

# Easter 6

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May 25, 2003

## Prayer of the Day

O God, from whom all good things come: Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to think those things which are right, and by your goodness help us to do them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Acts 10:44-48

{44} While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. {45} The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, {46} for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, {47} "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" {48} So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

*44. Peter was still speaking:* Acts 10:34-43, in which Peter instructs Cornelius and his family and friends in the Gospel is the first lesson for Easter Sunday this year. Is this intended to make a connection between the beginning of the season of Easter and the end (Easter 7 is a transition from the Ascension to Pentecost rather than an integral part of the season of Easter.)?

*the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word:* The gift of the Holy Spirit is the sign that those who received it were believers.

*45. circumcised believers were astounded even on the Gentiles:* "Jewish Christians who accompanied from Joppa who accompanied Peter to Caesarea." [1] Up to this point only Judeans, Samaritans, and Diaspora Jews had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, been baptized and included among the believers. The objective gift of the Holy Spirit, not a subjective inclination on the part of an individual, determined one's acceptance as a believer. These are not the same "circumcised believers" who criticize Peter in 11:2.

*46. speaking in tongues:* Ecstatic speaking. This is not the same kind of speaking in tongues that occurred at Pentecost when the disciples spoke in "other languages," so that pilgrims heard them speaking in their "native languages" (Acts 2:4-6).

*47-48:* Having received the Holy Spirit, nothing stood in the way of baptism, so Peter ordered that they be baptized. Peter's journey from regarding Gentiles as unclean and unworthy of the Gospel to authorizing baptism for them is a microcosm of the early (Jewish-Christian) church's journey in the same direction. In 8:36 the Ethiopian asks a similar question.

## Psalm 98

{1} O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. {2} The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. {3} He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. {4} Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. {5} Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. {6} With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD. {7} Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. {8} Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy {9} at the presence of the LORD,

for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

1-3: Yahweh has remembered his covenant and restored his people from exile. The nations are witnesses to Yahweh's victory and the vindication of his people.

4-9: "A chain of summonses for hymnic veneration of Yahweh lies before us. Not until v. 9 does the reason follow." [2] Yahweh is coming to judge the world and its people. For this the whole earth is invited to rejoice. Because of Israel all creation will be saved; "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22).

## 1 John 5:1-6

{1} Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. {2} By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. {3} For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, {4} for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. {5} Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? {6} This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

1: Last week the lesson said that those who say they love God but hate their brothers and sisters are liars. This is the reason. If you love the parent (God) you also love the child (brothers and sisters).

3a. *The love of God is this, that we obey his commandments*: Paul says essentially the same thing: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

3b. *his commandments are not burdensome*: This reflects the Jewish (and Jewish-Christian) attitude toward the law, that it was God's blessing for his people to be received with joy and kept with love. Cf. Deuteronomy 30:11. Even Jesus agrees, "My yoke is easy, and my load is light" (Matthew 11:30).

4. *whatever is born of God conquers the world*: This is the reason God's commandments are not burdensome; we are born of God, therefore we are able to overcome the hindrances the world puts in the way of our obeying God's commandments.

6. *water and blood*: The customary interpretation of water and blood is as a reference to baptism and eucharist. In John 19:34 water and blood are connected with each other and with the death of Jesus. This probably reflects a disagreement between John, who asserted that Jesus' passion was a necessary part of his work of salvation, and those who claimed that Jesus was incarnate in the baptism and that nothing else was necessary for salvation, certainly not that God in Christ would *die*.

## John 15:9-17

{9} As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. {10} If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. {11} I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. {12} "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. {13} No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. {14} You are my friends if you do what I command you. {15} I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. {16} You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. {17} I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

9-10: Love and obedience are inseparably connected.

12. *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you:* "As I have loved you" is made explicit in verse 13: namely love is exemplified in dying for a friend.

14-15. *You are my friends* ❖ *I do not call you servants:* Those who worship God are frequently called "servants of God." In both Greek and Hebrew the word for servant is also the word for slave. The relationship between master and slave is all one-way, master to slave. The relationship between friends is mutual. The same differences exist between the suzerainty treaty (Sinai) and the parity treaty (Abraham, David). As Jesus ❖ friends their relationship with Jesus governs and is reflected in their relationships with one another.

