

Easter 7-May 12, 2024

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 17:6-19

“Sanctified and Sent” Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

If you have a “red-letter bible”, a bible that highlights the words that Jesus speaks in red, you will notice that not only every word that you just heard in the gospel would have been in red, but the entire 17th chapter of John is uninterrupted with any narration or conversation with anyone else speaking. Jesus speaks from the beginning of this chapter right to the very end. Every word was from Jesus. In Confirmation, students learn that worship has two directions. One is when our words “go up” to God which we call prayer. The other is when God’s words “come down” to us which is what we call a sermon. Today, we learn about a unique situation in the bible where both take place at the same time with the same words. This is when Jesus prays to his heavenly Father, but his words are overheard by you and me and his prayer becomes a sermon for his disciples which includes you and me.

In the previous chapter of John, Jesus was speaking to his disciples by preparing them for his future. He told them that he would suffer, die on the cross, and rise again after three days. In today’s reading from John as Jesus prayed, Jesus knows that soon, in fact that very night, he will be betrayed by one of his 12 disciples, Judas. After this, Jesus will no longer be their teacher, but Jesus will be leaving this world and Jesus knows his disciples will wonder if they have been abandoned. As Jesus knows this about his disciples, he doesn’t say “I’m sure going to be worried about you guys when I’m gone.” Jesus doesn’t throw his arms up in despair. Jesus does what he tells us to do instead of worrying about the future. Jesus lifts his eyes up to heaven and prays for the people he has chosen to follow him. Not only does Jesus pray for his first disciples in this prayer, but Jesus prays for each of you as he completes his transition back to his Father in heaven who sent him into this world to save you.

There can be quite a few transitions for families this time of year. Seniors will soon be moving out of their homes that they grew up in. These graduates may start new jobs or will soon be going to a next level of education that will help prepare them for the future. In a few days, there will soon be a transition, a welcome transition for most students, from the routine of the school year to the different business of the summer schedule. Students will hopefully be transitioning to a new grade. I know of several people who are in the transition between jobs or moving to new homes. In the first reading for today, the disciples were dealing with a transition in their small group. They dealt with the vacancy that was created when Judas, as scripture said, “turned aside to go to his own place.” Churches still deal with vacancies that are created in their councils when transitions happen. We would do well to follow what the disciples did when they faced uncertainties when transitions took place in church. First, they prayed, then they believed that it was the Lord who made the choosing like when they cast lots as Matthias was chosen to fill the vacancy of the first 12 disciples.

Jesus prays for the people who had already been chosen to be his. Jesus prays for the people that God had given to him. There were no casting lots, rolling dice, coin tosses or resumes submitted to become God’s

chosen people. You and I became chosen by God by his word in the waters of baptism. The Father gave you and me to Jesus with his word. His word of promise that we will be his from that day forward and that is a promise that can never be broken regardless of what we do.

Now that you are a chosen child of God, what happens next? You are not forgotten or sent out aimlessly on your own. Jesus first prays for you and then Jesus sanctifies you and Jesus sends you out into the world.

Did you know that you are sanctified? In the constitution of our church, it talks about baptized members. It talks about what it means to become a confirmed member of the church. The constitution spells out who voting members are in the church. But there is no mention of who the sanctified members of the church are or how you are sanctified. There is no specific date you can turn to as your sanctification date like the date when you were baptized or confirmed.

Sanctification in its simplest form means to be made holy. We often are just as confused about what it means to be holy as what it means to be sanctified. Holiness or sanctification does not mean that you will keep each of the laws of God. Sanctification means that God's word of grace; will be keeping you wherever you go. Sanctified or being made holy means that you have been set apart from the rest of the world to serve in the world. You are no longer OF this world after Jesus has claimed you as his own in the waters of baptism. However, when Jesus prayed for you, he did not pray that you would be taken FROM this world. When Jesus was baptized, he too was not taken from this world, but was sent immediately into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Jesus' prayer for you is that you would be sent into the world knowing that you are being protected by the one, your Father who Jesus was praying to.

When you have been chosen by God, when you have been prayed for by Jesus, when you are sent into the world with God's protection, when you have been made holy, you cannot mess it up. You can go into this world without worrying. You will go into the world with a word. God's word. And it is His gospel word that you keep with you.

I just had a conversation this week with another grandparent who was worried about this world that his grandchildren were being sent out into. He said that it is a different world than he and I grew up in. I agreed with him, that it is different. Satan has acquired a few more tools to attempt to lead you away from God. But also, I reminded him of what is the same and what will never change.

Jesus has not abandoned us by dying and rising again and ascending into heaven. Jesus is even closer to us since he has given us his word. As followers of Jesus, we have the assurance that although there will be tribulation in this world, just has overcome Satan and the world. Today, you have not overheard Jesus speaking about someone else, but you have directly from Jesus that he has prayed for you and has made you holy by forgiving your sins. You have been sanctified simply by hearing what Jesus has done for you and now Jesus sends you out from this place to proclaim this good news that is for you. Amen