

## The Seventh Sunday of Easter YEAR C May 8, 2016

The Seventh Sunday of Easter : Sunday after Ascension Day

This is the last Sunday before Pentecost (which closes out the 50 days of Easter), and appropriately, the focus is on God's invitation to all people to enjoy the life and grace that is offered in Jesus. The scene is set, then, for the welcoming of all nations in the reversal of Babel which happened on the birthday of the Church.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**The First Reading** - Acts 16: 16-34 After casting a demon out of a fortune-telling slave girl, Paul & Silas are imprisoned. They continue to worship even while in jail, and the prison bursts open, giving Paul an opportunity to lead the jailer and his family to faith in Christ.

or 1 Samuel 12: 19-24

**The Psalm** - Psalm 97 God is great and mighty over all, above all gods and idols, causing the earth to tremble, and rescuing and protecting those who are God's people

**The Second Reading** - Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21 John's conclusion to the Revelation proclaims Christ as the one who invites all to find life in Christ, and who is coming to 'set things to rights' bringing rescue and the safety of the Holy City to those who respond to God's invitation.

**The Gospel Reading** - John 17: 20-26 Jesus prays for his disciples and for all who will come to believe in him, that they may be one, and that through their love and their 'belovedness' the world may be brought to knowledge of Jesus.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Acts%2016:%2016-34%0A%2BOR%0A1%20Samuel%2012:%2019-24%0Acw%20Psalm%2097%0ARevelation%2022:%2012-14,%2016-17,%2020-21%20%0AJohn%2017:%2020-26](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%2016:%2016-34%0A%2BOR%0A1%20Samuel%2012:%2019-24%0Acw%20Psalm%2097%0ARevelation%2022:%2012-14,%2016-17,%2020-21%20%0AJohn%2017:%2020-26)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

O God the King of glory,  
who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven;  
We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless;  
but send to us thine Holy Spirit to comfort us,  
and exalt us unto the same place  
whither our Saviour Christ is gone before,  
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, world without end.

#### Collect Two

O God the King of Glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:

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Mercifully give us faith to know  
that, as he promised,  
he abides with us on earth to the end of time;  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

As we wait for the Lord Jesus to come, let us pray for all who thirst and desire the water of life.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering and all who enter our circle of faith.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For our leaders, and all the holy people of God in every place.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the leaders of the nations and peace in the world.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this city and the community around us.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all in any pain and all who sorrow.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the dying and the dead.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.  
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Lifting our voices with the blessed Virgin Mary, N, and all the saints,  
let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.  
To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, O Lord, one God with your Son and Spirit. Hear our prayers for all peoples and bring them out of the prison of darkness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### POST COMMUNION

Eternal Giver of love and power,  
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world  
to preach the gospel of his kingdom.

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Confirm us in this mission,  
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS

Mighty God,  
in whom we know the power of redemption,  
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.  
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,  
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning  
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,  
we will share in his resurrection,  
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life  
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,  
long ago, faithful women  
proclaimed the good news  
of Jesus' resurrection,  
and the world was changed forever.  
Teach us to keep faith with them,  
that our witness may be as bold,  
our love as deep,  
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.  
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,  
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,  
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.  
As his disciples in this age,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe  
in which we are privileged to live  
and our neighbors with whom we share it.

*Intercessions, concluding with:*

Open our hearts to your power moving  
around us and between us and within us,  
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,  
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,  
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,  
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are our companions,

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not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.  
Seeking to be true friends of all,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

*Intercessions, concluding with:*

Guide us in the path of discipleship,  
so that, as you have blessed us,  
we may be a blessing for others,  
bringing the promise of the kingdom near  
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,  
God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,  
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,  
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures.

*Intercessions, concluding with:*

Receive these prayers, O God,  
and transform us through them,  
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand  
not only what you do on our behalf,  
but what you call us to do  
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

God of boundless grace,  
you call us to drink freely of the well of life  
and to share the love of your holy being.  
May the glory of your love,  
made known in the victory of Jesus Christ, our Savior,  
transform our lives and the world he lived and died to save.  
We ask this in his name and for his sake. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

#### REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

At first glance, the readings this week seem completely unconnected. But a closer look reveals the simple theme of invitation. In Acts, Paul and Silas are given a unique opportunity to invite a jailer into Christ's life. In the Psalm, God's glory and power are the context for an invitation to those who are 'godly' to find refuge in God. In Revelation the invitation to all who would 'drink of the waters of life' is proclaimed, along with the assurance of Christ's return to love and welcome those who respond to the invitation. In John Jesus prays for unity and love among believers so that others may see this, know the truth about Jesus, and be drawn (invited) into the life of Christ, and of the loving, beloved community of faith. It is appropriate that this theme should follow closely behind last week's focus on hospitality, and on the celebration of the Ascension – which proclaimed both God's divine reign, and God's gracious immanence. God seeks intimate relationship with humanity, and, as an integral part of this intimacy, we need to share God's love with one another. Thus, even as we accept God's invitation to beloved life, we are called to extend the invitation to others. The Gospel is, after all, at its heart an extravagant, divine invitation.

### CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** When it comes to the Gospel invitation, we inevitably find ourselves debating things like the uniqueness of Christ, and what happens to people of other religions. But, the invitation of the Gospel is not to grow a particular religion (even one that calls itself by Christ's name). Rather, it is to invite people into the grace and love of God which is embodied and offered in the person of Jesus. The invitation is not intended to create a bunch of philosophical and religious hoops for people to jump through before they can be accepted as 'in', but rather to remove obstacles, and, through practical, lived and shared love, make God's grace as easy to access as possible. Perhaps, if we were less concerned about religious dominance (or the dominance of other religions that are not ours), and more concerned with the practical expression of love for those within (and without) our own faith community globally, we would have to worry less about evangelism, and more about how we welcome the people streaming to join us. As I read on a poster the other day: "A suggestion for global peace – all Christians should promise not to kill each other". What if we also promised to feed, clothe, house and educate each other?

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** A lot of the conversation around "Church" these days (be it emerging church, seeker church, worship evangelism, denominational structures or whatever) boils down to "church growth" or, worse, "church survival". We are constantly bombarded with statistics about people leaving the church and stories of those who have been hurt/disillusioned/marginalised by the church. Both the stats and the stories are good and need to be heard, but our responses are often to seek new "solutions" or "programs" or "techniques" or even "theologies" to stop the bleed and get back on top – or at least back to being alive to some degree. Jesus, though, doesn't seem particularly concerned about "the Church" and whether it grows or not. What he is concerned about is that people should know about God's grace and life which is available through Christ and which is demonstrated by a community of love. God's invitation, in the end, is not a message or an institution. It is a relationship with God and with those who love God and know they are beloved of God. Perhaps the best way we can be a people of invitation is to stop speaking, "reaching out" or trying to be attractive, and to start simply loving God and each other – and anyone else who happens to enter our circle of awareness.

### SERMON OUTLINE

**Jn 17:20-26 'I ask not only on behalf of these'** Chapter 17 contains the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus just before his arrest and trial... In it he prays for : himself 1-5; his disciples 6-19 & finally for all believers 20-26...

The final part of his prayer focuses on 3 key aspects of faith still relevant to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century....

**1. Unity 21-23:** He looks beyond the disciples to those *who will believe in me through their word* – witness of the 12...

**a) the Plea for unity** – our Lord's closing prayer on earth for his church - that all Christians would love each other as one family – with God as *Our Father*.... This can happen only when we are in a close relationship with God.....

**b) the Place of unity** – finds its pattern in the relationship between the Father & the Son - *<sup>21</sup>that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me & I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

**2. Glory 24:** of God the Father *<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you*

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*loved me before the foundation of the world.* Jesus says that His will is for all of His followers to be with Him in Heaven where they can behold and share in His glory.

3. **Victory 25-26:-** that is evidenced in Christians as the Gospel of love is proclaimed throughout the world - *26I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.* He wishes all His people to be characterized by a life of love one for the other. In fact, Jesus declared that our mutual love would be a sign to the world that we were genuinely of the Lord.

*By Norman Porteous*

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

**An in-between place** - Sermons that Work - Episcopal

The Seventh Sunday of Easter always seems to be a sort of in-between place; the Feast of the Ascension was celebrated just a few days ago, and Pentecost is still another week off. Like the disciples, we seem to stand metaphorically staring into the heavens, awaiting the next chapter of our story to unfold.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/?cat=9>

[Don't Be Deceived,](#) the Rev. Dr. Emmanuel McCall, *Day 1,*

[http://day1.org/1043-dont\\_be\\_deceived](http://day1.org/1043-dont_be_deceived)

**"Lover,"** the Rev. Peter Panagore, *Day 1*

On Jesus' prayer

<http://day1.org/4753-lover>

**Ascension Day** - Sermons that Work - Episcopal

Scroll down past first sermon...

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/?cat=9>

### CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, [Ascension C](#), [Easter 7C](#), Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/year-c-ascension-of-lord-thursday-may-9.html>

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

And Can It Be

To God Be The Glory

Come Let Us Sing Of A Wonderful Love

Come Sinners To The Gospel Feast

You Are

Wonderful Love

Join The Song (YouTube video)

All Who Are Thirsty (YouTube video)

Come Now Is The Time To Worship (YouTube video)