



FIRST LESSON  
ACTS 16:16-34

PSALM  
PSALM 97

SECOND LESSON  
REVELATION 22:12-14, 16-17,  
20-21

GOSPEL LESSON  
ST. JOHN 17:20-26

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O GOD, FORM THE MINDS OF  
YOUR FAITHFUL PEOPLE INTO  
YOUR ONE WILL. MAKE US  
LOVE WHAT YOU COMMAND  
AND DESIRE WHAT YOU  
PROMISE, THAT AMID ALL THE  
CHANGES OF THIS WORLD, OUR  
HEARTS MAY BE FIXED WHERE  
TRUE JOY IS FOUND, YOUR SON  
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, WHO  
LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU  
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE  
GOD, NOW AND FOREVER.  
AMEN.

9300 E. BELLEVUE AVE.  
GREENWOOD VILLAGE,  
COLORADO 80111

VOICE  
(303) 770-9300

FAX  
(303) 770-9301

WEB  
[WWW.STPLC.ORG](http://WWW.STPLC.ORG)



*Living in God's amazing grace*

Liturgical Day: The Seventh Sunday in Easter

Date: May 20, 2007

Sermon Title: In God's House

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed!

For those of you who don't know, these handsomely dressed young people in the front row have just completed three years of catechetical study. We have studied the Bible together. We have studied the traditions of our church. We have served in the community, seeking to be the presence of Christ in this world. We have worshipped and prayed, we have laughed and played. We have grown in our love for each other. We have grown in our commitment to Christ and to the church. And now we are here this morning, ready to affirm before God and in the presence of this community, that the promises of our baptism are central to our lives, and that we look forward to living and growing in the presence of Christ for many years

Congratulations, friends. You have worked hard. You have grown tremendously. And you are now ready to become adult members of this Christian congregation. We love you. We are proud of you. And we look forward to serving Christ with you for many years to come.

You know, as I stand here looking at you, and thinking about the others in your class who will affirm their baptism at the other service, I am aware that you are unique people – each one of you different, in some special ways, from the rest of the group.

- Some of you are boys; others are girls.
- As your final projects showed, some of you are drawn to the creative arts – video and music and poetry – others of you prefer to express yourself with essays.
- Some of you are into books; others are into sports.
- Some of you are life-long Lutherans (a few were even baptized here at Saint Peter); others of you are new to the Lutheran church.
- Some of you are very serious about your faith and your involvement here at Saint Peter; others of you are looking forward to being a bit less involved.
- Some of you are very close to your parents; others of you can't wait to leave for college or a job.

You have, in this group, a lovely diversity. It is part of what makes you such a fun group to be with. And I've been thankful for that, during these past three years.

You are diverse, but at the same time you have a lot in common. You are all the same age, of course. And you live in similar neighborhoods, at least compared to how the rest of the world lives. But there is more. Each of you has heard your name spoken as the waters of baptism flowed over your heads. On that day, God promised always to love you; always to be with you; always to forgive you; always to have a place for you when your journey through this life is complete. Those are incredible promises. Those promises are the reason the church exists. And they are promises that each of you has received from God.

There is more that you have in common. You are all sinners. Am I wrong about that? No: each of you is, like I am, less than a perfect person. There are times when we give in to our selfish nature. There are times when we act in ways that are harmful to others. There are times when we take our families or our friends or our environment or our God for granted. There are times when... well you get the point. We are all sinners. We time and time again fall short of God's expectations for us. We come here each Sunday needing the healing touch of God in our lives.

And that is another thing you have in common: all of you. You are children of God. You are loved by God. You are so precious to God – so precious that God was even willing to die for you. And in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God promises that there is nothing that God can't undo; nothing that God can't forgive; nothing that God can't heal. If you remember anything at all from your time studying with me, I hope you remember this. God loves you very deeply. God knows your every thought and your every deed, and even though there are times (most times, actually) when we don't deserve it, God always chooses to forgive us, to renew us, and to give us a new beginning.

That brings me to the last thing that you have in common: you are all being called by God to live in this world as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. God has a plan for your life and for this world, and one of your most important responsibilities is to discover what that plan is, and live into it in a way that honors God and blesses the world that surrounds you. So you are a baptized child of God; you are a sinful human being; you are loved by God; you are forgiven by Christ; and you are called to live as a faithful follower of Jesus. You have a lot in common, don't you?

We don't often talk like this. In this world, we more often speak of our differences – that's the way the world works. We focus on our differences in order to better understand who we are. Who are you?

