

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

May 21, 2023

## PRAYER

*the awkward public prayer of Jesus*

by Drew Downs

Some public prayer is easy. Doing church together. Saying grace.

Some is a bit more challenging. Like offering a prayer before a public meeting.

What Jesus does several times in the gospel of John is pray in public for the benefit of his disciples. Not like he's thanking God after scoring a touchdown or gathering players at the 50 yard line.

He's revealing something about the relationship between three parts of a triangle: Jesus, God, and disciples. How we interlock. With God, Jesus, each other. How they interlock. That we ask for grace even when it is promised. Hope when we're assured of it. Life when we are living it.

We aren't supposed to set up times to imitate him. We're supposed to see him. And sometimes we're seen doing the same.

# EASTER

2023

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### **Ascension**

Every year I remind people of the Ascension, that this is a principal feast of the church, and an essential part of our theological conviction. I point out the places throughout the liturgy in which we affirm that Jesus "ascended into heaven."

And still, it feels like a losing battle. The afterthought. The necessity. A way of tying up loose ends. We don't make special plans to attend church, usually. We don't give gifts or get the day off of work. Nor do we define our theological convictions around this. People talk about being cleansed by the blood of the cross and freed by the risen Christ. They don't usually say "I'm inspired by the ascended Jesus."

But I think this is all so reductive.

The Ascension is inspiring like a graduation. It is the public handoff, the baton transferred in the relay as a diploma on a stage. It's our turn. To take off, launching ourselves into the world.

And that our potential is so wide open and the challenge so clear, we can pretend that it is all so inevitable or normal, what would have to happen. Like a sign of adulthood, rather than achievement; of expectation rather than hope and transformation. Of grace.

This isn't about Jesus leaving. It's about our being here. For our turn.

With love,  
Drew

# EASTER

2023

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Seventh Sunday of Easter*

May 21, 2023

### **Collect**

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 17:1-11

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

"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. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 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. 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 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."

# EASTER

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## Reflection

Jesus has spent several chapters in John talking about going away. And we, for several weeks now, have engaged in what we might call Jesus's Farewell Discourse. He is encouraging and challenging. He offers them guidance and opportunity. It isn't just his last chance to get a few words in, though. He's making sure they really get this.

Do they really think he'll leave them? I don't know. It doesn't seem like they truly believe it. But they do engage him in this crazy exercise.

Last week, we heard Jesus tell them about the Advocate: that another would come as a Spirit to be with and within them. And in the meantime, Jesus expands on the idea. Helping them get the point. And why.

That God wants them to have a guide. *And* that they will need one. Both of these ideas are important.

God desires this for them. And also: people will treat them like a problem that needs to be neutralized, so they're going to need help.

This public prayer we hear this week is the culmination of teaching. Jesus is confident in the work he has been called to do. But that doesn't prevent him from praying. And praying with his disciples, for his disciples.

This isn't performative exactly. And it isn't naive or literal. It's something more like relationship and respect. Hope and confidence.

Like when I pray with the altar party that God be with us, to guide us and encourage us. Not because I don't think God won't do that, but because that is precisely what we all desire. To be aligned, in love, gathered and serving. Together with God.

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