

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The names for the Sundays of Easter are typically taken from the first words of the intro. Last week, however, was the exception with Rogate. And that Sunday is named after what Jesus was telling his disciples to do, that is, to ask, to pray. To ask of Christ for the things that he desires to give. And this Sunday we return to the name of the Sunday which comes from the first words of the introit, which is what? Hear. God commands us to ask, and we respond to him, hear us, O Lord. And that indeed is the interplay of prayer. We are called to ask. And God is to hear. There are distinct roles for man and God. And God loves his role and is jealous for it. He loves when his people cry out to him. And he loves to hear and he loves to answer prayer. Because he loves to give comfort.

And so we have our gospel text today from John 15 and 16. From this Upper Room discourse of St. John that goes from the 13th to the 17th chapter. From the night in which he was betrayed, Maundy Thursday, John designates five chapters to that Upper Room. It is one of the longest discourses, the straight conversation and words of Christ we have in all of Holy Scripture. And from that time and from John's Gospel, eight of our Gospel readings throughout the church year are pulled. Six are from this discourse on Maundy Thursday, and two more throughout the church year. All in all, between the chapters of 13 and 17, eight times we hear from this section of John. This arguably should put it as the most important discourse in Holy Scripture. So you should ask yourself, what is it about this discourse that the church just can't get enough of? What is it about what Jesus says in the upper room on the night in which he was betrayed that we desire to hear it? His discourse in that upper room is all about comfort. For these are his last hours with his disciples.

He is finalizing his teaching to them. He is warning them, exhorting them, and comforting them. All of the things that he wanted to say before he died and rose and ascended, all those things are happening on that night. This discourse is his last will and testament. These are the last and final teachings that he wants them to hear before their entire world is turned upside down and he is taken from them. And in this last will and testament, several themes come out. Jesus confesses that he is the way, the truth, and the life. He reveals the Father to them, and he commands them to pray to the

Father, that anything they ask for the Father in his name, the Father will indeed give them. He expresses to them unity in Christ. He says, I am the vine, and you are the branches. For that is how unified Christ is with his people. He is the vine, they are the branches. They are of the same tree. He promises them that by the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will be with them in their trials.

And then, in our text today, he says, "You will be persecuted. They will hate you. They will cast you out of the synagogues because they did not know the Father, nor did they know me. But the Spirit is coming, the Comforter coming. I will send him to you. He will tell you all things, and he will comfort you".

Next week we hear of Pentecost. We'll hear again from this discourse, and then the Sundays after Trinity all revolve around Jesus in centered in and around this Eucharistic setting. The upper room was prepared for the giving of the Lord's Supper, and all of Christ's discourse is centered around that one event. In our Sundays after Trinity, we will sit here and listen to his teachings about the Lord's Supper. For this is the context of our worship.

What does the comfort look like that Jesus sends to us from heaven? What does the comfort that the Spirit brings to us do? What does it look like? How do you experience it? How do you understand it? How do you grasp it? The comfort is not how the world sees comfort. No, Christ answers that question tonight, and he says the comfort is in spiritual persecution. When Jesus says that the world will hate you, It is because they do not confess Christ. The disciples will be hated because they are not like the world. They will be followers of Jesus. And in turn, because we are followers of Jesus, we will be rejected by the world as well. The two philosophies, the hatred of Christ and the embracing of his teaching, of his doctrine, and the confession of his name, are incompatible with one another.

