

5/17/26
7th Sunday of Easter
For Group Meetings from May 10th – May 16th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God of glory, your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to your right hand. Unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (John 14:15-21) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: John 17:1-11

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. How does Jesus describe "eternal life" in this text?
2. What three ways does Jesus address God in this prayer?
3. What reasons does Jesus give for praying for his followers?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Share a particularly meaningful time for you involving prayer. Why was it impactful for you?
2. How would you describe "eternal life"?
3. What part of your inner life feels most in need of prayer or healing right now?

Memorize this verse: "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them" (John 17:10) What part of your life do have the most trouble giving to God?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

You won't often hear a Lutheran preacher or theologian talk about glory. At least not positively. Luther frequently railed against theologians of glory, those who trusted and elevated the role of human reason and ability with regard to our salvation. He argued instead for a theology of the cross, one that trusted completely in God's mercy and grace as revealed in the cross of Christ. But I can't help but acknowledge how important "glory" is in this passage and, it would appear, to Jesus. "Glory" and "glorify" are mentioned no less than five times in the first five verses. That's a lot of glory talk. But, once you get over the frequency of the term, it doesn't take long to realize it's a peculiar kind of glory Jesus is talking about. Keep in mind that this passage describes the conversation Jesus is having with his disciples on the evening he will be betrayed, arrested, tried, denied, and sentenced to death. It is not a setting that would typically lend itself to boasts about glory. Moreover, the "work" Jesus speaks of completing is the work of the cross. The unexpected, even unimaginable place of his ultimate glorification. Why unexpected and unimaginable? Because the cross is a place of extreme vulnerability, isolation, and complete identification with humanity (us).

Perhaps it's also both unexpected and unimaginable because we tend to identify glory with strength, with victory, with triumph and success and adulation. But Christ seeks glory in service and servanthood, in suffering, vulnerability, and loss. God is glorified in these things. Again, why? Perhaps because the human penchant for identifying strength with glory and vulnerability with weakness leads us to an unhelpful trust in ourselves and our abilities. And when we finally realize that we are limited and fall short the lie of our strength is exposed painfully by the very fact of our mortality. And the shock of this "mortality reality" often leaves us with two choices – deny or despair. We may deny our mortality and vulnerability by imposing our will on others, by contrasting ourselves favorably with others, or simply by making the kind of vain boasts that seem rampant these days (but are, truthfully, part and parcel of human history). Indeed, at times we seem to believe that by insisting on our strength and glory relentlessly we make it a reality, something along the lines of Joseph Goebbels' law of propaganda: "repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth."

Except when it doesn't. And so Jesus goes to the cross to demonstrate God's power to defeat death. Jesus' utter rejection by the religious authorities, his suffering on the cross, and his death in weakness provide both the proof of human futility and the absolute necessity of God's intervention. Similarly, Jesus' resurrection asserts God's power over all things, even death, and God's ability and intention to open a new future. All of which would be a delightfully pious assertion of God's absolute sovereignty over humanity except for one thing: it is God who, in Jesus, enters into our mortal, vulnerable condition. It is God who endures unjust suffering and unbearable loss. It is God, ultimately, who dies. Jesus' cross and resurrection testify not merely to human weakness and divine rule but to God's complete embrace of our weakness out of love. In Christ, to echo Paul, God chooses to give up divine power in order to prioritize empathy, identification, and solidarity, all out of love. This is the "sacrifice" Jesus makes. And that sacrifice, that embrace of mortality, that identification and solidarity, according to Jesus, is what glory looks like. True glory, even divine glory, it turns out, is always glory in the shape of a cross.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen