredible live giving Love.

Jesus is in the garden right before He's arrested and He's praying for His disciples. Jesus prays that the disciples will be sanctified in the truth. He does not pray to save them from the pain and suffering of this world.

Like a parent dropping off a child at college, Jesus sends His disciples out into the world.

I went some 600 miles away for college, my parents dropped me off and said, "see you in four years." Other parents might say, study hard or make good choices. As parents we try to equip our children with the skills they need to be successful. Then we send them off into the world. We know they will struggle, but we also know it's important for them to make their own way.

Jesus did just the same. Jesus equips the disciples with the Word and sends them off. Knowing they will be hated and persecuted. And He prays for them.

He prays they will be sanctified in God's Holy Word.

He prays that they will be unified in the Word.

He does not pray for their safety.

Jesus prays that they will be one as Jesus is one with God. This prayer seems to indicate that there may be protection in the unity of faith. A unity we all share.

This unity is not limited to Lutherans. It's not just for Christians or limited to those who share our own theology.

Jesus comes to earth to unify us, and we waste time dividing God's children in Jesus' name. Imagine how painful this judgement is to watch. Imagine how painful it is to be judged, excluded, or othered.

Jesus came to unify us.

This is the prayer Jesus prays for us.

We are all part of the same unity. We are all to be one with each other, one with Jesus as Jesus is one with God. We are all God's children.

Even the people who don't believe in God are still God's children.

This is the prayer Jesus prays for us.

It's so easy to forget. It's much easier to remember things the way we want them. But for us to Love one another, we need to understand that we each have different perspectives. We see things through our own filters created by our own experiences.

We need to understand that it's ok to disagree, but it's not ok to hate. We can disagree without hating each other. We can disagree and still be of one spirit. What we need to

do is try to see and understand the other perspective. This starts by acknowledging that there are more than one perspective. We may not be right. Both might be right.

This is the prayer; that we see and speak the truth that God Loves us and cares for us. That we are all united so that we can never be alone.

Jesus sends us out into the world, sanctifies us, and Loves us.

Jesus calls us to follow Him and when we follow Jesus and Love as He Loves, we will have more life. We will have everlasting life **AMEN**

1. NRSV Harper Collins Study Bible, 2. NIB One Volume Commentary, 3. Sundays and Seasons

First Reading: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 (Matthias added to the apostles replacing Judas)

Some church communities use lots to choose their preachers or other leaders. Judas is mentioned as not only part of Jesus' ministry, but a necessary part of the resurrection. Did Judas do God's will? Someone had to fill the role Judas played. Makes me think about the Sandman series about how two devout angels were chosen to replace the devil when he decided to leave hell. Interesting how lots were cast to select Matthias, just like lots were cast for Jesus' tunic. **The selected verses leave out the gory details of Judas' death. How many of us are happy that Judas got what he deserved? There are some retellings of the Passion that indicate Judas' betrayal was an accident, that he went to warn Jesus about what was to happen, was followed by the Roman soldiers who then found and arrested Jesus.** / For Luke an apostle had to have been with Jesus from His baptism to His death and resurrection; thus Paul could never achieve the title apostle. ¹ / The necessity to replace Judas was to keep the Apostles number to twelve to reflect the tribes of Israel, consistent with images of the kingdom, resurrection, and the coming Spirit, all intertwined with God's promise to restore Israel from exile. The casting of lots was used to ascertain God's choice. No further mention of lots is made in the NT, perhaps the arrival of God's Spirit to empower and guide God's people rendered lot-casting unnecessary. ² / Early Christians saw twelve as symbolizing the completed whole and twelve apostles as a reiteration of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus Luke narrates the selection of Judas's successor. Luke describes these two candidates as becoming witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Matthias does not appear again in the Bible. The divine will is manifest both in the Hebrew Scriptures ("through David") and through the casting of lots. "Apostle" is a preferred Lucan term and connotes "being sent," and is thus a way to understand those who are sent out to preach the resurrection. ³

Psalm: 1 (The Lord knows the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked shall be destroyed)

We are all sinners and saints. We don't see ourselves as wicked or seek. God Loves us all, even the wicked. We give fruits as we are able (seasonally), but we always receive food/water from God. The psalmist set a high bar blessing ONLY those who have NEVER sinned. This excludes all of humanity except Jesus, who alone is without sin. It does provide comfort for those oppressed by the wicked and for those trying to live a Godly life despite the ways of the wicked. / A psalm exalting God's law and a blessing upon those who abide by it. ¹ / The wicked chose their own way and thus lead themselves to destruction. The righteous surrender self-mastery and give themselves to the Lord's way, becoming objects of the Lord's care. ² / .³

Second Reading: 1 John 5:9-13 (God gives us everlasting life through Jesus)

The testimony is in our heart. When we follow Jesus, we have more life. God gives us eternal life through Jesus. Makes me immediately think of Adam and Eve who presumably had eternal life prior to the fall, for Genesis tells us that because of sin

death entered the world. Therefore, God sends us Jesus to atone for our sins and return us to everlasting life. / x .¹ / The Message is “Love.”² / If believers already have eternal life, it is other than life after death: it is the joyful communal sharing in Christ’s truth now.³

Gospel: John 17:6-19 (Christ’s prayer for his disciples)

Jesus prays for the disciples to be sanctified in truth, but no to be removed from the pain and harm in the world. Can be hard for us not to be judgmental; hard to remember that God is God, and we are not. It can be hard for us when we find ourselves being judged. God sends Jesus into the world and Jesus sends us into the world. We are both part of creation but not part of the world – aliens and exiles. We are called to be different, but it is easy to get sucked into the evil ways. V11 may indicate that there is unity in faith, but is this unity only for Christians or those who share our particular theology? Jesus came that we may all be one – and we continue to divide in His name. / The Gospel according to John was written for those in the Christian community who felt alienated from the world. Their conflict with the synagogue authorities convinced them that the world hated them, and that Jesus also did not belong to the world. *The world* does not refer to creation, but rather the human world that rejected God. John regards the evil one as the ruler of this world (the human world that rejected God). Despite this the disciples are sent into the world though they do not use the methods of this world.¹ / The disciples are not removed from danger and the power of the evil one but rather protected in the Father’s Love and unity within the context of violence and persecution. This prayer offers a notion of communion rather than intercessory prayer.² / In the final discourse in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks a chapter-length prayer for his followers. Befitting Johannine theology, Jesus does not pray to avoid his crucifixion, since it is understood as his glorification. Rather, crafted by the fourth evangelist at the close of the century, this prayer asks for the Father’s ongoing protection for the community. .³

Good Morning!

Welcome to Gethsemane! We're so glad you're here.

The gospel this Sunday is taken from the long prayer Jesus prays for His followers in John's gospel on the night before His death and includes Jesus' desire that His followers will be one as He and the Father are one. This oneness is not mere doctrinal agreement or institutional unity, but mutual abiding, interpenetrating life, mutual love, and joy. This oneness is the work of the Spirit whom we have received but also await.
Come, Holy Spirit!

We are using Setting 3 in the ELW starting on page 94.

Please note that we live stream the service. During communion the live streaming is paused to protect those not wishing to appear on camera. **Children are able to use the front pew during the Children's Sermon to avoid being on camera.**

I need **2 volunteers** for the offertory.

I invite you now to close your eyes and take a deep breath and let it out as we prepare ourselves for worship and listen to Gary's prelude.