- You are not a jock (not a nerd; not a geek).
- You are not a student who goes to that school.
- You are not a supporter of that political party.
- You are not someone who listens to that music.
- You are not someone who wears those kind of clothes.

Do you get what I'm saying? That is the way the world thinks. It can lead to clarity, as we better understand who we are and who we aren't. But it can also lead to division and suspicion and animosity and an inability to move forward together.

That is the way the world works. Sadly enough, sometimes the church behaves the same way. What does it mean to be a faithful Christian?

- Do you believe in creation or evolution?
- Do you oppose abortion or not?
- Are you born again or not?
- Do you believe Jesus performed every miracle in the Bible or not?
- Do you prefer traditional or contemporary music?

Sometimes we end up defining ourselves or our faith by describing what we are not – or what we refuse to be. It reminds me of the old joke: maybe you've heard it.

*There was a man who was about to jump from a bridge to end his own life. A passerby stopped to try to prevent it. The passerby tried to start a conversation and told the jumper, "I am a Baptist". The jumper said, "me too". "Oh really, that's great", said the passerby, "are you a pre-millennialist Baptist?" The jumper replied, "yes I am". The passerby said, "great, me too". The passerby asked, "are you a King James version only Baptist or will you use other versions?" "King James only" said the jumper. "Me too" said the passerby. "Are you a 5-point Calvinist?", asked the passerby. "No" replied the jumper. "Me either" said the passerby. "Would you recognize baptism from a Baptist Church where the pastor did not attend a Baptist seminary?" The jumper replied "Yes". The passerby then shouts, "Die! Heretic! And pushes the jumper off the bridge.*

That's the way people in this world define themselves. But this morning, Jesus commends a different way of thinking to us. He asks us to focus, not on what divides us, but on what unites us. We may be different from one another in many ways. Yet what unites us is much greater than our differences. We are created by God – each of us. We are saved by Jesus Christ – each of us. We are supported by the Holy Spirit – each of us. And Jesus instructs us to focus on our unity, not on our differences.

And get this: if we realize that, and find ways to appreciate and support one another, life will be so much better for us. You know what it's like. Maybe it happened to you; maybe to a friend; maybe you just

saw it happen. But it happens every day. Someone at school just rips into you. They saw that you were different from them, or vulnerable for a moment, and they took advantage. It hurts. It hits you deep inside. You remember that kind of a hit, don't you? Think about what life would be like if we all focused on what we have in common. If you saw someone who was hurting, and instead of ripping into them, you sat and listened to them and cared about them. Unity is a pretty amazing thing. When it happens in a group, the group begins to become each other's strength, and life is so much better. I hope that happens for you. I hope that happens as you gather with kids your age here at church. I hope you can become a group that experiences powerful Christian unity – because I know it will help you stay faithful and hopeful and strong.

But that is not why Jesus prays for our unity. Listen again to what he says:

*... they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me...*

Jesus calls us to focus on our unity; to live together in love and acceptance. Why? So other people will know that God sent Jesus to this world. Our love for each other, our acceptance of each other is a sign to the world that Jesus is real. Our love for each other, our acceptance of each other might be the only sermon some other person ever hears.

That's why I'm so excited that you want to become adult members of this church. I want you to become one of us. I want you to become one with us. And as we live together; as we love each other; as we work together, I pray that others might notice. I pray that they will see in our fellowship a sign that God continues to be alive and well.

Congratulations, friends. I love you. I am proud of you, and happy for you. And I look forward to being the body of Christ with you. Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (May 20, 2007)

English Text: <sup>i</sup>

<sup>20</sup>“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup>“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” <sup>ii</sup>

## Greek Text:

<sup>20</sup>Οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ, <sup>21</sup>ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ᾧσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. <sup>22</sup>καγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκας μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ᾧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν. <sup>23</sup>ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ᾧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν, ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας. <sup>24</sup>Πάτερ, ὁ δέδωκας μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ κακεῖνοι ᾧσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ, ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν, ἣν δέδωκας μοι ὅτι ἠγάπησας με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. <sup>25</sup>πάτερ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δέ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. <sup>26</sup>καὶ ἐγνώρισά αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομα σου καὶ γνωρίσω, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ἣν ἠγάπησας με ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡ καγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς. <sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at [http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church\\_year/lectionary.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church_year/lectionary.html).

<sup>ii</sup> St. John 17:20-26, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

<sup>iii</sup> St. John 17:20-26, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).