

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTERTIDE – YEAR A

Psalm 26 (27)

The verses of Psalm 26 prayed today have two distinct approaches. One conveys the psalmist's trust in God; the other is a fervent plea addressed to him: 'Hear my voice'. Some theologians have therefore wondered whether these were initially two different psalms later combined as one.

The first stanza almost stands as the psalmist's 'creed': the Lord is 'my light, my salvation, my stronghold'. The theme of light is a very powerful one, especially when read in connection with this week's Gospel: light and darkness are favourite themes for St John. Light is the first gift from God, which begins the creation process (Genesis 1: 3).

The questions which follow are rhetorical; no answer is required, given the previous statements.

The 'house of the Lord' is the Temple, the place where God dwells. In ancient times, it was the place that needed defending at all costs at times of attacks by enemies.

The response ('I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living') is taken from the penultimate verse of the whole psalm.



The Lord is my light and my salvation

Gospel John 17: 1–11

Chapter 17 of St John's Gospel is part of the Farewell Discourses and is known as the 'Priestly Prayer'. It is the longest prayer in the Gospels. We see Christ praying to God the Father after the Last Supper, surrounded by his disciples. Although we often read that Jesus goes to pray, apart from the 'Our Father', we rarely have an insight into the actual content of his prayer.

Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven

John shows Jesus adopting the traditional Jewish stance for prayer. He was also probably standing, as was usual at that time.

His prayer is not private and can be seen almost as a 'report' to the Father of the mission he has accomplished. It is a summary of the significance of his life. He prays for himself (vv. 1–8) and for his disciples (vv. 9–11).

'This is eternal life: that they know you ... and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'

To know God and Jesus here does not mean having an intellectual, factual knowledge, but rather to have an intimate relationship with the Father and the Son which will then lead to love and discipleship.

John substitutes the traditional Jewish knowledge of God through the Law, with a knowledge arising from a personal relationship of love.

'I glorified you on earth ... now, Father, glorify me.'

'Glory' is a main theme throughout this passage. For John, the glory of God and his Son is expressed in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

'I have manifested your name'

People in Ancient times believed that a person's name revealed their inner character and power. In making his Father's name known to the disciples, Jesus was revealing to them who God truly was.

'I am not praying for the world'

The 'world' in this passage has two meanings: first (v. 5) the created universe; then in verse 9, it represents secular society, those who do not know or accept God.

'All mine are yours, and yours are mine'

The disciples and us, as his followers, are included in the bond of love between the Father and the Son.



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