

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

St. John 16:23-30: "Jesus Is Your Tireless Mediator."

May 8/9, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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O Lord Jesus Christ, who said to Your disciples, "Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son": Give us grace, we beseech You, to ask aright; teach us to bring our requests into harmony with Your mind and will; and grant that both our prayers and our lives may be acceptable in Your sight, to the glory of God the Father. Amen. (*Parish Prayers*, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 89)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said:] "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. / "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." / His disciples said, "Ah, now You are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that You know all things and do not need anyone to question You; this is why we believe that You came from God." (ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who came into the world from the Father to win our salvation, and who continues to advocate for us at the Father's right hand, dear fellow redeemed:

When a little child wants something, he charges right ahead with his request: "Mom, can I have a cookie?" And if Mom says "No," he takes one of two approaches. He either whines and begs, desperately hoping he will get what he wants. Or he goes and makes the same request of Dad: "Dad, can I have a cookie?" And what does Dad say? "Go ask your Mom."

But when a child gets older, the strategy improves. An older child has a better sense of when to ask for something, how to ask for something, and who to ask for something. You know how this works. You wait until your parents are in a good mood. You make your request politely, possibly making the case for why you should get what you want. Maybe you convince your sibling to make the request, thinking their odds are better than yours. You choose the parent who is more likely to say "Yes" than the other.

And if you get a hard "No" from one, you try to get the other to see the good reasons for your request. If you are fortunate, perhaps Mom will speak to Dad on your behalf and get him to

reconsider. In that situation, you needed a mediator. Whether it was one of your parents or a sibling, you needed someone to go between you and the person with the authority.

For the salvation of our souls, we needed mediation between us and God. But there was no favorite sibling we could turn to on earth to patch things up with Him. We are all sinners. We are all equally guilty of disobeying His commands. The mediator had to be designated from God's side, not from ours. Jesus is that Mediator. He is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. And He is also true Man, born of the virgin Mary.

What is interesting about Christ's role as Mediator is that God wants reconciliation with us. It isn't like the embittered couple looking out for his and her own interests in divorce court with a mediator trying to keep things peaceful. God wants to be one with us. He wants to be our merciful Father, and He wants us to be His children.

We could not make this peace with God. The idea that we can mend what is broken with God, that we can set our wrongs right, is at the heart of all false religion. Even thinking it is possible for us to fix things with God shows that we don't realize how far we have fallen. We don't realize how far apart we are from the holy God. God demands our perfection at all times, perfection in what we do, perfection in what we say, perfection in what we think. Jesus states it plainly, *"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Mat. 5:48).

But we can't imagine this command is so hard and fast. Why would God demand what is impossible for us humans to accomplish? So we try to bring God down to our level. We say that because He loves us, He must be willing to overlook our imperfections. He must be happy to meet us where we are and to accommodate Himself to us. This is totally wrong. God is God! He doesn't take orders from us. He doesn't play by our rules. He is the all-powerful, all-holy God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

We cannot raise ourselves up to God or make Him come down to us. But He can do this. He can lower Himself to us and raise us up to Him. He accomplished both of these things by sending His only Son to become a man. The Son of God came in the flesh to be our Perfection—to keep the holy Law in every detail. He came to be our Redemption—to suffer and die for all of our wrongs. And He came to be our Reconciliation—to bring us eternally back together with God.

Jesus did all the work of our salvation. We do none of it. Our righteous standing before God is because of Him. The full forgiveness of our sins is because of Him. Our victory over death is because of Him. *"All this is from God,"* writes St. Paul, *"who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them"* (2Co. 5:18-19).

Jesus was not forced into this or tricked into this. He did it all willingly. He wanted to obey His Father's will even if it meant such suffering and torment. Jesus wanted all sinners to be saved. His sacrifice in our place is the reason God the Father looks upon us with favor. With Jesus as our Reconciler, our Mediator, nothing separates us from the grace and glory of God.

Our dear Father in heaven loves to attend to our needs. He loves to hear our prayers. We don't have to worry about catching God on a good day or select only the best pray-ers to make our

requests. Because of what Jesus has done for our salvation, each and every child of God can boldly and confidently bring their needs and concerns to Him. Jesus says, *“Truly, truly – Amen, Amen – , I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you.”*

But maybe you find it hard to ask. Maybe you don’t think you are very good at it. Others seem to pray so naturally, while you fumble around looking for the right words. God does not mind if your prayers lack polish. He doesn’t mind if you speak in fragments, or if your thoughts jump all over the place. He listens just as carefully whether you pray for ten minutes or ten seconds. He does not grow tired of your praying. He loves you.

Jesus says that *“the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.”* You can be sure of the love of God the Father because you trust in the One He sent to save you. When you pray *“in Jesus’ name,”* you acknowledge that Jesus accomplished everything His Father sent Him to do for your salvation.

By the words, *“in Jesus’ name,”* you also confess that Jesus is still your Advocate at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. **He Is Your Tireless Mediator.** Jesus prayed often during the time of His public work on earth. He prayed that God’s will be done even if it required His suffering. He prayed for His disciples that their faith would not fail. And He still prays for you.

Every time you pray *“Our Father,”* remember who taught you that prayer. The Lord Jesus taught it, and He prays it with you – *“Our Father,”* He said. In this way, Jesus sanctifies your prayers to the Father. Your prayers, though they come from your imperfect heart and mind and pass through an imperfect mouth, are perfectly presented to the Father in Jesus’ name. Like all of your imperfect works, your prayers are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and are therefore acceptable to your Father in heaven.

We don’t fully grasp the privilege of prayer. The God who rules over all things invites us poor sinners to speak to Him about anything. What’s more, He promises to hear those prayers and answer them. We don’t pray for sinful things that only have to do with our own selfish gain. We pray *“in Jesus’ name,”* in view of all that He did to save us. This means praying with humility, knowing that we deserve nothing good from God. And we pray with thankfulness, since our eternal life and joy have been secured for us by our Savior.

There is no good reason not to pray. We might use the excuse that we are too busy to pray, or that God is too busy to hear us. But neither of those things is true. Our opportunities for prayer are endless. We don’t have to wait until we are alone in the quiet, kneeling at our bedside. We can pray at any time and in any place. Jonah prayed from inside the slimy belly of a fish!

Christians who don’t pray are like beggars standing across the street from the soup kitchen waiting for food to be brought to them. Christians who don’t pray are like choir members who don’t sing. *“Ask, and you will receive,”* said Jesus, *“that your joy may be full.”* Even if we don’t receive exactly what we ask for on our timetable, we rejoice that God listens to us. He is for us, not against us. Jesus tirelessly presents our needs to the Father, and through the gifts of Jesus, our Father in heaven is constantly working all things for our good.

Some people pray to the saints and the angels. Some invoke dead relatives to come to their aid. We pray to the *"God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all"* (Eph. 4:6). We pray *"in Jesus' name,"* because He is our *"advocate with the Father"* (1Jo. 2:1). *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all"* (1Ti. 2:5-6).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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