

Introductory

This material often given the title, “The High Priestly Prayer” is exclusive to John. In the TLH one-year lectionary, all the readings for the Easter Season through Trinity Sunday are taken from John’s Gospel, including several taken from chapter sixteen. This text before us, however, is not appointed to be read on any Sunday in the TLH one-year lectionary.

It is the appointed text for Easter 7A in the LW three-year lectionary. In both LW and LSB readings from John 17 are always read in every series on The Seventh Sunday of Easter. In the A series, vv. 1-11 are read, in the B series, vv. 11-19, and in the C series, vv. 20-26. On Easter 7A, therefore, you will always be preaching on the Son’s prayer to the Father.

We continue to find our context on Maundy Thursday, the evening before Jesus was to be crucified, located in Gethsemane. As we move through these readings, we may have noted that Jesus is explaining to His followers, often in great detail, what is going to be happening in the next few days and beyond, much like a parent would explain things to a child.

As noted last week, Jesus uses the extended metaphor of the vine and the branches to help His listeners get their heads around the ideas that He is trying to communicate to them. I suggested that we maybe work that metaphor into the sermon for the same reason that Jesus did; metaphors – we use them all the time – help people to understand things better.

Chapters fourteen through sixteen contain a three-chapter sermon by Jesus to His disciples, and chapter seventeen is a prayer of Jesus that is directed at His Father. One of the topics in chapter seventeen is similar to one of the ongoing topics in the previous three chapters. He prays about the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the followers of the Son.

These words may be well-known to some of your listeners, who may have heard the Christian axiom, “You are in The World, but you are not of The World.” Jesus does not ever exactly say exactly that, but the axiom captures the essence of what He does say. The World is a tough place for Jesus, and it will be a tough place for the followers of Jesus.

The Christians then and now are going to need all the help they can get. Jesus has talked about the coming Paraclete, and now He petitions the Father for His help. He is going to be leaving this place of difficulty, but we are still left here, and it’s a tough place. We await knowing that He is with us every step of the way, and we know the end of our destination.

Textual Notes

1. When the text begins with the words, “Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς – Jesus spoke these words,” it is imperative upon us, in order to understand the context of what He is about to say next, to at least make mention of what “these words” were. After we have ourselves done that, then we can then pass that on to the hearer to help them better understand.

For several chapters, Jesus has been talking to His disciples, primarily – but I don’t think limited to – the Twelve. He has told them what is coming; that He is going, and then they will be going – He is sending most of them to their deaths. Before that, they will suffer hatred and persecution. Now He’s going to pray for them and those who come after them.

The older translations have it correct, and it is the newer ones who add “when” or “after” He had said those words. The actual verb is the aorist active indicative form of “λαλέω – to speak,” followed by the conjunction καί, which work can and in this case does mean “and then.” It’s an important thing, and too often glossed over or not even noted.

Communication always includes what I was taught is a “sender” and a “receiver,” and the identity of the person who is *listening* is as important as that of the person doing the *talking*. God had been speaking to man, and now man is speaking to God, and the way Son speaks to the Father – including what He says – is different from the way He speaks to those men.

Any Sunday, or every Sunday, is the right time to review the Sacramental and sacrificial parts of Divine Service. In the sacramental portions of Service, God is speaking to us, through the voice of a man, the Pastor. In the sacrificial portions, men speak to God. It has been called “The Divine Conversation,” but some of the Lutherans frown on that term.

It says that Jesus “καὶ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν – lifted up His eyes to heaven.” The verb is an aorist active participle, a “focus on the action” participle that “generally conveys action prior in time to the action of the main verb” (FGG 144). The main verb is “εἶπεν – He spoke.” So, “Having lifted up His eyes to heaven, He spoke.”

First, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and then, gazing up, “εἶπεν Πάτερ ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα· δόξασόν σου τὸν Υἱόν, ἵνα ὁ Υἱὸς δοξάσῃ σέ – He spoke to His Father, ‘the hour has come. Glorify Your (the) Son, so that the Son might glorify you.’” The verb “ἐλήλυθεν” is a perfect active indicative of “λαλέω – to speak,” focus on an act with results that continue.

