

"YOU ARE MINE"
JOHN 17:1-11
SEVENTH S. OF EASTER
MESSIAH, BOERNE
MAY 21, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT. AMEN.

TEXT: JOHN 17:1-11

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

WHEN A MOTHER AND FATHER HAVE A BABY, THEY HAVE THE
SPECIAL PRIVILEGE OF CHOOSING THE BABY'S NAME. MOMS AND
DADS MAY CHOOSE THE BABY'S NAME FOR VARIOUS REASONS AND IN
A VARIETY OF WAYS. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY MAY CHOOSE THE NAME
BECAUSE OF A RELATIVE OR A BIBLICAL CHARACTER, OR THEY MAY
CHOOSE THE NAME AFTER CONSULTING A BOOK LIKE THE ONE I HAVE
WITH OVER 13,000 NAMES WITH THEIR MEANINGS OR SIMPLY
BECAUSE THEY LIKE THE WAY IT SOUNDS. SOMETIMES PARENTS
AREN'T ABLE TO DECIDE UPON A NAME BEFORE THE BABY IS BORN.
NEVERTHELESS, THE BABY *DOES* RECEIVE A NAME AT BIRTH—"BABY"
AND THE MOTHER'S LAST NAME. THAT NAME MAKES IT CLEAR THAT
THE BABY BELONGS TO ITS MOTHER.

WE ALSO CARRY A VERY SPECIAL NAME INTO THE WORLD: THE
NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, GIVEN US THROUGH THE *NEW BIRTH* WE
RECEIVE IN HOLY BAPTISM. AS "CHRISTIANS," CHRIST'S NAME

MARKS US AS *HIS* VERY OWN. IT SETS US APART FROM THOSE WHO ARE "OF THE WORLD." IN OUR TEXT THIS MORNING JESUS PRAYS THAT WE *REMAIN* HIS THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD'S NAME PUT ON US IN HOLY BAPTISM. AS WE GO ABOUT OUR DAILY LIVES, BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD SENT TO SAVE US, WE GLORIFY HIS NAME AND MAKE IT CLEAR TO OTHERS THAT WE ARE HIS.

NOW, AS GOD'S PEOPLE IN CHRIST JESUS, WE HAVE SOME SIGNIFICANT FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS. FIRST OF ALL, THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, WE ARE GOD'S *ETERNAL* PEOPLE (VV 2-5). *ETERNAL* LIFE STARTED FOR US IN HOLY BAPTISM WHEN WE RECEIVED GOD'S TRIUNE NAME AND CAME TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SAVIOR BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. IN BAPTISM THE FATHER GRANTED US JESUS' OWN AUTHORITY TO GIVE *ETERNAL* LIFE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM. THAT AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED WHENEVER WE TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST AND GOD'S WORK FOR THEIR SALVATION. AS A MATTER OF FACT, GOD IS AT WORK IN US *RIGHT NOW* BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, RENEWING US THROUGH HIS WORD AND GIVING US *ETERNAL* LIFE, AND HE PROMISES TO BRING THIS WORK TO COMPLETION ON THE LAST DAY.

WHEN NORMA AND I LIVED IN ST. LOUIS WHILE I WAS AT THE SEMINARY, WE ATE AT A RESTAURANT NEAR OUR APARTMENT. IT HAD POOR SERVICE AND LOUSY FOOD. THE STORE WENT THROUGH AN EXTERIOR RENOVATION, HOWEVER, SO WE DECIDED TO GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY. THE RESTAURANT LOOKED NICE ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT WHEN WE TRIED THE FOOD, WE REALIZED THAT NOTHING HAD REALLY CHANGED. LATER THAT YEAR WE NOTICED THAT THE INSIDE HAD ALSO BEEN REMODELED, SO WE TRIED IT AGAIN, BUT THE RESULTS WERE THE SAME. JUST BEFORE WE LEFT ST. LOUIS FOR HOUSTON, WE NOTICED THAT THE RESTAURANT HAD CHANGED AGAIN,SO WE GAVE IT ONE MORE TRY. EVERYTHING WAS GREAT, INCLUDING THE SERVICE AND THE FOOD. WHEN I ASKED THE CASHIER WHAT HAD HAPPENED, I WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP. IT HADN'T JUST CHANGED ITS APPEARANCE. A NEW OWNER RAN IT.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO US THROUGH HOLY BAPTISM. WE WERE CHANGED BY NEW OWNERSHIP: THE LIFE-CHANGING JESUS CHRIST. PRIOR TO OUR BAPTISM, WE WERE UNDER THE DOMINION OF DARKNESS AND RULED BY THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD, SATAN. BUT IN HOLY BAPTISM THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS WERE CAST OUT. WE RENOUNCED THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS AND ALL HIS WAYS, AND JESUS THE KING TOOK UP RESIDENCE IN OUR HEARTS. THROUGH

HOLY BAPTISM THE OPPRESSIVE RULE OF SATAN ENDED AND THE JOYOUS REIGN OF CHRIST BEGAN.

