



Easter 7

May 28, 2017 - 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: What's Your Mission In Life?

Sermon Text: John 17:1-11

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

⁶ “I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.”



Mission statements abound in this world. Businesses large and small have them, from mom and pop quick-marts to large corporations like Boeing and Microsoft, but few of them really live up to them. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has a mission statement that states: **“As men, women and children united in faith and worship by the word of God, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout eternity, using the gospel to win the lost for Christ and to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the Glory of God.”** That’s a pretty lofty mission statement, wouldn’t you agree? Mission statements are ideals to strive for. But Jesus declares that His mission statement has become a reality. In His “High Priestly Prayer” that He prayed on the night He was betrayed, He says to His heavenly Father: **“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do”** (v. 4). Jesus lived up to His mission statement. All that the Father has given Him to do, He has done.

Jesus didn’t preach to everyone in the world. He didn’t heal everyone, either, nor did He go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the gospel message He embodied. He didn’t try to do more than the Father gave Him to do. In fact, many times He went in search of solitude, even as needy people clamored for His attention. He didn’t respond positively to every request that came His way. He didn’t stay busy for the sake of busyness. When He ascended into heaven, there was still much work to be done. But Jesus focused on the work the Father had given Him to do, and He accomplished it. He didn’t stray from His mission, lose His focus or let anything or anyone stand in His way. **“My food,”** He once said, **“is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish that work”** (John 4:33). **That’s** dedication!

When our earthly life ends and we stand before the Father, will we be able to say as Jesus does in our text, **“I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do”**? Is Jesus our model as we seek the will of God and minister in this world? Blessed are all who’ll be able to echo these words of Jesus at their life’s end! That won’t mean that we accomplished everything everyone else expected of us. It won’t mean that we worked so hard that we’re sure we managed to do God’s will sometime during all of our earthly activity, though we’re not really sure when. It won’t mean that we addressed every situation for which we felt sympathy, or gave to every charity or missionary that requested our financial support. It will simply mean that we discovered God’s will for our lives and devoted ourselves to accomplishing it by the power of His indwelling Spirit.

Just as Jesus’ work wasn’t scattershot, neither were His prayers. They were laser-focused, too. Jesus prayed to the Father: **“I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours”** (v. 9). It’s not the Jesus doesn’t care for the world—His familiar statement in John 3:16 rules that out. Rather, Jesus knows that the fate of the world depends on the faith of those who have followed Him through thick and thin, in good times and bad and thru the **“many hardships”** that **“we must go through ... to enter the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22).

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

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Paul lived out Jesus' **Great Commission** to **"go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"** (Mark 16:15). He confessed to the Christians in Corinth: **"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might win some"** (1 Cor. 9:22).

Paul recognized the vital importance of the work Jesus had called him to carry out as His **"apostle to the Gentiles"** (Gal. 2:8), and—like Jesus—Paul wouldn't let anyone or anything stand in the way of his work in the Lord's behalf. Jesus ascended on high to intercede in behalf of His people, to prepare a permanent home for us in His Father's house and to work all things out for the good of those who love Him. He hasn't left us do His work by ourselves, though. He's poured out His Holy Spirit on us, and we go in Jesus' name and in the power of His Spirit to share the message of forgiveness and eternal life with everyone He chooses to put in our path. The scope of our mission is worldwide, but we carry it out with the means we have at our disposal and in the places where we live, move and have our being, starting in our own homes, workplaces and neighborhoods.

Jesus knows that the eternal fate of mankind depends on the faith of those of us who follow Him where He leads us in life. His sovereign power will accomplish His purposes. He spoke through the prophet Isaiah, **"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire, and achieve the purpose for which I sent it"** (Isa. 55:11). And so He has called simple human beings like us—individually, and as members of this congregation and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—to reach out to the world with His all-powerful Word. We do that through our own personal witnessing efforts as well as through the offerings we return to the Synod to the tune of \$10,000 a year. If we fail to carry out the work He's left us to do in this fallen world until He returns, then the message He's entrusted to us will be lost. If we falter, the spread of the gospel is either limited or corrupted as is sadly the case in many churches today. The Son of God's gospel mission now depends on the disciples He's called.

Still today, that remains the case. Jesus' kingdom is being built, **"living stone"** by **"living stone"** (1 Pet. 2:5) on **"the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone"** (Eph. 2:20) by we who envision it and who rely on Him for God's pardon and power. We're active participants in the mission of God! For that reason, the words of Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" apply to us. Just as He prayed specifically for the eleven men who were with Him that final night, His strategic prayers are still targeted on us. The exalted Savior still makes intercession on our behalf at the throne of the Father (Heb. 7:25). Our High Priest hasn't left us in this world alone with a message to tell and no support for telling it. He isn't just a heavenly observer. He's an active participant in the work He initiated. If ever we feel weak or alone in the work to which God has called us, we can turn to John 17 and read Jesus' prayer. It's a prayer for us, and the Son of God doesn't have unanswered prayers. His will is one with the Father's, and His prayers are accomplished. Dwell on this encouraging thought. If you belong to the Father thru faith in the Son, then the Son is praying for you right this second!

And what's He praying? The same thing He prayed in His "High Priestly Prayer": **"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."** **"The Name"** of God is the holiest and most sacred of all words,

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especially in the Jewish context of Jesus' ministry. There's an inexpressible reverence for God's name on the part of devout Jews that we often fail to appreciate in a culture that incorporates God's name into common slang. This inherent reverence exists because of the awesome power of the Person it invokes. There's nothing more mysterious, feared or awe-inspiring than **"The Name"** of the living, eternal God. Jesus' request for the unity of His followers is backed by the power of **"The Name."** This is no casual request. Just as our prayers that end with "in Jesus' name" carry a force we can scarcely comprehend, Jesus' desire for our union with one another invokes a power that is unmatched. The name of the living God solemnly seals this unity. It is done!

This is no run-of-the-mill kind of unity, either. We're united as one *just as the Father and the Son are one!* Jesus compares the level of our spiritual bond with one another to the bond between the three Persons of the Godhead! No wonder, then, that the enemy of God has spent centuries trying to spoil the unity of the Church and the unity of Christian families and congregations. I've always thought that if the devil can succeed in dividing Christian homes and churches, then he's accomplished his greatest goal. We know that he cannot succeed, ultimately, since Jesus already bested him at the cross and empty tomb. But he can throw a monkey wrench into the works and do damage nonetheless. He can sow his malicious seeds of doubt, gossip, back-biting and scandal so that the unity of the body of believers is—if not permanently, then temporarily—disrupted so that the work of Christ's kingdom is jeopardized. That we so readily allow him to do so betrays a lack of understanding of the Lord's intercession in John 17.

The unity of true believers has never really been at stake in all of church history. What has been at stake is whether or not we behave as if we're united by an uncommon faith to a common cause. *We are one in Christ—that's a reality.* But do we *act* as if that's the case? Far, far too often, the answer is a resounding, "NO!" No, we don't! And so, as I close out this sermon, I pray as that we would all heed the Apostle Paul's advice to the Ephesians, and **"Make every effort"—every effort—"to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (4:3).** And just as Paul appealed to the Corinthians, so **"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10).** **That** would redound to God's glory! And, after all, isn't that what's being a believer is really all about? Amen.