

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday of Easter - Year A

Week 11 of Quarantine

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

05/24/2020

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John,

1After Jesus had spoken these words [to his disciples], he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and

you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11And 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.”

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **Protection**

Good morning! 24 year old Gregory McCalium was out to make a quick, and illegal, dollar. So, on one fateful day in August of 2008 he decided to rob his elderly neighbor. Carrying a knife, Gregory broke into the house of Frank Corti. There was only one problem, this wasn't your average 72 year old man. Frank was a retired boxer and veteran of the British armed

forces... and those are the type of people you just don't mess with. The attack went exactly as you would expect it, Frank knocked the knife out of the robber's hands and young Gregory didn't even make it through the first round before he was knocked out.

Most of us aren't Frank Corti, but protection is no less important for us. Security and protection are a serious thing, and we all go about it differently. Some are more relaxed than others, a motion light in the back yard, a deadbolt on the front and back door that are checked before we go to bed. Others are a little more serious, home security systems, trained dogs, and loaded firearms next to the bed. And then there are the REALLY serious people, the ones with homes that could withstand a real life scenario like the movie Purge. It's understandable, presidents and dignitaries are prime targets, so they need to be protected. But I doubt the average Jane or Joe need access to a nuclear bunker. But who knows, the way 2020 is going!

Today's readings are, in one sense, about protection, but not in the traditional sense. But first we need to take a step back and look at the text in light of where we've been, and where we are going. Over the last three weeks we have been in the 16th and 17th chapters of the Gospel of John. Jesus has been teaching and speaking to the disciples for the last time

before his arrest. And as I discussed last week, what someone says before they die can be something important.

We still find ourselves in the season of Easter, those days of celebration after the Resurrection of our Lord. This past Thursday was Ascension Day. The time where we celebrate Jesus' literal ascension and the end of his time on Earth. Next Sunday we celebrate the wonderful day of Pentecost, a time of excitement for the church. So right now we're in a strange in-between place. And as we look back at the earthly ministry of Jesus, and while we look forward to the sending out of Pentecost, we find ourselves reflecting on what Jesus promised for both us, and his disciples. Raymond E. Brown, a Catholic priest and biblical scholar wrote that "*... the Jesus of the Last Discourse transcends time and space, for from heaven and beyond the grave he is already speaking to his disciples of all time. Nowhere is this more evident than in xvii where Jesus already assumes the role of heavenly intercessor... ascribe[d] to him after the resurrection.*"

And it is this prayer that we turn to today, a prayer that for so many of us has been a comfort and assurance of our protection. But this protection isn't the type of earthly protection that we so often want or expect. If Jesus is our model, we learn exactly what living a life modeled after God will

result in. Likewise, tradition tells us that all of the original disciples died for their faith. So, regardless of what bad tele-evangelists might have promised you, bodily protection isn't a guarantee. No, what Jesus asks of God is something much more profound. We find the key to Jesus' words in the beginning of today's lesson: *"2since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* Jesus prays for the ultimate gift of eternal life, a life made evident when we enter into the relationship with God that was made possible by the incarnation.

It's a lesson the community of I Peter knew all too well. *"12Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you..."* we hear in the text. I love the compassion in these two pieces of scripture. Jesus and Peter speak from a place of deep and abiding love for the groups for which they care. And it's this compassion and love that should serve as the model for us in times of pain and suffering. Times like, well, right now actually. As Christians, we can't expect our faith to mean that we're safe from every little thing. But what we can believe is that God, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, has given us an eternal protection that is more precious than anything else. And it's in the awesomeness of

this gift that we become a community united together, bringing others into the fold, celebrating together the joy of true fellowship. Amen.