



May 13, 2018 - Lord, have mercy!
Given by Rev. Mattei

Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts...And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. whoever has the Son has life. (1 John 5:10-12)

The Greek phrase, Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy -- Luke 17:13), is not a forgiveness request or a prayer of intercession for those in need. It is a request for divine help and grace. It is the humble awareness that we need the presence of the Spirit of Jesus helping us navigate the distractions and temptations of the mind and reach the inner chambers of the heart where we encounter true Self. Connected to God we live in God.

It is when in the presence of the True Self that we are able to listen and pay attention to the testimony of the Spirit. We hear Jesus' words that move and transform us. We experience Peace, Joy and Beauty and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, the one sent by God. This Life is, in Jesus' words, eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). In the deepest chambers of our heart we rediscover our oneness with God and all of God's creatures.

In today's gospel we listen in as Jesus offers his prayer to God at the end of his last meal with his disciples (John 13-17). The passage we are considering shows Jesus' concerns for the disciples. That Jesus prayed is common knowledge. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and often retreated in isolated places to spend time in prayer. In a few passages we are passed on gems of his prayer and even instructions on how to pray and what to say (Mt 11:25-27; Jn 11:41-42). Here, however, we witness Jesus' long prayer to the Father before he gets arrested. We are given a glimpse on what was clearly important to him and how he cared for his disciples and friends.

What is on his mind in his final hours of his life is a grateful celebration of what he has been able to accomplish by God's grace as the one sent by God and the immediate availability of eternal life to those who trust. In his life, Jesus has unveiled the Father's character and purpose (3:16; 5:24). Filled with God's Spirit in our heart our life gains meaning and fulfillment and is empowered to glorify God.

Jesus gives much consideration to the disciples' complicated relationship with the world. The disciples were chosen *from* the world (verse 6), are *in* the world (verse 11), are hated *by* the world (verse 14), and are not *of* the world (verses 14, 16). Jesus prays that the disciples be protected from the "evil one" who is at work in the world, but not that they be taken out of the world (verse 15). Ultimately, just as the Father sent Jesus *into* the world, so too Jesus sends the disciples *into* the world to continue his mission.

And this is cause for continued prayer for protection: just as the world has persecuted Jesus the world will persecute the disciples. The temptations are apostasy, renegating the faith to save one's life, and idolatry, worshiping "easier," convenient and more attractive gods (or so they want us to believe). All the more we need to pray: Kyrie eleison, so we don't get seduced by the "world," a reality that opposes God and chooses darkness over light.

Our sanctification is what the Spirit of Jesus does and the basis for our claim to be children of God. This sanctity is not just an abstract reality or the grounds for claiming a godly status. Being in Jesus connects us to the Father through the Spirit. Communion with the Holy Trinity allows us to grow in familiarity and intimacy with the divine Being, the Ground of all there is, the Life source and energy that is all in all. Sanctification does not take the disciples out of the world but sends them into the world to sanctify the world (John 17:18; 20:21). Our sanctification, therefore, comes freely to us at a cost to God in Christ, but it is not cheap grace. It also comes in the experience of losing our own lives (John 10:17-18; 15:11-13; 12:25). Yet, in spite of the world's hostility, the disciples are encouraged to trust Jesus, who has overcome the world (John 16:33). The Paraclete also stands up to the world (14:17; 15:26).

To John the mission of the Church is to show the world an alternative way of living that does not subscribe to the values and systems of the world (John 3:16; 10:10; 16:8-11; 13:12-20). The power of the Spirit moving freely, energizing, nurturing, instructing and shaping the disciples into the Body of Christ reality is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to be ever present (14:16-17). A life in the Spirit of Truth is a life lived in communion with the Holy Trinity and with the rest of the children of God. We signify that communion when we approach the altar and take a morsel of the same loaf of bread, communing with one another on the Body of Christ and participating in the Beloved Community as envisioned by Jesus: Reality as it is supposed to be.

Thus, prior to approaching the altar today, we may want to acknowledge the great gift we are given and the mystery of life into which we share. As we respond with "Amen" and not only with "Thank You" we remind ourselves that the gift is a commission to carry that reality of communion to the world. We receive freely what we are willing to give

graciously: Life in God, enlightened by the Word, sustained by the Spirit. How can we always be aware of such passionate love for the world unless we beg: Kyrie eleison? How can we become the Body of Christ unless we cry: Lord have mercy? May the good Lord open our heart to receive the grace he has in store for us and use it to bless the world. Amen.