The world's philosophy and God's philosophy do not mesh. They cannot be mixed like oil and water. They remain separate. There is a war between these two things. And those who hold to the gospel of Jesus Christ will be hated by those who hold to the gospel of the self. Because that is what the world professes. The world professes the self. And they tell you that the greatest thing you could

have in this world is your own pleasure, your own comfort, your own satisfaction. And don't let anybody tell you differently. For anyone who tells you differently is a bigot and an evil man, and you should not listen to him. Don't let anybody take away from you your autonomy, your choice to do what you want. And that is completely contrary to the gospel of Christ. But Jesus does not instruct you to live a comfortable life in this world. He never promises that to you. You may receive it, and it's not sinful to have it, but Jesus does not promise it to you. He does not tell you that you will have everything you ever wanted in this world. No, the central thing for the Christian, what Christ promises, is that we are to hear the words of comfort in the gospel and to know that this world is not our home. That we are passing through it. We, like our Savior, are moving on to the next, to go where he has gone and to be where he is. And so the comfort that Christ sends through the Spirit is to comfort us along that way.

And at first, it seems a little strange to us that God does not first take care of our earthly wants and needs. But he never promises that. He never promised the disciples in the upper room. He never promises that he will make sure that you're never hungry. He'll make sure that you're never thirsty or you go without sleep, and your job will be enjoyable, your wife will be pleasant, and your husband will always listen to your advice. He doesn't tell them that at all. In fact, he promises them quite the opposite. He tells them that when, not if, when you are persecuted, when they hate you because of your faith, when they reject you and call you all kinds of names and do all manner of evil against you, he will be with you, comforting your spirit. In the order of God, it comes first the spiritual and then the physical. It is completely upside down from how the world sees it. For the world professes, first, go after your physical needs. Make sure you are taken care of. Make sure you are satisfied, you are happy. Go out, chase your physical pleasures. And then, if there's time, and only if you want to... Then maybe remember to pray and think of someone bigger than yourself, someone outside of yourself, but again, only if you want to. And Jesus turns that on his head. Jesus wants you to know that your spiritual well-being is the most important part. And so you come to church. And so you read the Holy Scriptures. You have your children educated in the Bible and in the small catechism because

that is of primary importance. Where you will sleep, what you will eat, and what you will do later is insignificant compared to this.

Of course, you take care of your children. Of course, you give them food and clothing and shoes and a house and a home, and you pray for them to have a godly spouse that they delight in and to be healthy. Of course you do that. But it flows out of the first thing. God wants you to educate your children in the faith, to bring them up in the faith, not to let the physical go undone, but to put it in its rightful place. That is the proper order of the church. And that is what Christ is telling his disciples in this discourse. They will be put out of the synagogues, Christ will be with them. They will live in this Christian community that will be persecuted and hated. But Christ will be with them.

And it blends so beautifully with this epistle text from 1 Peter. For 1 Peter is talking to that first church. The church in the first century is experiencing these difficulties. That is experiencing these persecutions. This lack of food. The lack of water. Read our epistle text again, because St. Peter is telling them what kind of mentality they ought to have in that situation. We would do well to understand this and to have the same mentality, to pray that the Lord would give us this mentality. Peter says, the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly. Since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling, as each has received a gift. Use it to serve another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God. Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

You are to be concerned about your prayers first. And only after your prayers are taken care of, you are to look to your neighbor. And St. Peter never even mentions looking to yourself. And then he continues on, right after our epistle reading ends. He says this, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his

glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because a spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

St. Peter had to have this discourse on his mind as he penned that letter to the church.

In the times when the noise in your head and the difficulties of your flesh are so loud that you cry out to God and ask him why. Be thankful that he hears your prayer. The why is so that you will depend only on him. And he doesn't just speak to you, he comforts you with visible signs.

He has brought you to the waters of holy baptism. He allows you to approach him at his altar where he gives you his body and blood for your comfort and to give you peace along the path to heaven. The comforter, the spirit, is not here to give you the most comfortable life in this world. No, he is focusing you upon the world to come. He is not a spirit so much who gives glory and fame and power on earth. One who teaches you to rejoice in Christ, even in the midst of your own sufferings. For in your own sufferings, you are united to Christ and his sufferings. Christ is with you. You are called a disciple of God. You sit at the table of the Lord. You hear his last word and testament. Come and receive the comfort he has to give.

In Jesus' name, amen.