

Pastor T.C. Arnold
6th Sunday of Easter
John 16:23-33
May 1st, 2016

Our text for today is from the Gospel just read, with focus on Jesus' words, "*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.*"

This is the Sunday during Easter when we reflect and hear how God calls upon us to call upon Him. This is the Sunday of prayer. The Lord just doesn't tell us to pray. He gives us words to pray. This is the Sunday when God's Word teaches us that because Jesus rose from the dead, we can go to God bearing His name and know that He will hear us and answer our prayers.

The catechism teaches us this very thing regarding prayer in the introduction to the prayer that our Lord has given to us. Turn now to page 323 of your hymnal and read along with me the introduction and its meaning.

Our Father who art in heaven. What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children as their dear father.

The Christian faith is not faith in an idea, feeling, or a concept. We don't trust in the "idea" of peace or the "feeling" of love deep from within, or the "concept" of what makes for joy in your life. No, unlike every other "faith" or "religion" in the world, the Christian faith finds its object in a person. "*In me you have peace,*" said Jesus. "*Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full,*" said Jesus. Now think about that, and you will be amazed at the tremendous gift which Christ our Lord gives to us by His great mercy and love. For this closely connects us to our heavenly Father.

Our Father who art in heaven...in me you have peace. So many people the world over try and find their strength, their hope, their power in a concept, a philosophy or even a good book. So much of what we hear about today for the care of self and how we will find happiness comes in all sorts of remedies and gimmicks that often times only exist for the task of making money. There are thousands of ways to have peace. There are thousands to receive joy. Do this, and you will have peace. Do that and you will find all the joy you need for this life until life's end. Many of these ideas about peace and joy are so abstract. Joy and peace are relative to each person, we hear so often. Joy and peace will come when happiness is found. But if you happen to be a real person, you know that even if you are happy at the moment, that doesn't always translate into a peaceful or joy-filled life.

With joy and peace in the abstract, there is no relationship, there is no "person" involved at all. You are left to your own devices to work your way out of your own problems.

Sadly, this is how many Christians act. We act as though God is simply "a thing" or "an object" to bring out of the closet and dust off when it becomes convenient, or when we want to impress people. But when things really go downhill, when we begin to have tribulations like Jesus talked about in our text, when that happens, there will always be one part of us which believes that we have to get our lives *fixed before* we can go to God. There will always be one part of us that believes we have to fix all these problems ourselves before we can be right with God. This is why some people tremble at the thought of coming to the Lord's Supper. "I am not worthy," we hear some say. "I have to get this, this, this and this figured out before I can go to God."

Now, of course, as long as we are living under the Law, that's true. The Law teaches us that we are not worthy, and that we must be cleansed and purified and perfect before we can enter into God's presence. And that's true. But what the Law doesn't teach us is that Jesus' death on the cross *is* our cleansing and purifying. Because we are *in Him*, we are declared perfect and holy, righteous and forgiven before God.

This is why Jesus says **in me you have peace**. Our peace is not in our works, not in our pious intentions or goodwill, and it's certainly not in our holiness or righteousness. Our peace, the only peace we will ever have and the only peace that really matters, THAT peace lies in the wounds of Jesus Christ alone. Peace lies in the person of Jesus.

Why is this so important? Why is this so central to the Christian faith? This is so central because this is at the heart and core of who God is and what He longs to give us as His very own children. The triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, longs to draw us into His presence and to give us His love and mercy and forgiveness. He wants to share all that He has with us, the sinner redeemed by Christ. This is what St. Paul speaks of in I Timothy chapter two, "*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*"

Jesus Christ is the "go-between" for you. You go to Jesus, for in Him lies all your hopes and dreams. This is why we pray of our collects *through Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord*, and this is why we pray *Our Father who art in heaven*. We could not pray "**Our Father**" unless Jesus "our brother" was praying with us and for us.

And beloved, we need a God who is interceding for us – especially with tragedy all around. And there is tragedy. For sure what Jesus said about having "tribulation" in the world is true. World tribulation is significant. See in the news how homes and lives have been destroyed by tornados in Joplin, Missouri and Reading, Kansas, and in Oklahoma and Arkansas. Many lives taken and many homes no longer exist. The storms of life can at times be personal disruptions or "actual" storms. Jesus is right...we have tribulation in this world. We need our mediator Jesus.

Jesus is right when He would tell us that false prophets would stir up the world. They cause tribulation by ruining lives, influencing some to sell everything because the end of the world is coming, and cause others to mistrust Christianity all the more because these people make their predictions all in the name of Christ the Lord. More tribulation is at hand by the hand of man. All the more reason why we need the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself for all. Jesus was right... in the world you will have tribulation.

So what about that peace that our Savior gives? What about that peace that the world cannot give? What about that love and that joy that are actually personified in a Lord who became like us in every way except without sin...which means it is so much more than a feeling or a philosophy?

Well, let's go back to the Introduction of the Lord's Prayer on page 323. Let's speak together the meaning one more time... "**With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.**"

Beloved, have peace in the knowledge that God is our Father and we are loved by Him like cherished children. The world is the author of tribulation. The Father gave His Son for peace. In that peace we see Jesus... not an idea... but a true Savior.

The Lord gives us the opportunity, as Children, to talk to Him. In prayer we have the blessed opportunity to converse with our Lord. And beloved in the Lord – In His Word He talks back. In His Word He shares with us the hope we need and the strength that is promised. In Him we have the opportunity to share with others what has been given to each of us in His precious Word.

So this is what Jesus means when He says, "*These things I have spoken to you, that in me you have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" The victory is won. You have Jesus which means you have "peace" in the midst of tribulation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in true faith, unto life everlasting. Amen