

The 7th Sunday of Easter
May 16, 2021

"Sanctified and sent into the world"
(John 17:17-19)
By Rev. Ed Weber
LSB 578

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's text for this 7th Sunday of Easter is from our Gospel reading John 17

"17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

Here ends our text.

Did you know that you are "sent"? No, I don't mean that you were "sent to HEB to pick up some groceries" or "sent to the post office to mail some letters" or "sent to the principal's office back in your rebellious youthful days".

No I'm talking about being sent by God. Well, when did God send me? you might ask. If you are a follower of Jesus, then He sent you the moment you believed in Him. Where were you sent? Into the world, the world of unbelievers, that is. The world that Jesus is not of, our Gospel says in verse 14. Nor are you, who believe in Jesus. How? Because of the word of God which Jesus has given you.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

God's word changed everything in your life. God made His temple in your heart, and has promised you life with Him eternally. Dear friends in Christ, today's Gospel reminds us over and over again of who we are – children of God, not of the world. It reminds us that one's relationship with the Triune God, is a pure gift!

We are sanctified by the word of truth. Sanctify means “set apart” for holy purposes, God’s purposes! He called you and me through His word of truth and made us who were not holy...holy.

Listen how Jesus explains this in the opening verses of His prayer.

“Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”

Give, give, give! The Father gives His Son the words of salvation and the Son in turn gives these same words to us. These words we receive through faith. And these words we confess, that Jesus is the sent Messiah, the Savior of the world!

This faith, He has sealed in our baptisms. We are cleansed already connected to the Vine, so that we are now worthy to be sent for His purposes. Where?...back into the world! The unbelieving unholy world, that we were taken from! Listen to verse 15 of our Gospel again.

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

Jesus doesn’t sanctify us to live as hermits. He does sanctify us for battle for lost souls though, and our chief enemy who wants to take all souls to hell is the evil one. Jesus prays that we be kept from the evil one and we are. As we heard last week from 1 John 4:4 **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

For what purpose are we sent into the world? To bear fruit...to manifest Jesus’ word in all that we say or do! Simply put, we reflect Jesus’ light of salvation to the world of darkness. Without Christians there would be no light of God’s truth being taught. It starts with each of us. It starts in our homes and extends to where we work and play.

We tell the world what we have heard in the Gospel ...that Jesus sanctified Himself for us, for our sakes. The perfect High Priest offered Himself as the holy sacrifice for the sins of the entire world! He was set apart by His Father for this purpose and did His Father’s will perfectly as a true Man for us.

Again, think about who you were before faith was given to you in Jesus. We were of the world before we believed and were baptized. We were completely unable to change our separation from God because of our sin. But, what does Jesus say in His prayer? The Father gives us to Jesus as a gift!

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” (John 17:11)

Read Jesus’ entire high priestly prayer and you will hear over and over again 17 forms of the word “give”. Listen to the opening words of Jesus’ prayer to His Father in verses 1 and 2.

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

By His death, resurrection and ascension on high, Jesus was glorified by His perfect obedience, so that now Jesus has a gift to give to us. What does Jesus give to the believers who have been given Him by the Father? Eternal life! What an amazing gift out of His pure love for us!

Today as we remember our dearly departed sister in Christ, Helen Vogel, we know that of yesterday morning, she was no longer “of this world”. She had run her race and kept the faith by the grace of God. So, we can say with all assurance that she is enjoying the gift of eternal life right now with her High Priest, Jesus! 101 years is a long life on this earth, but eternal life has no ending! Thanks be to His saving grace to her and all believers! Our Good Shepherd, Jesus, promises to give this same priceless gift to all of His sheep.

On Friday afternoon, I read these words with Helen from John 10:27-30.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. 30 I and My Father are one.”

Did you hear the word “give” a couple of more times again? **“I give them eternal life”** and **“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all.”**

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus begins His prayer to His Father by praying especially for His disciples with whom He had just spent 3 years. But, all that He prays for them He is also constantly praying for you. The verse right after our Gospel, in verse 20, includes all believers.

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

For Jesus is the eternal High Priest who continually prays for all believers in Him.

“23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:23-25)

Wow! Did you just hear that? Jesus' Priesthood is unchangeable. He saves the “uttermost”. That includes you and me who have come to faith through Him! Jesus lives! We've been saying this since Easter. “He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! That means He lives to continually intercede for you and me!

Again, what was the holy purpose for which we are sent? Acts 1:8 tells us, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

To save the uttermost through Jesus' word, we are sent to the outermost parts of the earth!

“21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

“That the world may believe”. What a high calling God has given each of us! Be assured that your High Priest, Jesus, does not send you alone for we would miserably fail. But listen to the assurance we receive in 1 Peter 3:12-15.

**“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

**13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?
14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (1 Peter 3:12-15)**

The eyes of your High Priest are always upon you, blessing you even as you suffer for righteousness’ sake. Don’t be afraid of their threats or be troubled. Being sent does not mean it will be easy. But the Lord has a good purpose in all He does. And your witness, your defense of Jesus with meekness and fear, because of the hope that you have in Him, is how Jesus saves unbelievers.

To live in this unbelieving world as children of God calls you to continually sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. It means that you continually drown the old Adam in you daily through repentance, and continually hear the Gospel of forgiveness in Jesus. As one who is sent from God for His most holy purpose of sharing the Gospel of salvation, God calls you to continually sanctify the Lord in your hearts by hearing His word and receiving His sacraments for your forgiveness.

So, Paul’s words to the Thessalonians are also spoken to you.

**“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)**

Whatever station one has in this life, the life that is sanctified by the blood of Jesus is the life of the highest calling there is. It is one which is unified with God for His purposes and plans. It is one that ever seeks the lost and makes known the gift of salvation that is a gift for all people. Making disciples by baptizing and teaching them all that God has commanded in His word of truth comes with Jesus sure promise, that He is **“with us always until the end of the age”**. (Matthew 28:20) **Amen.**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)