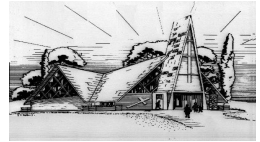




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Exaudi Jesus' high-priestly prayer!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 17, 20-26:

- ^{ESV} 20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
- 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
- 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,
- 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
- 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
- 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.
- 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

• ***Vote: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts, let us find comfort in Your prayer. Amen.***

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- We have just heard the beautiful high-priestly prayer of Christ, which He prayed moments before going to the garden of Gethsemane and was betrayed by Judas. We know that Jesus was glorified by God by being lifted up from the earth onto the Cross. Suffering and dying for the sins of the whole world is Jesus' Glory, according to the Gospel of John.
- That is why the Word became flesh! Jesus and His Father are fully united concerning God's mission in the world. The Father sent Jesus who willingly became flesh. He was baptised into His ministry of proclaiming the Word of the Father and doing the Word of the Father, fulfilling it, on the Cross! He truly is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and baptises with the Holy Spirit!
- This wonderful act of God has happened before our eyes and ears today. Little Emily was baptised into the Body of Christ today by water and the Spirit! A new member of Christ was

born today. As she grows up she will learn to consider what great gift God has given her today! She is His child, now, a child of heaven. All the promises of God belong to her, just as they belong to each and everyone of you who have been baptised and are growing up in faith by hearing the Word of Christ!

- Emily was baptised into the ministry of Jesus. Her old Adam is crucified, buried and dead in God's eyes! You as parents will still have to face her old Adam and will have to deal with her old nature, just remember your old Adams are also hidden in there. Yes, that is true. In Baptism God declared that Emily is His child. It is like in a court room where the verdict is spoken: you are free.

- In Baptism God authorises us to become His children! He declares us to be His child- He adopts us, and then for the rest of our life we grow into becoming who we are.

- So, that is why we are going to teach her about the Love and Grace of God and also about His wrath against disobedience. God is our Father in Heaven who sent His only begotten Son so that we are not stuck in sin, hopelessly captivated and tied in, so that breaking free from the evil in our hearts and our doing is never a hopeless case. We belong to Him. When we sin there is forgiveness available, so that the unity and peace is restored! By forgiving us our sins God breaks the deadly spiral of sin! He rips us out of its grip. It might try and grip us again, but we have the medicine against it.

- Of course if we would misuse this medicine as a licence to enjoy sin, to indulge further and further in it, instead of wanting to get out of it, then we would deceive ourselves. Then our intention, our desire, would not be in line with God's will any more. That is, our old Adam is beginning to reign again. That is when our old Adam needs to hear the Law of God and be reminded that he is trespassing. He has got no say, no right to determine our desires and doing any more. And we need to be reminded that we are baptised children. Jesus suffered dearly for us to save us from evil, because evil kills us. It is deadly. It destroys life!

- Dear congregation, that is why Jesus prayed for all of us that day. Jesus prayed for His church that we all would be one within the Oneness of the Trinity. Please note: It is about being one. It is about being born from above, out of God as opposed to being born of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man! It is about truly having the same spirit, desire and direction as the Holy Trinity. It is not about a superficial unity, a unity in externals, a unity in works. No. It is a unity of being, mind, direction, willing to go along with God's Law and Gospel. It is a unity based on the truth, on the teaching of Christ, what His word says, who Christ is, what His work is for us.

- Those are in His unity who have received His Word, who still receive His Word. Whoever

receives what Jesus says, receives what He promises through the means He has instituted, is saved, gets sanctified and receives Jesus' Life. Whoever is in the receptive mode, so to speak, and receives whatever Jesus gives participates in His unity. Being in the receptive mode is the same as being in repentance. Those are the ones who realise that they need the person, word and ministry of Christ to be saved. There is nothing good in themselves. Those are the ones who realise, I am poor in the spirit. I need to receive it all from Him in the Way He wants to give it to me. Those are the ones who are blessed by the Father.

- Those are the ones who truly believe that Jesus came from the Father, that He has to be God, because they need none other than God Himself to do the whole of salvation for them. They cannot contribute in any way! Do they understand everything in full? No, not yet! They are learning, truly learning because they realise that they depend completely on the Holy Spirit to teach them through Jesus' Word written down in the Scriptures. They are open to hear and learn from Jesus. They will never reject what He truly says. Where this is the case the Word begins to form their mind, their insights, even their desires and customs and practices! They are prepared to let go of their own ideas if proven to be wrong by the word of the Apostles.

- On the other hand, those who reject any thing of what Jesus says, any thing of what the Apostles have written down for us, especially concerning who Jesus is and what He has done for us, explicitly or implicitly, reject Christ. Whoever reject what Jesus' disciples taught concerning Christ reject Jesus and the Father as well! Those are not in the unity of the Trinity. They are not driven by the Love of God, because they don't love the Word of God! Those who don't love the pure doctrine of Christ, the pure truth, reject the Way in which God wants to save him/her. The greatest temptation and all heresies in the church have to do with the old Adam who wants to keep something of salvation for himself. He wants to participate in salvation, thank you. I am not *that* bad. And even if it has to do with defining in what way, the means of Grace, that I determine the way in which I want to be saved. That is why the doctrine of original sin and the pure Gospel go hand in hand.

- In the end it is quite straightforward. Grace and truth came through Jesus, that is, completely from Him, nothing from our side, nothing from my family tradition, human philosophy, or any human wisdom nor from my experience. Also not from Moses, from the ministry of the Law. The Law teaches me that I am a lost sinner before God. Grace and truth came through Jesus alone. He is the only source of Grace and truth. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

- And this fact is a confession of truth. That means it excludes all other truths and ways to these false truths and lives coming forth from those deceptive lies! And you see, this is where

this plain confession to Christ will find objection in the world, because it goes against the unwritten law of inclusiveness against the written human right of equality, against the agenda in the world of having all religions seeing themselves as different ways to the same God. How can you claim the exclusive truth for the faith you follow? That is why Jesus says in verse 14: *“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”*

- But now see this: Jesus does not tell us to draw back in Christian ghettos, or Christian homelands or isolated communities. To the contrary. As you have send me, I am sending them, into the world, says Jesus about you and me.
- We have the best message, a message of Grace and Truth to hand out in the world. A message of hope, of genuine secure future, even in this world. What can happen to you if Jesus, the Heavenly Father even is on your side, is backing you to make use of His good news wherever you find a soul in despair. There are so many these days, in our country. A whole nation is practically in mourning in trauma because this dream of a rainbow nation didn't realise yet.
- You have something far more substantial to hand out, something that does not depend on any politician not on any human idea or doing. The Grace and mercy of God is in your heart. You have received it. Let it go out of your mouth freely. Don't hold it back. Tell the sick, the mourning, anyone who needs Christ, share the mercy of God in word and deed. Don't worry, it will never run out. There is an abundance of mercy available. Don't be stingy with the Gospel.
- Remember, Jesus has prayed for us, that we will be one with the Trinity. He will do it!

Amen.

• Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Amen. (1Peter 1,3)