WHEN WE FORGET CHRIST'S REIGN IN OUR LIFE, IT AFFECTS US. WE BEGIN LIVING FOR OURSELVES AND FOR THE MOMENTARY PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE, INSTEAD OF FOR HIM WHO HAS REDEEMED US AND RENEWED US BY HIS SPIRIT. WE FORGET GOD'S EASTER WORDS TO US: "YOU DIED, AND YOUR LIFE IS NOW HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD. WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS YOUR LIFE, APPEARS, THEN YOU ALSO WILL APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY" (COL 3:3-4). CHRIST PRAYS IN OUR TEXT WITH THE AUTHORITY OF ONE WHO HAS BEEN WITH THE FATHER IN THE GLORY OF ETERNITY, AND HIS WORDS INSTILL IN US THE CONFIDENT HOPE THAT GOD WILL COMPLETE THAT WHICH HE HAS BEGUN IN US. AS ST. JOHN WRITES: "DEAR FRIENDS, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND WHAT WE WILL BE HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE KNOWN. BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS" (1 JN 3:2).

SECOND, EVEN AS WE ARE GOD'S ETERNAL PEOPLE, WE ARE ALSO *PEOPLE OF GOD'S WORD* (VV 6-8). WE CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE OF GOD'S REVELATION. BOTH THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND THE WORD OF GOD INCARNATE, JESUS CHRIST, ARE GOD'S REVELATION TO HUMANKIND. GOD HAS

REVEALED HIS LOVE, WILL, AND PURPOSE TO THE WORLD THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, AND HE CONTINUES TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO THE WORLD THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD, THE BIBLE.

THE PRIVILEGE OF KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS WORD CARRIES WITH IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF KEEPING HIS WORD, TOO. WE HAVE COME TO KNOW JESUS AS OUR GOD AND SAVIOR THROUGH GOD'S WORD OF HOLY SCRIPTURE, AND IN THAT WORD JESUS SAYS, "BLESSED . . . ARE THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND KEEP IT" (LK 11:28). BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE FORGET THAT WORD AND LIVE FOR OURSELVES? MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REALIZE OUR SHORTCOMINGS—THAT WE CAN'T LIVE UP TO HIS JUST REQUIREMENTS?

THEN GOD CALLS US TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE PEOPLE OF "THE WORD MADE FLESH," JESUS CHRIST, WHO FORGIVES OUR SELF-CENTEREDNESS AND OUR SHORTCOMINGS. BY THE GOOD-NEWS MESSAGE OF OUR SALVATION, JESUS PICKS US UP, CLEANS US OFF, AND STARTS FRESH WITH US AGAIN. REMEMBER: IT'S NOT BY THE STRENGTH OF OUR WILL OR THE WORKS OF OUR HANDS THAT WE OBEY GOD'S WORD. RATHER, IT'S THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH GOD'S WORD OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS THAT KEEPS US IN CHRIST JESUS!

THIRDLY, WE ARE GOD'S GLORY PEOPLE (V 10). WE GLORIFY GOD BY RECEIVING AND BELIEVING IN THE WORD HE SENT US:

JESUS CHRIST. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND IN NATURE WE SEE GOD'S GLORY. YET AN EVEN GREATER GLORY THAN THAT WHICH IS SEEN IN GOD'S CREATION IS THAT REVEALED IN HIS REDEMPTION. AS ST. PAUL WRITES: "I CONSIDER THAT OUR PRESENT SUFFERINGS ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING WITH THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US. THE CREATION WAITS IN EAGER EXPECTATION FOR THE SONS OF GOD TO BE REVEALED. . . . THE CREATION ITSELF WILL BE LIBERATED FROM ITS BONDAGE TO DECAY AND BROUGHT INTO THE GLORIOUS FREEDOM OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD" (ROM 8:18-19, 21).

