

Gathering, therefore, is an eschatological act as it is the foretaste of the unity of the communion of the saints.

In good company: the church as polis / Stanley Hauerwas. 1995

Related topics

For further study:

Prayer; evangelisation; ecumenism; mystery of suffering; redemption; paschal mystery; Jesus Christ; soteriology; discipleship; conversion; baptismal call of priest, prophet and king

Closing Prayer

Father most holy,
look upon this people
whom you have sanctified by the dying and rising of your Son.

Keep us one in love
and consecrate us in your truth,
that the new life you have given us
may bring us to the fullness of joy.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Easter 7, Year B²

CPL • LBC Year B Easter 7.odt • 2021-04-25

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

The reading from Acts must be used as either the first or second reading

Acts 1.15-17,21-26

The disciples choose a successor for Judas Iscariot

Psalm 1

Blessed are they who delight in the Lord

1 John 5.9-13

Whoever has the Son has eternal life

John 17.6-19

Jesus prays for himself and his followers

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus prays for himself and his followers

Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed: ⁶Father, I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.'

John 17.6-19 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Jesus says that he has perfected the task his Father gave him to do: he has made God known to the disciples. The Father has given him the disciples (17.6), and Jesus has gone on to give them the words his Father gave him (17.7). Jesus gives a positive assessment of his disciples, but it is not the result of their achievements; it is due to God's initiative. The result is that they have come to believe in Jesus as the one sent by the Father (17.8); such belief is a major theme of John.

The prayer that follows focuses almost entirely on the disciples of Jesus and has three parts: (i) Jesus prays for the disciples in the world (17.9-11a); (ii) that the holy Father be 'father' to the fragile disciples (17.11b-16); (iii) that the holy Father make the disciples holy (17.17-19).

Jesus announces that he is praying for his disciples. He does not pray for the world (cf. 14.30; 15-18-19, 21; 16.3), but for those the Father has given him (cf. 17.6-8). Jesus' words to the Father indicate that as his perfection of the task given to him by the Father glorifies the Father (17.4), so the continuing presence of the same quality of love among his disciples also glorifies the Father (17.10b). Jesus' mission is coming to and, but that of his disciples is just beginning (17.11a).

Throughout the prayer Jesus addresses God as 'Father', but here he uses the term 'holy Father' (17.11b). Jesus asks the Father to care for his disciples, to be a 'father' to them. All that Jesus is and does flows from his unity with the Father (cf. 10.30, 38), a consequence of him being sent by the Father. 'The name' of the Father has been entrusted to Jesus and this enables his revelation of 'the name', and he prays that his disciples may experience the same oneness that he has with the Father (17.11d). Jesus looks back on his care of them, and he now asks the Father to do what he has been doing – to keep them in his name (17.12a). 'The one destined to be lost' is usually thought to refer to Judas Iscariot, but

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perhaps it refers to Satan (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2.3, 8-9). However, when Jesus asks the Father to be a 'father' to the disciples, he does not make an exception. He wants to hand over the disciples fully to the Father so that they may have joy and not anxiety (17.13). The disciples do not belong to the world, and Jesus does not pray that they be removed from it, but rather that they may be protected in it (17.15).

The disciples of Jesus cannot simply enjoy the protection of God (17.11b-16). Jesus asks that they be made holy (17.17,19), that they be made holy in the knowledge of God, and in truth (17.17). Jesus commits to a final act of holiness, of sanctification as he prepares to leave his disciples (17.19).

Quotations

1

Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.

Charles Spurgeon, 1834–1892

2

We tend to lament this seemingly endless parceling of Christianity (which, let's face it, can indeed get out of hand), but I'm not convinced the pursuit of greater unity means rejecting denominationalism altogether. A worldwide movement of more than two billion people reaching every continent and spanning thousands of cultures for over two thousand years can't expect homogeneity. And the notion that a single tradition owns the lockbox on truth is laughable, especially when the truth we're talking is God.

Searching for Sunday: loving, leaving, and finding the church / Rachel Held Evans. 2015

3

The church is constituted as a new people who have been gathered from the nations to remind the world that we are in fact one people.