

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

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die;” (Ecc 3) none of us know how long we have to live, when we will die, nearly all of us would just as soon keep it that way. Many die tragically in accidents, from illness, seemingly way before it was their time, some are ready to die, want to die, but continue living even when they are desperately ready to pass on. And of course, most of us just live, not spending much thought to our deaths even though we know that at some point, life as we know it will end. Occasionally we know when our end is approaching, we may have opportunity to speak with our loved ones and closest friends, we may be able to leave some testament as to what our life has meant.

Our gospel reading this morning is just such a testament. Jesus, the Word became flesh who dwelt among us, has known he will die in the prime of his life, and he has known why he would die, he is determined to complete the Father’s mission. The Last Supper is over, he is gathered with his disciples, knowing he will shortly be betrayed, arrested and subsequently crucified. Then he prays to his Father in heaven. He prays for his disciples and they are meant to hear this prayer, not as participants in it, but as recipients of the Father’s grace.

Jesus prays looking upwards, and those who know the only true God through Jesus will have eternal life. Jesus, for our salvation has revealed God in his work on earth, now finished. His disciples are those whom the Father has given into Jesus’ keeping, and now they know God the Father through his Son Jesus, and they will reveal the good news, the salvation that comes through Christ, to the world.

Jesus prays that his disciples may be one as he and the Father are one. Call it oneness, call it unity either way what Jesus is praying for is one of the gifts of the resurrection. And of course the resurrection is the theme of Easter, the Easter Season and every Sunday. The resurrection is the foundation of our Christian faith, without the resurrection there is no faith. Denial of the resurrection began on that first Easter Sunday, and has continued every since, often with the purpose of destroying our faith.

But we continue to preach and to teach the truth of the resurrection, Christ risen from the dead, Christ with the marks of his crucifixion was raised from the dead, and spent time with his disciples and with many believers. We baptized believers will be raised from the dead, no longer in bondage to sin or death. We are linked to Christ in our baptisms, saved by grace through faith, living in the hope of the resurrection, the love and mercy of the Father, the promise of the family of faith united by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus prays that his disciples will be one even as he and the Father are one. Unity like that of our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One but unique as persons, as are we who are members of the body of Christ here on earth, the church, sharing

an essential unity, calling one another our sisters and brothers in Christ. One family, one body, one household of God in Christ Jesus by our baptisms and our faith. We share the truth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World for our salvation even in the darkness of the world around us. We share Holy Communion, we pray together, we confess our sins together, we forgive together, together we share in the suffering of Christ and rejoice in his glory, the compassion, the healing, our acceptance by our Lord. Together we listen to the Word we help one another to bear the burdens we all face including our struggles to live as Jesus' disciples.

Jesus prays that the Father protect his disciples, part of the family in Jesus' name, he prays that we be faithful. God has sent us the Holy Spirit to preserve us, to work in us, to work with us, to work through us, to keep us in oneness. We are to live as people who have seen the truth of the resurrection, who wait in hope and joyful expectation. We who are family unite around our head, Jesus Christ, wanting to know him and love him better, wanting to know and love one another better, devoted to sharing Christ's love, doing compassion and mercy even as Jesus has done unto us.

AMEN