

POSSIBLE Prayer of Church Exaudi-7th/Last Sunday of Easter 5.17.26

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

O LORD, since Your Son has gone up with a shout and the sound of a trumpet, ascended in triumph and seated at Your right hand, so open our lips to sing praises to our King, rejoicing and living in the truth of His victory for us. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Father of glory, clothe our Synod president; our circuit visitor/s; and our pastor/s with the robe/s of Your Spirit's power from on high, that they may be equipped to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in Christ's Name. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We give thanks to You, Heavenly Father, that You have brought us from many families into the household of God. Continue to bless all Christian homes, that fathers and mothers may faithfully lead their children by word and deed to call upon You as Father. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

O God, since Your Son will shatter kings when He executes judgment on the nations, keep all our leaders from acting in ways that will earn them His wrath. Bless them with wisdom to govern in accord with Your righteous ways. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Heavenly Father, You have seated Christ at Your right hand for our deliverance. Remember those who are afflicted with illness and injury [*especially **Faith & Our Savior Prayers***] ... *and all those we each name and keep in our hearts in personal prayer.* Give them health and strength according to Your Will. Sustain them in faith, knowing that, for Jesus' sake, You will raise them in glory on the Last Day. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Merciful LORD, grant that all who receive the Holy Supper this day may partake in Christ's body and blood in a worthy manner. Fill us with joy as we approach Your altar to receive the body and blood of Christ. Give us the peace that surpasses understanding, the gladness no man can take from us, and the hope that does not fade away. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

O LORD, Heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious Resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His Ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom, which has no end. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Into Your hands, O LORD, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD.
Amen.

EASTER-7 John 15:26-16:4 & Acts 1:1-11 'OUR INTENTIONS/GOD'S WILL' 5.17.26

ROAD TO HE__ IS PAVED ... You know the saying, "*The road to hell is paved with [all sorts of] good intentions.*" We like to hold to this notion that if we intended to do the right thing, that somehow makes our sins and our failings **less problematic** and **less horrific**. "*Oh, he meant well.*" As if that makes any real difference. Jesus shows the foolishness of this way of thinking in today's Gospel when he says, "*The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.*" Does it really make it any better that someone is intending to do a good and holy work when they kill a disciple of Jesus? Of course not! In fact, in some ways **that makes it worse**. So don't comfort yourselves with the thought that you were trying to do something good when you sinned, or that your heart was in the right place, or some other nonsense. That's just another way of trying to justify yourself. **That is NOT the way of repentance.**

TREATMENT Jesus' main focus here, though, is **How Christians are going to get treated**. He is warning his disciples that they are going to be sinned against with the best of intentions. People will think that by casting them out of synagogues and persecuting and even killing them, they're doing something God approves, and serving God by doing so. People may think they're doing something spiritual and good and holy, when all the while they're opposing God.

WORLDWIDE / JIHAD We see this all too often, terrorists killing in service to their false god, like in the killing of Coptic Christians in Egypt. **Dozens of followers of Jesus were specifically targeted because of their faith.** And unlike much of the day-to-day violence that we hear about, the terrorists think that what they're doing will make the world a better place. They actually think that they're serving God; but all their good intentions obviously don't make their works any less horrific.

U.S. / TOLERANCE?! Or closer to home, this is also what the so-called social justice warriors are trying to do to Christians more and more these days. If you make any sort of open statement that you think **marriage is only between a man and a woman**, well then you're no better than a KKK racist. You deserve to be shunned and driven out of business. You yourself may not be killed, but your livelihood certainly can be killed. And the thing is, those people who would speak against traditional Christian morality *may actually think that they're doing something moral and good and loving*. They may well believe they're serving God by enforcing their version of tolerance, which is ironic in itself. But again, **good intentions don't make anything right.**

?TOO? CLOSE 2 HOME / US? **Let's then apply the same standard to ourselves.** The truth is, most of our sins are done with good intentions, too. We have this idea that engaging in our own particular sins may actually be for the good, that it can be justified in our case, that it will make things better. It will satisfy us or relieve us and it won't really hurt anybody. We give in to metaphors, like I'm just bursting to get this gossip out, or I'm just bursting with these angry feelings and I need to vent. Well, we're **not steam kettles; we don't need to vent. We need to repent.** [David Petersen] The reality is that sin begets more sin. When we give in to these things, it doesn't alleviate our lust or our anger or

our greed or our pride; it feeds it. It leads us to [try to] justify our behavior. It hardens our hearts. All our good intentions only lead to hell.

REPENT [NOT VENT] So let us repent; let us give up on trying to justify ourselves and instead look to Christ who alone can justify us and save us from hell and put us right again. This is precisely what the **Ascension** of our Lord is meant to teach us and give us. Our justification before God is accomplished and complete in Him who sits at the Right Hand of the Father. **Though OUR good intentions fail us and fall short, the LORD's good intentions toward us and His Good Will toward us does not fail.** It lifts us up to new and real life.

