

Are You Ready? *¿Estás listo?*

Que las palabras de mi boca y la meditación de nuestro corazón sean aceptables ante tus ojos, oh Señor, mi roca y mi salvación. Amén. [Salmos 19:14]

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen. [Psalm 19:14]

In today's Gospel lesson for John, Jesus is praying to the Father in the presence of his disciples before he ascends into heaven. He closes his prayer by asking the Father to protect the disciples so they may be as one as the Father and the Son are one.

Last week's Gospel lesson from John and our lesson today from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us that even though Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, he was not going to leave the disciples alone. In last week's Gospel from John, in his discourse to the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples that if they love him they would keep his commandments, and he would, in turn, ask the Father to send them another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be with them forever. In today's lesson from the Acts of the Apostles, after Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit appeared to the disciples in the form of two men in white robes and told them that Jesus "who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." And in Jesus' prayer to the father before he ascended into heaven, he asked the Father to "protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

But before the disciples would see Jesus again, they had some work to do. After Jesus ascended into heaven, his disciples returned to Jerusalem, went to the upper room where they had been staying, and along with Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers, devoted themselves to prayer. Then, after Pentecost, the disciples embarked on missionary journeys to spread Christianity throughout the lands. This was not an easy task by any means.

We too have some work to do, before we reap the reward that our Lord and Savior promised. And, like the disciples, we are not alone. We have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with us to guide us on our journey. So, what is the work we have to do?

Given all that is going on in our community, our country, and the world around us to divide and separate the people of God, I believe that the biggest task that lies ahead is reconciliation and forgiveness. Each of us needs to open our hearts and minds to the transformative power of The Holy Spirit so that Jesus may dwell within us. It is up to us; each and every one of us in this room, in our communities, in our nation, and in this broken world. Doing so, hard as it may be, is the only way that we will be able to repair the world.

The need for reconciliation and forgiveness is all around us. While preparing today's sermon, I read an account of a church dispute that several preachers used as an illustration in their sermons. It was poignant and amusing, so I thought I would share it with you. This story is about a small church that had a major fight over wood piles:

This church had a wood stove in the center of the sanctuary that heated the building. Two groups that didn't get along with each other took turns stoking the fire and keeping it lit. However, one group claimed that they were working harder than the other group to provide the wood. As a result, both groups provided the wood but in separate piles. One child while reading the scripture one Sunday used his own version of the well-known text from Ephesians 4:5 to illuminate this conflict. The child said: "One faith, one Lord, one baptism, and two wood piles."

And, the preacher reflected "it seems appropriate, because it seems that their one God and Father of all was their own view of themselves – as made manifest in the wood piles that they created." He asked, "Whose glory do we serve? What witness do we make? He reflected, quoting scripture, "As you, Father, are in me", Jesus prayed, "and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that world may believe you have sent me." He also said that we should be about "letting go and letting God in" as this pertains to change in our midst.

There are far too many separate wood piles out there and these days we need the Lord's redeeming grace more than ever.

This week I read a [Washington Post](#) article about a woman who confronted an avowed white nationalist in an Alexandria, Virginia health club. According to the article, the woman, an associate professor at Georgetown University, recognized the president of the Alexandria, Virginia-based white-nationalist National Policy Institute and confronted him; calling him a "cowardly Nazi," declaring that as a woman she finds his statements to be "particularly odious," and stating that his presence in the gym and in this town was unacceptable. According to the article, the confrontation continued until the gym's general manager intervened.

While I certainly do not support or endorse racism, segregation, hate speech, or any of the views espoused or promoted by the alt-right and others who share their views, the fact that the professor's action's were met by a swarm of crude and hateful social media postings and voice mail demonstrates that this form of engagement does not lead to a change of heart, meeting of the minds, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Such engagements, cathartic as they might be, only hardens hearts on all sides and creates barriers to reaching understanding, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Instead, hard as it may be, our engagement – with those who are different from us and with those with whom we disagree – must come from a place, where the admonition inscribed on that beautiful clock that I mentioned last Sunday – *Justice, Devotion,*

Tolerance, Service, Peace, Compassion, Community, Charity, Generosity, Mercy, Respect and Love – becomes our tools and means to let the light of Christ shine bright in our community, our nation, and in the world.

I know this is not easy; no, not by any means. But when Jesus ascended into heaven, he did not leave us alone. So I offer this prayer:

Loving God, as You opened the tomb and raised Jesus to new life, so open our hearts and minds by the power of Your Holy Spirit that as Your word is proclaimed, we may hear with joy what You say to us today, and in confidence go forth to live what You show us. Lord, transform us into Your image more and more. Transfigure us so that we may become more like You in our behavior, thoughts, and words. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

¿Estás listo? Reparar el mundo...

Are you ready? Repair the world...

En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo, Amén.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.