In the second chapter of John, when Mary asked Jesus to help out with the wine problem, Jesus responds, in part, “My hour has not yet come.” He then spends much of the Gospel

of John talking about how “the hour is coming” and “the hour is not yet come.” The “hour” which had been coming, which had not yet come, has now come; it’s time for the Cross.

It’s time for the Son to be glorified on the Altar of the Cross, and He will no longer speak of the “hour.” But the true story continues, as He is raised from the dead, and then He walks around for forty days, showing Himself to many people. Finally, at the end of those days, He gloriously ascends into heaven, from whence He will at The End come in glory.

2. We note that Jesus “goes third person.” If you google that term, you get hits about Minecraft and other games. Grammatically, first person singular is “I,” second person singular is “you” and third person is “he.” To “go third person” is to talk about yourself using “he” or “him,” sort of like one is observing oneself from another’s point of view.

Ricky Henderson famously talked about “Ricky,” and so did Jimmy in that one Seinfeld episode. The effect of them – and Jesus – doing that is to make it less about “me” and more about “him.” Or at least it appears that way. Here, we find Jesus the man stepping back and talking about The Son of God and His Messianic work and the “glory” of that work.

The Son now speaks to the Father of the “authority” the Father has given to Him – which He passes on – and the ability to do good things with that authority, “καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός ἵνα πᾶν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. – As You gave Him authority over all flesh, that all you have given Him, He will give to them eternal life.”

When the word “ἐξουσίαν – authority” appears in the NT, it always merits a closer look. In the NT, all authority, including earthly authority (Romans 13), finds its genesis and validation in and from God. We see that Kingdom of the Right (spiritual) authority begins with the Father, is given to the Son, who in turn gives it to the Apostles and the Church.

The words that follow speak to that ordering, particularly later on (8), “I have given them the words which you gave to me, and they have received them...” The specific “authority” said by Jesus to have been given to the Son by the Father is over “πάσης σαρκός – all flesh,” the word for the whole of humanity for the purpose of gaining eternal life for them.

3. These precious beings, highest creations of the Father, are entrusted to the Son, the Son is faithful, and He will save them, giving them eternal life. Eternal life is defined, “ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν – that they should know you, the only true God and (know) Whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.”

He calls the Father, “The only true God,” and The Son “the one who you (The Father) sent naming Himself. Continuing the joined-at-the-hip language seen in His earlier sermon, Jesus proclaims the close connection between the Father and the Son; to know the One is to know the Other, and anybody who knows the true, Triune God will have eternal life.

4. Returning to talk of glory, Jesus says that “ἐγὼ σε ἐδόξασα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – I glorified you on the earth,” it’s γῆς, the word for God’s creation, not κοσμος; the word for sinful man. While the Son glorified the Father by His entire life, things like His perfection; that He never sinned, His wonderful words in preaching/teaching, and miracles come to mind.

Knowing that the end of His time on earth is drawing near, He notes that, “τὸ ἔργον τελειώσας ὃ δέδωκάς μοι ἵνα ποιήσω – having finished the work given to me to do,” i.e. all the things just noted. Like anybody or anything else, Jesus had been incarnated for a specific purpose, which has now been achieved, and which will soon come to completion.

5. Asking the Father, “καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, Πάτερ – now, You glorify Me, Father.” The verb is in the imperative; a command or in this case a request for the Father to “glorify” the Son, “παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί.– with yourself, with the Glory that I had, before the world existed, with You,” taking us to John 1:1.

A note here on the use of the Imperative mood in the Greek language. The woman at the well spoke to Jesus in the Imperative – the mood of command. That doesn’t seem right. If the Imperative is a command, then it doesn’t seem right for her to be commanding Jesus. This week we have The Son seeming to command The Father, which doesn’t seem right.

That also seems inappropriate. I don’t think I’ve ever told my father what to do. We note that imperatives are used throughout the Lord’s Prayer. There, and in other prayers, we are praying for God’s Will, and that our prayer is connected to the prior promises of God. Essentially, we are telling God to make good on those promises, but there’s another aspect.

The imperative mood is indeed on a basic level the mood of command, but it can also be the mood of what we would call request, or as in the case of the Lord’s Prayer, a “petition.” Like most other modes of communication, meaning is determined by context. Earlier, Well Woman is likely requesting, and here Jesus is clearly asking, not commanding the Father.