ASCENSION TEACHES First of all, **the Ascension of Jesus teaches us** that God the Father has accepted Christ's Sacrifice for our sins on the Cross, **no matter what our intentions may have been.** The Ascension means that Jesus accomplished the mission He was given. It is written in **Hebrews**, "*After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven.*" If Jesus had not been successful in doing what He had been sent to do, He would not have been welcomed Home. However, God the Father **has honored** His Son's redeeming Work and has received Him to His side. And that shows that the **Blood of Jesus has truly cleansed you of all sin.** You really are fully forgiven and redeemed. Jesus has covered it all for you. **The ungodly think they offer service to God by killing, but Jesus offers service to God the Father and to you by dying.** That is the true service of God, to love and to sacrifice Oneself for the sake of another. Jesus has done this for you to rescue and deliver you.

GOD ACCEPTS YOU! And here's where it **gets even better still:** by receiving Jesus to His Side, **the Father also receives YOU to His side.** Because YOU are in Christ; YOU are members of His Body. In welcoming Jesus, He has also welcomed and accepted YOU. **Think about that: God accepts YOU.** He accepts YOU because of Jesus. God is for YOU in Christ. And if God is for us, who can be against us? YOU have God's favor. Jesus has ascended and is preparing a place for you at the Father's side. YOU are welcome in God's own household.

AT GOD'S R.H. And since you are baptized members of Christ's Body, in one sense **you have already ascended to Heaven.** That's how sure your salvation is. It's not just a future thing, it's a present reality. We sing it in a hymn, "*He has raised our human nature on the clouds to God's Right Hand.*"

There we sit in Heav'nly places, there with Him in glory stand." And **Ephesians 2** says, "*Even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up together and made us sit together in the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" Heaven is **already yours.** You're already there, because you are in Jesus. Your eternal well-being is secure in the One at the Father's Right Hand.

HE'S WORKING NOW...4 U Jesus' Ascension also means that He is praying and speaking for you with the Heavenly Father right now. It is written in **Romans 8**, "*Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*" Whether it's individually, or especially as we gather for divine service, Jesus is the One who is leading our

prayers. That's one of the **reasons pastors wear robes**, to cover ourselves up and to show that it's **actually Jesus who is leading us** and serving as our Priest. When we offer up our petitions, Jesus receives them and brings them to the Father on our behalf. Jesus is the one and only Mediator between God and man; because He alone is both God and man. God the Father hears and acts upon your prayers according to His wisdom and mercy **because of His Son, Our Brother, Jesus.** The next time you pray, think of that. You are never praying alone, even when you're by yourself. Jesus is there with you as you pray in faith. Since you are a child of God now together with Him, He prays with you.

HE'S STILL HERE And **remember:** just because Jesus has ascended does not mean that He's gone from us. He said to the apostles, "*I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.*" **Jesus is NOT absent.** He is simply hidden from our sight. It's written in **Ephesians**, Jesus "**ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things**" in Heaven and on earth. Jesus is not confined to one physical spot somewhere. Since God is present everywhere, so also is His right hand where Jesus is seated. So the Ascension means that He who from the Beginning filled all things as true God now also fills all things as true man. Our LORD makes Himself specially present in the flesh for us, with His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. **The Word and the Sacraments are the portal where Heaven and earth come together** and you can come into contact with the risen and ascended Jesus. The Right Hand of God is here in this place.

A MAN ON THE THRONE And finally, consider this Ascension **truth: in Jesus, Man is now sitting on the throne of God.** One of our guys, one of us, our true blood Brother is there. We have a Friend in the highest of places. He's the One who is in charge. So no matter what is happening in your life right now, it's going to be OK in the end. **Jesus has got this.** Scripture promises that He is ruling over all things for the sake of His church, for you. It is written in **Romans 8**, "*We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*" YOU are the called in Holy Baptism, who have been brought to love God because He first loved you. **In love** He has told you in advance that things aren't always going to be easy. Christians are going to be persecuted just as our Lord was persecuted and suffered. Even if the unbelieving world claims to worship God, it is not the true God. Jesus said that they do not know the Father or Him. So we will not be shocked or surprised when suffering comes. We live in the sure confidence that as we share in Christ's Cross in this world, **we will certainly also share in His Bodily Resurrection and His Ascension glory** in the life of the world to come. **This is God's good intention and His good will for you.**

LORD OF ALL OF YOU So then, brothers and sisters of Christ, set your minds on things above, where He is seated God's Right Hand, and not merely the things of this world. **Rejoice in Jesus' Ascension.** It is in fact a great source of confidence and hope for you. **Jesus is LORD of all things.** He is LORD of your lives. He is interceding for you and preparing a place for you. And the LORD, Who has begun His good work in you, will bring it to completion in the Day of His return. The One Who calls you is faithful, and He will do it. **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**