

## Eternal Life

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Year A: Seventh Sunday of Easter: John 17:1-11

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 **And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.** 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 "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. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 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. 9 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. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 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.

*As we finish the Easter season Jesus prays for us. He tells us that Eternal Life is knowing Him and knowing God. This knowing is equal to being in relationship with God. May we all know!*

The resurrected Christ's grace and peace be with you all! Amen.

Well, here we are. We've arrived at the last weekend of the Easter season. Next weekend is Pentecost. Remember Easter? Who can't? It perhaps will be the Easter we'll all remember as we worshipped God from our living rooms with brass and flowers and Jesus out of the grave! Who can forget!

But even so, *how* we celebrated on Easter morning, didn't change *what* we celebrated from that first Easter morning! Jesus Christ once dead was now alive. Fully alive! Not only for Himself, but the promise of life for all who die after Him.

The passage we hear today puts the clock in reverse. We are overhearing Jesus praying for the disciples in John chapter 17 before His crucifixion. We know that Jesus was always praying; up in the mountains, as He did miracles, while on the sea, we just don't often get to hear what He's praying.

Today we do! It might feel a little bit like being a peeping Tom only with our ears. We get to listen in on a very intimate conversation between Jesus, Son of God and God, Jesus' Father. Listen!

“Abba, Daddy, I did it! I followed through on what you asked of me. I gave them eternal life as they come to know you and myself. You gave me your children to take care of, and I've completed your mission. I did it to bring you glory. Now, Holy Father, please continue to protect and watch over these your children when I return to you. They'll need it. You, I and these children are united as one.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus prays for you? He does! Incredible! Humbling! Mind –boggling. Reassuring. Jesus prays for all of us. He prayed for His disciples before He was crucified and He prays for us now.

Although His resurrection had not yet taken place, Jesus whispers to His Abba Daddy the truth that He has been allowed to give eternal life to all of God's children. Then Jesus says this. **“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”**

Eternal life equals knowing Jesus the Son and God the Father? That's what Jesus says! Eternal life is one and the same as experiencing Jesus the Son and God the Father! There it is! No heavenly clouds. No angels on the wing. No choirs or streets paved with gold. Just knowing Jesus. Knowing God the Father and being in relationship. Whispering prayers in the morning and prayers at night; telling God about everything that's happening in our lives. That's eternal life.

No! Isn't eternal life about what Jesus accomplished on the cross? Isn't it about having a “personal savior”? Isn't eternal life about pearly gates and all those bad jokes about what St. Peter supposedly asks us when we arrive?

Not from what Jesus says! Embedded inside this intimate prayer with God the Father creator, Jesus defines eternal life as being identical to knowing the only true God and Christ Himself.

For those who first knew and walked with Jesus, there was no sitting around the fire reciting the Apostles' Creed! There were no intellectual debates about the Trinity. Outside of the disciples training in the Torah, the Hebrew scriptures, what they knew of God was what they saw and experienced in Jesus!

Remember what it says in John chapter 1? “The Word became flesh and lived among us the glory of a father’s son. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart. This one makes God known.”

Yes! Jesus, God made flesh, moved into the neighborhood and while people didn’t know it right away, they were looking at God Himself. Olive complexion, darker hair, warm eyes perhaps. Imaginably, He noticed everything and everyone as if He was seeing them for the very first time.

Jesus began forming relationships. Jesus understood why Nicodemus came at night in fear and wonder. “How can I crawl back into my mother’s womb? That’s a pretty cramped space, don’t you think rabbi?” Yet Jesus never missed an opportunity to point people to God’s heart. “Look, don’t be surprised that all people must be born anew. Everyone who believes in God, knows God, loves God, is in relationship with God won’t perish. They’ll have eternal life!”

The woman at the well? She gets quite unnerved when Jesus knows her life history and they’ve never even met. He reminds her that worshipping God is not through rituals and laws, but through what’s inside your skull and your rib cage. Worship means connecting your spirit with God’s spirit! When you do, it’s like an unending source of life-giving water. The dear soul is so taken aback, she drops her water jar right there and then. She’s convinced she has met the Messiah. Jesus confirms it. “I am He!” Now she knows Jesus; eternal life has come!

Oh! Remember the crowd of 5000 who were following Jesus because He was healing them? An open doctor’s office right there near the sea. Scraped knees. Broken bones. Skin diseases. But it was the end of the day and their stomachs are growling. “Tell the people to sit down on the grass.” Wonder of wonders, miracles of miracles...bread is raised to heaven to give thanks to God His Father. Then the disciples begin to distribute the holy meal. Each family gets enough. 4 loaves here. 6 over there. Jaws are chewing on more food than the government could offer. Eternal life right there on the grass with 5000 full bellies.

What about dear bumbling Peter! Thank you Jesus for calling Peter so we all have him as our example of being in relationship with you. Sometimes he gets it right and other times....? Jesus asks, “Who do people say I am?” Peter replies, “You are the Messiah, the Son of God!” Yay! Right answer. In the middle of the storm, Peter takes Jesus’ hand, steps out of the boat and begins to walk. Yay! Faith in action! Moments later, that same hand is pulling Peter out drenching wet. Yes,

their relationship is solid, even solid enough to predict Peter's own betrayal. "Before the cock crows three times Peter, you'll deny me!"

Eternal life. It's all there. It's all right here. Jesus tells us that eternal life is identical to being in relationship with the living God: asking questions, having your soul exposed, being fed and reassured, trusting and not trusting all in the same moment.

We already understand consciously what being in relationship with God or Jesus means, don't we? Another woman passes the husband in the store. She has on his wife's perfume. It makes him turn his head to make certain the love of his life isn't standing nearby.

They sit across from one another at the restaurant. She guesses what he'll order. When the waitress comes she simply smiles when her husband orders exactly what she knew he would. She understands him....for 38 years....she knows him.

When we're in relationship with any other person, we understand their traits and characteristics, their patterns of speech and funny little sayings. Our best friend can consistently push our buttons and tease us because they grasp what we're made of! Our doctor knows when we're apt to follow advice and when we're tempted to do it our own way.

Guess what? Jesus says this. Eternal life – is found in knowing God - like you and I might understand and accept a spouse or best friend warts and all.

You see, Jesus' death and resurrection isn't only an earthly event. It's a cosmic event with earthly consequences! Eternal life begins now before we reach the heavenly clouds and angels on the wing. Eternal life is knowing God as we pray, as we serve, as we love our neighbor, as we work for justice and peace.

Let us pray.

Thank you Jesus for praying, loving, healing, leading, coaxing, and teaching us into relationship with you! You answer our questions, know our lives, feed our bodies and have grace with us when we fail. We humbly ask for your continued prayers this day and every day. Move us to know you and love you more and more. Amen.