YET, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE FORGET THE *IRONY* OF IT ALL—GLORY IN A SHAMEFUL CROSS—AND THE *PARADOX*—THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST AND THE LAST FIRST—AND BEGIN TO SEEK GLORY FOR OURSELVES? THE WORLD TELLS US THAT IT'S THE RICH, THE STRONG, THE POWERFUL, THE WISE, THE INTELLIGENT WHO HAVE ALL THE GLORY. DO WE SEEK AFTER THE GLORY OF THE WORLD OR OF THE CROSS?

YOU SEE, GOD'S GREATEST GLORY IS SEEN IN HIS MERCY. INDEED, HE HONORS SINNERS LIKE YOU AND ME. HE EATS WITH US AT HIS HOLY SUPPER, DWELLS WITHIN US BY HIS SPIRIT, AND INVITES US HOME TO HIM IN HEAVEN. THROUGH CHRIST GOD IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH THE POOR IN SPIRIT, THE MEEK, AND

THE HUMBLE. REMEMBER ST. PETER'S EXHORTATION: "HUMBLE YOURSELVES, THEREFORE, UNDER GOD'S MIGHTY HAND, THAT HE MAY LIFT YOU UP IN DUE TIME" (5:6).

OF COURSE, HAVING THIS HUMBLE ATTITUDE AMONG US "LIKE THAT OF CHRIST JESUS" MAKES US CHRISTIANS VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD (V 11). JESUS KNEW THIS AND PRAYED FOR US BECAUSE WE ARE "IN THE WORLD" BUT NOT "OF THE WORLD" AND, THEREFORE, AT RISK. SINCE WE LIVE IN THIS WORLD WITH ALL ITS INSESSENT ATTACKS ON JESUS—AND BY ASSOCIATION, ON US—WE SOMETIMES FORGET *WHO* WE ARE, LET ALONE *WHOSE* WE ARE, AND, THEREFORE, *HOW* WE OUGHT TO LIVE. YET JESUS PRAYS FOR US LATER IN HIS PRAYER: "SANCTIFY THEM (FATHER) IN YOUR TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH" (V 17).

JESUS PRAYS FOR OUR PROTECTION BY THE POWER OF GOD'S NAME SO THAT WE MAY BE ONE, EVEN AS HE AND THE FATHER ARE ONE. GOD IS A UNITY OF THREE PERSONS IN ONE SUBSTANCE. THEY WORK TOGETHER WITH ONE WILL AND FOR ONE PURPOSE: THE SALVATION OF HUMANKIND, SO THAT GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED. WHAT POWER, PROTECTION, AND POTENTIAL THAT GIVES US AS HIS CHILDREN!

WHEN WE TRY TO "GO IT ALONE," HOWEVER, WE LOSE OUR UNITY. PAUL HEIBERT DESCRIBES THIS ATTITUDE AS "INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENCY." THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE BOUGHT

INTO THIS PREVALENT IDEOLOGY IN OUR SOCIETY IS EVIDENT IN MUCH OF CHURCH LIFE—LOW ATTENDANCE, LOW FINANCIAL SUPPORT, LOW PARTICIPATION IN SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT BIBLE CLASSES. OFTEN PEOPLE THINK THAT THEY HAVE THE BEST IDEA, PLAN, OR SUGGESTION ABOUT HOW THINGS OUGHT TO BE DONE, AND WHEN THEY ARE NOT FOLLOWED, THEY LEAVE THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

BUT THEN, WHERE IS OUR POWER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST? WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR POTENTIAL WHEN THE BODY BECOMES "DISMEMBERED"? OUR UNITY IS A PRECIOUS GIFT FROM CHRIST. THE POWER TO STRENGTHEN AND MAINTAIN IT COMES THROUGH HIM ALONE—THROUGH HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS. SO, LET'S BE FAITHFUL IN OUR ATTENDANCE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST HERE AT MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL. GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH GREAT POTENTIAL!

DEAR FRIENDS, OUR UNITY AS MEMBERS OF MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH IS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST AND SO BECOME ONE WITH HIM, WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH US. OUR ASCENDED LORD HAS LEFT US THIS PRAYER TO REVEAL TO US HOW HE HAS INTERCEEDED FOR US— THAT WE MAY BE ONE IN SPIRIT AND PURPOSE AS HE AND THE FATHER ARE ONE—AND HE CONTINUES TO INTERCEED FOR US BEFORE THE FATHER EVEN NOW. SO, WITH GREAT BOLDNESS, LET US CONTINUE IN GOD'S WORD AND TELL EVERYONE WHAT HE HAS DONE

SO THAT ALL MAY RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE IN HIS NAME. AMEN.