16. *whatever you ask him in my name:* The disciples must ask God "in my name," "that is, naming him as brother ❖ but the request will be made to the Father, the ultimate patron." [3]

"What is paramount in this passage is that they demonstrate their attachment to one another; that is Jesus ❖ new and final request." [4]

## Reflection

In the first lesson baptism is the means by which one becomes one of Jesus ❖ friends. Neither ethnic identity nor subjective intent is the material factor, but rather, in this passage, evidence of the gift of the Spirit. In other cases the gift of the Spirit follows the act of baptism (Acts 19:1-7), or is not mentioned at all (Acts 8:27-40. Verse 37 is a Western Non-interpolation and not found in the major manuscripts. Ehrhardt, *Framework of the New Testament Stories*, pp. 234-238, suggests that it was added to reflect a baptismal question and answer from the second century.) [5] Concerning this inconsistency Ben Witherington writes, "The point is that God ❖s gift is in God ❖s control. The book of Acts suggests God ❖s sovereignty over the whole matter, not that the matter is in the control of clerics, not even apostles." [6]

Having become a friend of Jesus carries with it the obligation to carry out Jesus ❖ command to love one another as Jesus has loved him/her, including the obligation to die, as Jesus did, for his/her friends. This is the fruit Jesus appointed us to bear. If we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we cannot claim to love God.

In the Prayer of the Day we ask, "Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to think those things which are right, and by your goodness help us to do them." For Peter and his co-religionists that meant the unthinkable, that non-Israelites were not to be avoided as unclean, but welcomed as the children of God. What might it mean for us as we seek to know and do the will of God in our time?

## Hymns [7]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

527 --E--All Creatures of  
364 --D--Son of God,  
299 --D--Dear Christians, One  
554 --P--This Is My  
707s --P--All the Ends

795v --P--Oh, Sing to (830s)  
344 --II--We Sing the  
665v --G--Ubi Caritas  
836s, 271, 804s, 422

## Prayers of the People [8]

A: How fully God in Christ has joined himself to us! We are no longer slaves or servants but friends. Gladly we pray, "Reconciler Divine, hear us." Our response is simply, C: Alleluia, Amen.

A: That those who work as pastoral teams throughout the congregations of the church may

live in harmony, act decisively to redeem, relieve injury of heart, and break the Bread of Life among us. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

A: That those who act as managers of the great cities of our world may see clearly the areas under their rule, understand the needs of the powerless and those in want, and serve to build relationships. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

A: That those in administrative posts in small towns and cities may not seek pride in their accomplishments, but celebrate the privilege and weight of service. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

A: That those in the jails and prisons of our land may learn respect for the rule of law and turn from greed, lust, and ignorance of society's needs. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

A: That those who watch over the incarcerated may learn patience, curb anger, and show respect for those in bonds. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

*When the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness is not used, the following may be said.*

A: Forgive us, Lord, when we permit ourselves to be detached from you and accept a fruitless life as good. Restore us that we may bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit in our lives. Reconciler Divine, hear us. C: Alleluia, Amen.

P: Our prayers come before you with all humility. In Christ's name we pray. C: Amen.

**Or** [9]

*Presider or deacon*

God loved us and sent the Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Let us offer prayers to God for the needs, hopes, and concerns of all human beings.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering and for those who enter our circle of faith.

For *NN* and the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.

For all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

For the leaders of the nations and for all who seek peace.

For the suffering peoples of the world.

For those who experience desolation and for those who feel remote from God.

For the sick, the dying, and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, who gives the Holy Spirit to all who believe. Hear our prayers for all peoples and grant us the power to love one another as we love you. Glory to you for ever and ever.

## **Notes**

[1] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, p. 362, note 137.

[2] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989, p. 265.

[3] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, p. p. 235.

[4] *Loc. cit.*

[5] For a discussion of the text problem see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Corrected Edition. New York: United Bible Societies, 1975, pp. 359-360.

[6] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, p. 288.

- [7] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0203.txt>
- [8] [http://www.worship.ca/text/inter\\_b1.txt](http://www.worship.ca/text/inter_b1.txt)
- [9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>