6. Jesus then goes on to point out “Ἐφάνέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς ἔδωκάς μοι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου – I have revealed your name to those men you have given me out of the world.” We have often noted the importance of “name” in Bible times, an importance that has been largely lost in our time, and it is perhaps on the verge of being totally obliterated.

We see in many current surnames vestiges of the old idea that a name means something, and the hyphenated last name is a modern indication of that last vestige. In the Scandinavian countries, you were in days past called by your given name. If clarification was needed you were referred to as “Son of” somebody, which became your surname.

When my great-grandfather Peter Bengt came to this country, he was called Anderson, because his father was named Anders. My grandfather, who was born in America, was

named Cliff Anderson and not Cliff Peterson because that's not the way Americans did it. My people wanted – as much as possible – to be American and adopt to American ways.

A lot of the common English names come from occupations, and many come from cities. There are a lot of Millers and Smiths in America because there were a lot of millers and (black) smiths in the general population of England, and not so many Chandlers, Coopers and Butlers because of not so many candle-makers, barrel makers and bottle-carers.

By the same token there are a lot of Muellers (a miller, like my grandmother's people) Schmidts (a blacksmith) in the LCMS. Then there are place names like Lancaster, Washington, and London, for example, in England, that made it to America, and Berlin, New Berlin, Frankenmuth and the like that made it to here from The Old Country.

You are aware that, back in the day, many Lutherans had several middle names, often because they had several godparents, but sometimes because you just wanted to give props to multiple relatives. But in our day, we named our first child a name that had no connection to any family names. We simply liked the name and there was not more to it than that.

Our second was given the first name of his sainted uncle as a middle name, and the third likewise the name of a sainted aunt. These days naming bears almost absolutely no meaning except that the parent or parents liked the sound of it. People even make new names up, stringing together vowels and consonants in a more-or-less random fashion.

Bible Scholars talk about the meaning of “name” in the Bible. Barclay gives us a brief, concise explanation, talking about how “name is used in a very special way” in the OT,

It does not simply mean that name by which a person is called; it means the whole character of the person in so far as it can be known...So when Jesus says: ‘I have shown forth your name,’ he is saying: ‘I have enabled men to see what the real nature of God is like.

He also points out that power and authority are part and parcel of “name” in the Bible. I don't know if any real cop ever really said this, but I know that I have heard at least one cop on the small or large screen order somebody to, “Stop in the name of the law,” and a command given “in the name of the king” carried more weight than one given by me.

Jesus then goes on by pointing out that The Father has taken people out of “κόσμου – the (sinful) world” and given them to Him. Having been taken out of The World by The Father, these people are now in the possession of The Father, who then gives them over to The Son. The Son now finds Himself in the position of making intercession for those souls.

He states, “σοὶ ἦσαν κάμοι αὐτοὺς ἔδωκας, καὶ τὸν λόγον σου τετήρηκαν – they were yours, and you have given them to me, and they have guarded your Word.” The verb is the perfect

active indicative τετήρηκαν. The translations that have τετήρηκαν as “kept,” or in a few cases “obeyed,” are unclear and ambiguous at best, and misleading at worst, like last week.

These men, being sinners like the rest of us, have done anything but “keep” and “obey” the Word. What they have done is to “guard” or “preserve” the Word that had been entrusted to them by Jesus when He sent them out to proclaim Him and the Kingdom. They will further guard and preserve it by writing it down in epistles that will appear in the NT.

The corollary is people who do not “guard” the Word. Firstly, I said in last week’s sermon, by not doing that simple task of guarding the Word, they show themselves to be people who do *not* love Jesus. In fact, looking around at some of the liberal churches, I wonder if they actually hate Jesus. They certainly hate a lot of what He and the rest of the Bible say.

Many of them, in fact, are promoting the wholesale disposal of The Word into the trash. The liberal Christians are in the lead in promoting things like Abortion, Infanticide, Homosexual marriage, and every perversion that comes along. Up next? Be ready to be called a “Pedophobe,” which sounds like “Homophobe” only you are against pedophiles.

