

The Lord's Prayer

Shepherd's Grace Church

June 1, 2014

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶"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. (John 17: 1-11) (also read Acts 1: 6-14)

So...you were expecting "Our Father who art in heaven!" We are in the gospel of John today for our lesson and there is no request from disciples who say, "Lord teach us to pray!" There is no "Sermon on the Mount" as in Matthew's gospel or even a "Sermon on the Plain" as is found in Luke. Instead there is a four chapter sit down meal with Jesus where the disciples get real and where Jesus gets down to the nitty gritty about relationships.

Jesus knows that his time with them is short. He doesn't have much time to teach and he needs to make many points about life. The point he really wants to leave them with, however, is that life is precious, life is personal, life is possible when we choose to enter in to it.

On Wednesday of this week we took Broderick, Hannibal, and Kenton to the Tanganyika wildlife park. Rochelle had been given a family pass as a thank you for being a teacher and we thought it would be a fun way to spend one of our last days with all three of the guys. When we got there, one of the first

animal exhibits we saw was of the newborn baby leopards and tigers. The boys were fascinated by the newborns. They stood for several minutes at each exhibit talking and laughing as they imagined how each of the newborns might grow up. They talked about some who might make great house pets and others who would make sports stars! They laughed and looked and lingered there for much longer than I ever thought they would!

The boys were fascinated with new life! These sophomore and junior and senior boys were interested in thinking...even if they would not admit it to themselves...about all the possibilities life offered. The boys did not think about the past. They did not consider how ferocious these animals ancestors were. They did not consider how many lives...perhaps even human lives their parents had taken. They were concerned instead with the future which began with the present. They were focused on what might be and not on what already was. That which was is dead! That which is invites life! Their interest was in life! They did not want to dissect the infants to see what might have made them tick. They wanted to step into the future and imagine life!

As I reflected on their reaction to these infant cubs, I realized the point Luke is making this morning in the Book of Acts. The disciples stand watching Jesus depart from them. As he ascends, they deflate! They consider their past and all they will now be missing. They remember the remarkable healings, the creative curing, the remarkable teachings and they are saddened as they watch all that depart! Disconsolate, they stand staring at all that was and they fail to imagine all that will be!

Suddenly, two outsiders interrupt their remorse. "Men of Galilee," they ask, "Why do you stand there looking at the sky. Do you not know that Jesus will come in the same way he left?" As we hear these words this morning, we think that Jesus will return from the clouds in much the same way he departed. It only seems logical as we hear the words of the two men dressed in white. He left in the clouds, he will return in the clouds. But what if the men meant something else?

Earlier in the passage, the disciples questioned Jesus about the day and hour of his return. They asked about the coming judgment of Israel and Jesus responded, "It is not for you to know. Only the Father knows!" What if, instead of encouraging the disciples to stand and stare at the heavens the "men in white" were reminding the disciples that Jesus' return and the impending judgment of the world will come at an unexpected hour. What if they were reminding the disciples to prepare themselves and not only themselves but others for Jesus' return?

Does it make a difference in your reaction to the message of Acts today if these men are encouraging disciples to go to work instead of going to mourn? What if you consider that going to mourn involves remembering only the past? Mourning is appropriate at points in our lives. When we lose loved ones we...all of us, need to take time to remember, to reflect on the lessons of their lives and to respond to those lessons in our own ways. Mourning is good! It is part of grief and grief is part of healing.

Here, however no one was lost! Jesus left but He was not lost. He went away and while they could feel sad about his departure, they could also anticipate his return. They could look to the future, whatever that future was and wherever that future played out! That was the message the men in white had for the disciples. They were saying, don't look at the past. Don't remember all the death and devastation and destruction. Instead, step into the future...prepare yourself for something which you cannot begin to imagine yet. Recognize that what you are experiencing is new! It is exciting! It is alive! It is life itself!

The elation and the excitement I saw on the faces of the boys, the laughter I heard in their voices, the imagination I experienced in their conversations were not evidences of grief and mourning at those lost or the destruction realized. They were evidences of new possibilities! Those possibilities were in the future and not in the past. Those possibilities were alive! They existed as evidence of things hoped for and promises of things not seen! (Heb. 11: 1) Their excitement was an evidence of faith!

The "men in white" were not speaking to the disciples as men of fact. They were speaking to them as men of faith. Faith transcends fact and explains the unexplainable! Faith invites us to believe beyond belief and to work beyond our own ability to work because we know beyond all doubt and believe beyond all reason that God will keep God's promises. The disciples, at the encouragement of these "Angels" were able to refocus their energy not on grief...no one died!...but on grace! They were able to remember not the loss of a man but the evidence of who that man really was. They could recall his healing of the sick; his curing of the lame; his raising of the dead and with every recollection their faith could be strengthened. When Jesus said in John 14, those who believe will do greater works than the works I have done, he said it because He knew their faith could be increased beyond anything they could ever imagine!

The disciples, the same disciples John writes of this morning went back to Galilee to focus their energies not on remembering the past but on anticipating the future! They believed that Jesus would keep his promise to them. They had been with him on that last night. They had heard his message. "In My Father's house, there are many mansions. I am going to prepare a place for you and I will come for you so that where I am, there you will be also!" It no longer mattered when, they knew they were going to

live forever and when you are going to live forever time ceases to matter. What mattered was that they communicate His message as far and as wide as they could so others could know the peace that comes from resurrection in Jesus Christ.

In his message to them around a four chapter meal, they realized Jesus gave them instructions for how to get the message out. First he washed their feet and taught them a new commandment. "Do to one another as I have done to you. Love one another!" (John 13) Bobby Kennedy, 1968 presidential candidate, a person who gave his life for his friends said,

"Every time a person stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others, that person sends out a tiny ripple of hope...these ripples send out a mighty current which can wash away the strongest walls of oppression and resistance!"

Love is standing up for one's friend, offering hope when none seems to exist, offering strength when there is no strength left. Jesus message to his disciples was to remember the love He has for them, for us, and to love one another in the same way He has loved us!

Next, Jesus said, even though I have to go away for a time, I will return for you. His promise demonstrates his commitment to us. Like a groom in the Jewish tradition who goes away to build the wedding home for the couple, committed to the relationship, Jesus also leaves to prepare our place. Just like the groom, he promises to return when the project is complete. Jesus is committed to a relationship with His bride, the Church and even though he is absent for a time, he is confident of His return and is committed to his promise that where He is, we shall be also. John F. Kennedy, a former president who's birthday we remembered this week echoed the same sentiment in this way: "You cannot negotiate with people who say, 'what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable!'"

The point Kennedy was making, the point Jesus is making is that we as people of faith must recognize that the mansions God has, the places available to us in eternity are available to everyone. We cannot try to take from others and we should really feel no need to since we are already a part of everything God desires for us to have!