**John 17:20-26**

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **21**  that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22**  The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23**  I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. **24** Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. **25**  O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. **26**  I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

**“Christ Realigns Our Sights”**

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come,” Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen. In my high school years, in addition to your typical driver’s education, my parents made me take a defensive driving course. One of the things I can remember is the phrase, “Low aim steering.” This is when a person tends to drive by looking a few feet above their hood and not down the road. The outcome from such “Low aim steering” is that the vehicle tends to drift back and forth. Trying to watch the road just over the hood is impossible, because of the speed of travel. The only way to correct this driving problem is by looking up and farther out at the horizon.

On this last Sunday of Easter, we do not want to end up with low aim steering. The churches foundation is not from being a two thousand year old religion, or what comes from guidelines for a good life, or even the place of greatness in the world. If we go this route, we are looking over the hood and not at the horizon. The Church’s foundation is on Christ alone who rose, ascended, lives, reigns, and even prays for us. Our Scripture texts let us look at many lasts in life today and what do you see? Jesus is at the center of each one as the high priest, ascended Lord, and lamb on the throne. Rather than aiming low, Jesus lifts up the eyes of His Church to unity, glory, and love set upon Him.

In the Upper Room, Jesus prayed for unity that exceeds the bonds made by men in life. The visions for oneness is a picture people like. From the white picket fence of having a family to the establishment of a nation, this is what the generations of man seek after. Yet, Jesus was looking beyond the oneness in life by our efforts. He knows how sin easily can wreak havoc on family and tear it apart. He saw how death is the judgment upon all nations in the course of time. He even anticipated how Satan would intrude upon the visible church. As the Psalmist warns, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalms 127:1). By His sacrifice Christ alone gave oneness that would last always and forever in Him.

Since Jesus as God saw what to pray for in full, He left out no one. When he says, “I do not ask for these only.” It is like Him saying, “I see you Gentiles throughout the world who believe me. I see my Christendom that carries on until the Last Day.” He attaches such unity of faith in Him through the apostles’ Word being preached, taught, and read. The Holy Spirit works by the power of this Word. Rather than dreams and ideas of man, either losing Christ in the mess or running His church by force. The Word gives a unity that the world witnesses to be alone upon Christ . As St. John says, “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

Jesus prayed for glory greater than the best of what this life can give. Here is what the disciples still struggled over even asking at the ascension, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Life is shrouded in all kinds of glories and titles, works and callings. These differences naturally cause covetousness, anger, and bitterness. Equality and fairness the Law cannot solve nor will it ever satisfy sinners. The glories of this world are what lead to all kinds of evils that keep any away from Christ. Without repentance, the only unity left is with, “everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

To this kind of greedy and dark world Christ left His Church. The uniting factor among the baptized is the riches of forgiveness in Jesus. As He asked the Father, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them…” The justifying work come out of the cross is our glorify. To repent and hold fast to the Word looks to Jesus as Savior of the world, whether for rich or poor, strong or weak, male or family. As St. Paul tells us, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Any loss only hides gain, since it makes us come to Christ and see His glory lifted up high above the world, the Law, and even death. St. John saw such glory saying, “They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

Jesus prayed for love in the fullest with Him as life for a troubled world. Love has gone off in all different directions today. This is what happens when Christ is no longer at the center. The world for all it does in, “The name of God” does not know God, because it denies the Word and refuses His Son. This is why there is nothing more loving than to share Jesus. It comes with acts of love, but those acts are always short-lived and never enough. Yet, to share the Word of Christ is a treasure that only compounds with interest. The May Lutheran Witness notes, “Everyone who lays hold to this Word in living faith, no matter how it comes to him, how and through whom it may have happened is one in Christ…There is no higher office or honor in Christianity” (LW, from the president).

Jesus not only achieved love for us, He promises to keep giving it in this world. “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The Father’s love always centers upon His Son. What Jesus now gives by His Word and Sacraments is the treasure of His Church. This kind of love truly is alive so, “nothing else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39). Our boast to the world is love not worked by man, not based from man, and not found in man. Jesus, God and man, presides with love to help us bear with every man, to lead us to warn every man, to let us pray for every man, and to free us to forgive every man as God keeps doing all of this for us.

On the last Sunday of Easter, we can look up for all good that does not go away. The last gift Jesus gave before the cross was His high priestly prayer for us. The last sight of Jesus ascension proves that whether the ugliness of this world or in ourselves we have the right to see Him. The last chapter of revelation ends not in a tone of sadness, but a church that always is praying, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” So, guess I need to ask, “How’s your driving?” There is no need to be all over the place. Rather than aiming low, Jesus lifts up the eyes of His Church to unity, glory, and love set upon Him. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.