7. This meaning of τετήρηκαν is made clear in the next verse, where The Son talks to The Father about how “νῦν ἔγνωκαν ὅτι πάντα – now they know everything. The pipeline – and this is a theme that repeats constantly in John – goes from the Father to the Son to the Apostles – and they wrote it down – and they are all in agreement about what God says.

8. From The Father to The Son, who gives it to The Apostles and The Church, and it rests today with The Church and particularly with those who hold the Apostolic Office, i.e. Pastors. (Apostolate and Ministry by Karl Heinrich Rengstorff is a great read on that subject. A translation by Paul D. Pahl is available in the Concordia Heritage Series)

It is hard to imagine, given our context, that there was ever a time when it was commonly believed almost by consensus that the Church spoke with the authority of God. In the Early Church and well into Medieval times, preachers believed that when they were preaching, they were speaking the very Word of God to their hearers, and the listeners believed it too.

To those Christian hearers it was axiomatic that when the pastor preached or when the Church spoke, it was as if God Himself had spoken, and they would have had a hard time getting their heads around any other way of looking at it. Nor so much these days, where church bodies, congregations, and even individuals all have different takes on those things.

In 1991, the late historian William Manchester published *A World Lit Only by Fire*. I checked it out at the library, and did not get very far, being off put by his obvious and

sporadically virulent anti-Christian mindset. A few years ago, I checked the same book out on CD, and was immediately reminded why I had stopped reading twenty years ago.

I almost quit reading, but I waded through, and grew to expect the slanted, borderline revisionist tack, knowing that the author was a native of Massachusetts and had not been brought up in the Church. He is a good writer, and I avoid like the plague books written by bad authors. There are just too many good books to get bogged down in bad ones.

The book is actually a pretty good read, and for the purposes of our study, several times throughout the book he articulates the unswerving belief of the common man in the Church as the arbiter of all things spiritual. What an incredible, dramatic, and difficult shift it was from that thinking in people like Martin Luther and his followers to oppose the Church.

As is the way of things in human history, what was once axiomatic is now anathema, and what was once unthinkable is now the norm. Any talk of any kind of spiritual authority is, in varying degrees, scorned by the Post-Modern Western Man, who has his own ideas and philosophies. He used to not say that your ideas are wrong, but now he's gotten over that.

The opinions of orthodox Christians are by The Culture mostly pooh-poohed as being stupid, or at least old-fashioned, and the opinion of the Church – well, he will ask “what’s that...which church...” to our great embarrassment. There are some Post-Modernists who still acknowledge “Jesus works for you, not for me...” oh, for a return to the good old days.

9. We are reminded for whom Jesus is praying, “οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι σοί εἰσιν – I do not pray for the world, but for those you have given to me, because they are yours.” What a comforting thing to know that He is specifically praying for those who believe in Him, Christians, and the Church, but not for The World.

He is deliberately not praying for The World, which in John is from Satan, the opposition to Jesus, and it is the enemy to be fought against. As we noted above, He gives His life to save all people, including the World. The theological term for that idea is “universal atonement,” and Calvinism teaches “limited atonement” – Jesus died only for Christians.

Pray for their conversion, of course, as He taught us to pray “thy Kingdom come,” but otherwise...The idea that Christians take care of each other first is biblical but gets short shrift in the LCMS. It has been drilled into our collective brains that everything – our schools, our activities, our church service – is about evangelism. We’re getting over that.

His rationale is that The Father has entrusted these particular men to Him, and they are His responsibility. Whatever else you want to say about Jesus, you have to say that the guy knows what it means to be a pastor. These days, Pastors get a lot of encouragement to do things they should not be doing, which keeps them from things they should be doing.

One time, an area congregation went vacant. Their guy called me and said that they wanted me to be their Vacancy Pastor, and he asked me to come to a meeting. At the meeting, another guy started talking about all the stuff the pastor who had just left had been doing, stressing that they wanted their pastor to be “involved in the community.” Outreach, right?

The list went on and on and on and I was thinking, “When did he have time to be your pastor.” That list, as well as their offer of \$100 per day for three days per week – ten or twelve dollars per hour - more than the high school kid but less – at the time – than manager at McDonalds – told me a lot about how much (how little) they valued the work we do.

I found a different vacancy.

