

7th Sunday after Easter
May 28/29, 2022

If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father. Jesus and the Father are One. The world may not know who God is, but you know. Each time you proclaim the creed, you proclaim who God is. But the world does not know who the Lord is. You have been told, knowing that the Father has sent Jesus. More than this, we know that Jesus prayed that we would be one even as He and the Father are One. Take care to not over-think this. There are so many places where we compete with one another, vie for our will to be done, exclude others because they are not like us and so on. Jesus prayed that it would not be this way, so let us work together. Let us reach out and work with others.

It is not a matter of having to agree on things. Sometimes the person I disagree with the most is myself. It is a matter of having a heart filled with the love of the Lord and compassion for those who do not know the Lord knowing that apart from Him there will be eternal separation. You may have some tell you that you can go your way and they will go their own. But you know what is coming. Contrary to the lie that all will be well in hell, we cannot even begin to imagine what the complete absence of God's presence would be like. No love, compassion, mercy, care, or any of the other things we find comforting in this life will be there.

Jesus is coming soon. Whether tomorrow or a thousand years or more from now I do not know, but He has given us His promise, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come and take you to be with me where I am." Are you preparing to be with Jesus? That is the real question that should govern our thoughts, words, and deeds. We will be spending eternity with Him, so get used to things being the way the Lord wants them to be.

Today's story in Acts is about Paul who got into trouble because he actually had the gall to care for the slave girl. It's not that he went looking for trouble, but when you are about the Lord's business, trouble will come looking for you. This girl knew slavery. The demons that controlled her had her making trouble for them by proclaiming the truth (or at least in part). They were slaves of the Most High God. We may not think about it in these terms, but we are slaves. We are slaves to our bodies. We are slaves to nurturing the bodies we inhabit. We are slaves to the things that we feel compelled to do each and every day. Contrary to what the world is now shouting, we are not our own person. If we were, we really could make choices that pleased us. Alas, there are many things we must do (like pay taxes) which are not a choice we might otherwise make.

Annoyed by the constant harangue of the demon possessed slave girl, Paul rebuked her and the demon came out of her. This created an economic problem. The good action of Paul took away the demonic influence that caused the slave girl to have the ability of divination.

It is an interesting thing that as the world moves further and further away from the Lord, they still look for spiritual things. Card readings, astrology, even divination of sorts are what is left when you leave the Lord out of things. When confronted by the truth, those who deny the Lord will go on the attack. Learn this lesson, for it is something that is happening all too often in our culture. There are people screaming, hating, unreasonable and unwilling to have discussion. What is behind it? The same thing as in Paul's day – money.

Money is the means to get what you need. Beyond this, money is the means of power and influence. Those who have a lot of money, by and large, seem to want to have more. If, by your honesty, another is taken down, you will probably be taken to court. It happens all the time. The wicked know how to be wicked in ways that we probably would never think of. The devil comes

to steal, kill, and destroy. Those who are not of the Lord will join in destruction. They have no problem taking what is yours for their benefit. Paul was brought to court. “These men are disturbing the city.” No, they cast out a demon and the means of income was destroyed. Liars lie and injustice happens. It happened then and it happens now. You know, sometimes the ones who accuse are guilty of that which they are accusing.

Paul could have gotten these folk into a lot of trouble. Paul was a Roman citizen and what they did broke the Roman law. In those days that was like taking on the mob. This was not something people did. But Paul did not react with what he could have done, but instead, allowed to happen by the leading of the Holy Spirit, to happen. This is a good lesson for us. Sure, you may have just cause, but is this something the Lord wants to have happen? Be a willing slave and allow the Lord to work through every circumstance.

Paul and Silas were in prison singing hymns and praising God. An earthquake came and the walls of the prison fell. In those days, if a prisoner escaped, the guards were put to death. How things have changed. True to the call of the Lord, Paul did not take advantage as we might be tempted to, but stayed right where he was supposed to be. We never know what kind of witness we will make if we just do things the way they are supposed to be done.

The guard was so impressed with integrity of the prisoners that would not escape that he asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Think about what others see in you when they know you are a Christian. Do they see a difference and want whatever it is that you have that is lacking in their lives? Too often, I have experienced others who proclaim they are Christian and, quite frankly, there have been too many times when I think I’d rather hang out with those who are not Christian. Not really, well not always, but I hope you get my point. It is not that we have to be so well behaved. Sometimes, those who are smarmy and “goody-two-shoes” are the worst. What I am trying to say is, are you so sincere in your faith and its practice that the difference Christ makes in us is apparent? Of course we all have foibles and flaws. When you encounter someone who is sincere, those things are often the last thing that is seen.

Look at what happened in this story. Paul healed one possessed by a demon. He was jailed. He provided a witness which brought about faith in a whole family. Was it worth the earthly incarceration and the indignation? Of course it was. All heaven rejoices when one sinner repents. We are a part of the church and the church is in the saving business. We are representatives of the Most High God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Whatever it takes for one wandering in the world to come into the fold is how we look at things. Has not our Lord and Savior done the same thing for us?

This world has gotten real goofy, but we are not to lose hope. Our Savior prayed and thanked the Father that He had not lost one. Therefore, we are to join with Jesus with mercy and grace offering to all the truth that Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead, and unites us in His resurrection. How this happens I’ll leave to those who pontificate. That it happens is the truth of the Gospel. Lives are changed eternally for those who come to Him. As long as we have breath, we have the ability to live our faith and share with others the truth of the life He gives us through grace. He has made Himself known to us so that through us, others may come to know Him.

Grow in the grace You have been given and live knowing that because Christ lives, you too shall live. “Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!”

Amen!