

**John 17:6-19 – “The Resurrected Power of Christ Continues:
Through Jesus’ Priestly Intercession”– May 12th/13th, 2018**

Grace and peace to you all from God our Father and Jesus our risen Lord. Amen.

This final Sunday of Easter marks an important time in memory of the Church. Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father – what we celebrated on Thursday. At the right hand of the Father, the Son of God ever and always intercedes for his Church, prays for all those who truly belong to him, and his resurrected and ascended power is accessible and given to you through faith – what we focus on today. With this power, the Church readies herself for even more power from on high: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit – what we focus on next week. So today is a transition day, not only between seasons in the Church year but also a transition in how we view Jesus. Jesus is our risen Lord, now he is our ascended Lord, he is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, our great High Priest, seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for you and me before the Father in the dimension in which God dwells, what we call heaven, and bringing to you the spoils of his victory over sin, death, and the devil made possible by his death and resurrection and applied to you by the work of his Holy Spirit in the Word and Sacraments. By the way, we celebrate the mystery of the Trinity two weeks from now as well.

So what does this sermon title mean: “The resurrected power of Christ continues through Jesus’ priestly intercession”? What this gets at is the absolute impossibility for you to get into God’s favor, stay in God’s favor, and savor God’s favor apart from the work of God himself. This means it is a work of God that you believe. It is a work of God that you stay believing. It is a work of God that you appreciate, that you relish, that you enjoy, that you savor the awesome power of Christ our King and High Priest. You can’t do that in and of yourself. You need divine assistance, beginning to end. King David confesses in Psalm 16:2 – “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.” Jesus puts it this way in John 15:6 – “Apart from me you can do nothing.”

And it's like what Jesus says in John 17:8 – "...the words that you [Father] gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them..." And so, God gives, you receive. Like a beggar, we come only with open hands before the majesty of God. The only thing you can do is receiving what God wants to give. And what is it that God wants to give? He wants to give and share you with his resurrected and ascended power. And this power is manifested in different ways. Look at the words in Jesus' prayer for you; he names five things quite clearly: (v.11a) The gift of faith and the power of being kept in God's name; (v.11b) The power which enables you to live in unity with God and his Church; (v. 13) the power of joy, specifically, the power of having *Jesus' joy* fulfilled in you; (v.15) the power of protection from the Devil, the "evil one;" and (v. 17,19) the power of being sanctified in the word of truth. And none of these promises are possible for you to receive unless the Father has chosen you, unless Son intercedes for you, unless the Spirit applies them to you. So we are completely, and totally, and utterly dependent upon the Lord. We are completely, and totally, and utterly dependent upon the Lord to do in us what we cannot hope to do in ourselves. Jonathan Edwards, a pastor who lived in the 1700's in New England, and saw the interceding power of Christ our High Priest on display during what we call America's First Great religious Awakening, had this to say:

"...the redeemed, by reason of the greatness of their dependence on God, have not only so much the greater occasion, but obligation to contemplate and acknowledge the glory and fulness[*sic*] of God. How unreasonable and ungrateful should we be, if we did not acknowledge that sufficiency and glory which we absolutely, immediately, and universally depend upon!"¹

We depend on the Lord and his omnipotent power for all things, for all good things. And thanks be to God, the Son intercedes for you and I making sure the resurrected power of God comes to you as often as possible, as often as you are open to it, as long as your thirsty soul pants for the rivers of God, as long as your hungry heart desires Christ and all he is and all he has.

¹ "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" *Works of Jonathan Edwards: Volume II*, p. 6

If Jesus is not interceding for you and I at this very moment, all would be lost. It's what the Lord said through Isaiah's prophecy 650 years before Jesus was born (Isaiah 41:10) – "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." And just before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus tells the disciples, and you and I this (Matthew 28:20): "...I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Jesus is with you, through faith. His power is yours, through faith. His resurrected power is felt, experienced, tasted, heard of in this time of worship. And the reasons why you can receive that power of God on high is because the Son intercedes for you. Of the 5 things Jesus prays for in John 17, let me just pick out one and touch on that so you can see why Jesus needs to intercede for you, why Jesus needs to bring your prayers before the Father and bring a portion of the Father's power to you through his spirit.

In John 17:11, hear again one of Christ's many promises he prays on your behalf: "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me..." What does it mean to be kept, to be protected, in God's name? What we've been focusing on all throughout the season of Easter. If you want you can follow along in your bulletin as a refresher to see what we've covered these past 7 weeks. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you fight against the devil's desire to keep you from worship – what we focused on this past Thursday for the Ascension. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you have an abiding friendship with Christ – you abide in him through faith and he abides in you, yes you, by his Spirit. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you are made holy, kept holy, so that you are sanctified by the Father through his Spirit. God kills sin in you, you are pruned, you are sanctified and he sanctifies you

because he loves you. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you would hear God speak to you directly through preaching. God doesn't speak in general to people, he speaks particularly and particularly to you. Don't ever think the sermon you're hearing is ever for someone else. Preaching is always addressing you. Through preaching God is addressing you directly by agency of his Spirit. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you would see the glory of God in the Scriptures. And you won't see how amazing God is in the Scriptures unless the Holy Spirit of God gives you a supernatural appreciation for the written word of God. Being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you stay intimately united to Christ's Church. Christ is the head of the church; you, the Church, are his body. You cannot be a Christian and not be a part of the Church. You cannot receive the power of God apart from the Church. Jesus isn't a bodiless Lord; the Church isn't a headless chicken running around with no purpose. Both body and head go together in an intimate fellowship and you, people of God, get to be a part of that powerful fellowship between Christ and you, his Church. And finally, being kept, being protected, in God's name means Jesus intercedes for you so that you never stop marveling at the alarming power of God, the alarming power of God that turns the walking dead into people who are spiritually live and born again by the Gospel; the alarming power of God that will raise our dead bodies to new life one day; the alarming power of God that ascends on high only to again descend by a flood of grace in the person of the Holy Spirit – who we'll talk more about next week. Until then, may we all give thanks to Christ for his work as our mediator, as our great High Priest, as the one at the right hand of the Father who intercedes for you and me that we would be kept in God's name, that you would be wrapped in, covered, and flooded by the resurrected power of Christ. Amen.

HoD: ELW #392 "Allelujah! Sing to Jesus!"