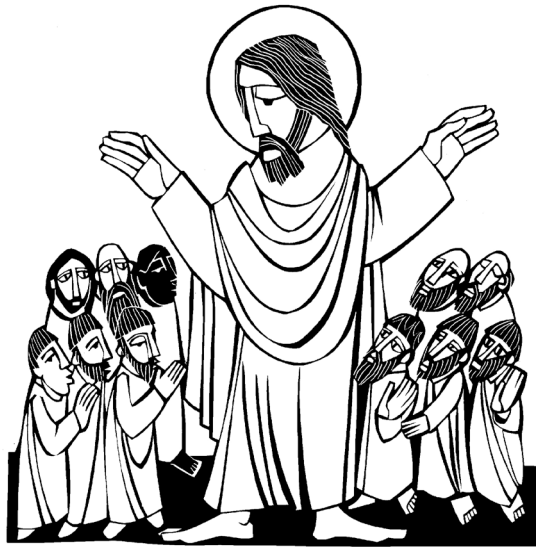


Mother's Day



The Rev. Ryan Wiksell

May 12, 2024 | 7th Sunday of Easter

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God.

- Happy Mother's Day
 - I didn't always get to see my own mom on a regular basis.
 - I went to college 2.5 hours away, and came home once a month during college
 - But then I settled down there, and the visits got farther apart
 - So a lot of Mother's Days amounted to a phone call. (I've never been great with gifts)
 - But we were never much of a gift-giving family anyway.
 - Yes, as kids we got presents for Christmas and birthdays
 - But that was more of a social convention. Other than that it's just not our thing
 - We're much more focused on time together than gifts
 - Which was hard when living on different sides of the state
- When Asher and Anya were born the need to spend time together only grew
 - And my Mom came for the birth, and came to live with us for the first month to help out with the newborn twins.
 - After that, she made 24-hour trips down on Thursdays to give us a little break
- This dynamic made the move to Virginia very challenging.
 - What was a day trip before was now an expensive flight, which required a visit of at least four days to make it worthwhile
 - But one time my Mom did come and visit us at the drop of the hat anyway, to get us through a bout of illness.
- So time together is important to us. And my Mom's favorite thing to do for Mother's Day is simply to be with her boys.

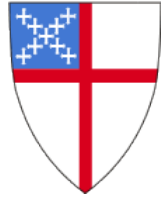
- But there is one thing that touches her heart even more. And I know because she told it to me.
- Even more than spending time with us, she loves it when her children spend time with each other.
- She hates to see disharmony or disunity between her sons – me and my brother – and she loves to see us enjoying each other’s company and getting along.
- Fortunately, that’s mostly the case – even though my brother and his family live on the West Coast, and our opportunities are limited.
- Jesus, as we know, is not a mother, and never was.
 - But the way he prays for his disciples, in today’s gospel reading, sounds very mother-like
 - It’s full of love, and a desire to nurture and support those he trains up
 - And there’s a desire for those “children” of his to grow up strong and independent, so they don’t need his constant physical presence anymore
 - A good mother, and a good Creator, desire exactly this for their children
- But the bigger desire, overriding all else in Jesus’ prayer, is the desire that they be unified.
 - This was a tall order for Jesus’ disciples, which included a tax collector (traitor) and a zealot (militant nationalist) as well as many conflicting personalities
 - Jesus picked followers that had no business getting along, in human terms, and then prayed to the Spirit to unify them, in the way only God can.
 - If all the members of a model railroad club get along, or all the members of a knitting circle, or a rugby team, or a hedge fund get along, there’s some sense to that. They have common ground. They can understand each other.

- And Jesus' circle was like this, or if the church was like this, then we wouldn't need God's help to be unified. It would come fairly naturally.
- But that's not what the church is like, is it?
 - Or at least, it shouldn't be.
 - So here's the challenge:
 - If you ever look around at church, and find that you understand everyone pretty easily. That we all just "get" each other, and don't need God's help to be unified, then we have missed it.
 - We are not a church. We are a special interest club.
 - A church is not a church unless it is full of contradictions and potential conflicts
 - If it doesn't feel like a ticking time bomb, then we have work to do
 - We have work to open our doors wider, to expand our horizons farther
 - And trust in the Holy Spirit *every moment* to not let that time bomb go off
 - It's messy, but it really can work. I promise.
- This is the last week of the Easter season. In the timeline Jesus has already ascended. We're kind of on our own.
 - But next week is Pentecost, when we receive the gift that Jesus leaves behind, to empower us to realize that unity he prayed for in the garden
 - Not because we agree to disagree
 - Not because we just want to keep our mothers happy
 - But because we are compelled by our mission, and empowered by the Spirit to see God's image in each other every day.
 - If we ask for it, God will give us the grace to overlook all the differences that don't matter at the end of the day. They just won't seem important anymore
 - So that we can look at each other and see only brothers, only sisters. Amen.

- The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Year B
RCL



Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
1 John 5:9-13
John 17:6-19
Psalm 1

The Collect

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

The First Lesson

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus-- for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us-- one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

The Response

Psalm 1

Beatus vir qui non abiit

- 1 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, *
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
- 2 Their delight is in the law of the LORD, *
and they meditate on his law day and night.

- 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water,
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; *
everything they do shall prosper.
- 4 It is not so with the wicked; *
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, *
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, *
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

The Epistle

1 John 5:9-13

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

The Gospel

John 17:6-19

Jesus prayed for his disciples, "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. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for 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. I 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And 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. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth."

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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