10. Jesus gives a wonderful contrast between orthodox Christianity and all other religions, including heterodox Christianity. While the Natural Man and all of his religions see the “glory” of God being manifested in power and might and hell for them, Jesus sees the glory of the Father in the cross, His ability to win and give away heaven to all, even The World.

11. He ends this section with poignant words of sorrow, grieving for those to whom He has grown close, who He must now leave behind “καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσὶν – I am no longer in the World, and they are in the world.” He is going to leave and go to heaven, and we are going to stay a while here and later on go to heaven.

He continues along those lines, saying, “ἐγὼ πρὸς σὲ ἔρχομαι – I am coming to you,” expressing His confidence that His coming death will not be permanent. Then once more He prays for you, “Πάτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι – Holy Father, guard by Your Name them you have given to me,” i.e. Christians then and now.

As a result, “ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς – that they be one, as we are.” That verse is often taken as a purpose clause; to mean that Jesus desires the Church to be united, which He does. The proper translation makes it a resultative clause; the Church is in fact one. To be sure, there have from the start been theological conflicts and lack of oneness in the Church.

There were the Judaizers and Paul’s public rebuke of Peter (Galatians 1), but after Nicea, the Church settled into a nice level of oneness. Then in 1054 The Great Schism, dividing the Church into East and West. The Reformations of the Sixteenth Century, first the Lutheran and then the rest, resulted in a yet more fractured than ever Christian Church.

The American re-introduction of religious freedom has taken disunity to a whole new level in this country, with thousands of denominations scattered about, most of them claiming to believe and teach true Christianity. Yet, in the midst of all that, Christians still recognize one another to be followers of Jesus. and these days, we’ll take all the allies we can get!

The Ecumenical Movement, which began in the last century and seems to have lost some of its steam into this, essentially sought to bring about unity by at least downplaying, in

some cases altogether ignoring, differing theological teachings. This approach appeals to the Post-Modern world, but not so much to the “woke” crowd, which is where we are now.

Far from downplaying the importance of correct doctrine, the adherents of the Lutheran Confessions have always sought unity by the only way possible, from the clear teachings of the Bible. Recall what we said earlier about “name,” and note that in v. 11 Jesus prays of His followers that the Father would keep them, “in Your name, so that they may be one.”

Connect the dots and see that the only basis for “oneness” is the “name” of God, Who He is, what He stands for, His entire character and person. Connect one more dot and see that what we know about God, we know from the Bible. The other approach has not led to a better Christianity, but only one watered down to almost not recognizable as Christian.

Law/Gospel

Separation/Unity – Original Sin separated Adam and Eve from God, and so it separates us from Him. It also separates people from people and causes them to be at constant loggerheads with one another, sometimes leading to war. Being united to The Son, we are united to The Father. We try for unity with other people here on earth, realizing that such unity will come only in heaven, but that when it gets here, it will last a long time.

Eternal Death/Eternal Life – Jesus and the rest of the Bible talk about both heaven and hell as being for “eternity.” Here Jesus talks about “eternal” life. The stakes are great for the Christian; remain the Faith and live, or reject the Faith and die. Whichever you choose, the results will be eternal. (I think that if we talked more like that to people who are currently Christians, they would be less likely to choose to reject Christianity. Once they fall away, it’s a lot harder to get that horse back into the barn.)

Satan Owns/God Owns – Because of sin, we find ourselves in the clutches of Satan. Because of the forgiveness of sin, we find ourselves in the clutches of the Son, who delivers us to the Father, a lot better clutch than Satan.

World Owns/God Owns – See above.

Sermon Titles

The Father, The Son, and The Christian

The Glory of the Father

The Christian and The World

Hymns

What is the World to Me? – LSB 730

O God, Forsake Me Not – LSB 731

The Trust section has several other good hymns.

Sing Easter Hymns during the Easter Season

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Matthew).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, Fundamental Greek Grammar. Concordia Publishing House, 1993

GBS – Jeffrey Gibbs, Concordia Commentary, Matthew, CPH, 2006

GND – Robert H. Gundry, Matthew A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art,
Eerdmans, 1982

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, A Concordance to the Greek Testament.
T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. Oxford University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

SCR – David Scaer, Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church, CPH, 2004

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html