

## **Introduction**

The gospel for Easter's seventh Sunday is always taken from the long prayer Jesus prays for his followers in John's gospel on the night before his death, and always includes Jesus' desire that his followers will be one as he and the Father are one. This oneness is not mere doctrinal agreement or institutional unity, but mutual abiding, interpenetrating life, mutual love, and joy. This oneness is the work of the Spirit whom we have received but also await. Come, Holy Spirit!

## **Prayer of the Day**

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **First Reading: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26**

*In the days between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, Peter oversees the process whereby one of the members of the community of believers is chosen to be the twelfth apostle, in order to fill the vacancy created by Judas's treachery and death.*

<sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, <sup>16</sup>"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—<sup>17</sup>for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." <sup>21</sup>So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>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." <sup>23</sup>So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." <sup>26</sup>And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

## Psalm 1

<sup>1</sup>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!

<sup>2</sup>**Their delight is in the law | of the LORD,  
and they meditate on God's teaching | day and night.**

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>**It is not so | with the wicked;  
they are like chaff which the wind | blows away.**

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when | judgment comes,  
nor the sinner in the council | of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup>**For the LORD knows the way | of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall | be destroyed.**

## Second Reading: 1 John 5:9-13

*God has borne witness to the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in the Son of God believes in the witness of God and has the promise of eternal life.*

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>13</sup>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.

## **Gospel Reading: John 17:6-19**

*In this reading the church hears Jesus' words on the night before his death—his prayer for his disciples and for all who would believe in him through their words.*

[Jesus prayed:] <sup>6</sup>“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. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

## Prayers of Intercession

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love. saying “hear us, O God,” and responding, “your mercy is great.”

*A brief silence.*

Holy God, in Christ Jesus the joy of the church is made complete. Root the church in your Word and unify us as Christ’s body. Send us into the world as your loving people, ready to testify to your Spirit at work. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Mighty God, the world is your handiwork, displaying your creative impulse. Seas teem with life, forests reach up to praise you, and the mystery of life lies deep in the soil. Guard and keep this world for the well-being of all your creatures. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Gracious Sovereign, those who follow your ways are like trees planted near streams of water. Establish the leaders of nations and all in authority in your grace and truth. Strengthen them, so that the people they serve will have abundant life. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Generous Savior, you befriend those who are sick, suffering, poor, lonely, outcast, rejected, or sick. Grant healing and love to all in need (*especially*). Give them tangible signs of your steadfast love. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Creator God, here in this community we share the gift of praying, learning, and supporting one another. Give us thankful hearts as we claim the gifts that are unique to us and keep us from being envious of others with different gifts. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Saving God, your wonderful promise is the gift of eternal life in Jesus. Through the witness of those who have died in you, strengthen us now in this gift of life. We cherish the memory of your saints (*especially*). Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for the Seventh Sunday of Easter...***

### Move In Day

Each fall is the perennial move-in day on or near college campuses. Legions of parents descend with carloads that include tiny refrigerators, Ikea furniture, electronics, area rugs, and posters. They unload the one they have birthed, raised, nursed, instructed, and reproofed for eighteen or so, to prepare him or her for independence. Then, just like that, the parents are gone, perhaps wiping away tears. Perhaps their final words were ones they hoped would stick. "Study well." "Make good choices." "Watch your time." "Don't stay up too late." But in every parental heart is a simple prayer: "O God, be with them." In the final portion of Jesus' great prayer for the disciples (John 17:6-19), he entreats the Father to love and protect the disciples as a parent who knows their time for direct supervision is coming to an end. In this preparation we hear his pleading like a loving parent who wants the best for the ones he has sheltered, taught, loved, reproofed, and sent. Jesus begs for God to hold them in the truth that is to do as they have been taught, to follow the model established for them. Jesus asked for the disciples to be protected and surrounded so that they may not be lost. He prays for the disciples to have their joy completed, and to live what they have seen and understood from their rabbi. May we, like the disciples, live in the truth of the gospel, love as we have been loved, have our joy complete, and, above all, know that God is with us.

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