



## **GATHERING IN THE WORD OF GOD**

This Sunday is Ascension Sunday in the Church around the world! As the Easter Season draws to a close we see the early church slowly transforming, taking the experience of encountering the risen Christ and trying to find ways to make it real in their world. To continue the Christ-life is to glorify GOD—not with only with arms reaching up in praise, but with hands stretched out in service!

Our lessons tell us that Jesus goes back to GOD the Father and sits at GOD's right hand! Sooner or later the disciples had to grow up and flourish on their own—without their charismatic teacher Jesus. But before they go out to transform the world—they immerse themselves in prayer. Prayer orients us toward GOD's vision and enables our actions and what we do to be grounded in GOD's wisdom and power.

## **HEARING THE WORD OF GOD**

### **Acts 1:6-14 (The VOICE Bible)**

<sup>6</sup> When they had gathered *just outside Jerusalem at the Mount of Olives*, they asked Jesus,

**Disciples:** Is now the time, Lord—the time when you will reestablish your kingdom in *our land of Israel*?

**Jesus:** <sup>7</sup> The Father, on His own authority, has determined the ages and epochs *of history*, but you have not been given this knowledge. <sup>8</sup> *Here's the knowledge you need:* you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will be my witnesses, first here in

Jerusalem, then beyond to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the farthest places on earth.

<sup>9</sup> As He finished this commission, He began to rise from the ground before their eyes until the clouds obscured Him from their vision. <sup>10</sup> As they strained to get one last glimpse of Him going into heaven, the Lord's emissaries realized two men in white robes were standing among them.

**Two Men:** <sup>11</sup> You Galileans, why are you standing here staring up into the sky? This Jesus who is leaving you and ascending to heaven will return in the same way you see Him departing.

<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem—their short journey from the Mount of Olives was an acceptable Sabbath Day's walk.

<sup>13-14</sup> Back in the city, they went to the room where they were staying—a second-floor room. This whole group devoted themselves to constant prayer with one accord: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), Judas (son of James), a number of women including Mary (Jesus' mother), and some of Jesus' brothers.

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Jesus is mostly where he's been the last six weeks: walking around, eating dinner with, and talking story with his disciples. What's more—Jesus is doing all of this with his new resurrection body! So Jesus is still "down here"

with us on earth; and the disciples' minds are still focused on this earth too.

So they ask, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? It's been 40 days after Easter and they are still focused on the same old political, earthly kingdom that kept them from really understanding Jesus' mission for years.

Jesus tells them that something of the "main action" of what is to come will indeed be right here on this earth. Power is coming but it will come to the disciples down *here* and it will *empower witness and work down here too*—which is why Jesus goes on to detail some geographical place names as the target of the work.

But no sooner does Jesus say this and he is taken **up** into the skies (*the Ascension*) and clean out of sight of the disciples! Despite how often Jesus had mentioned going to be with his Father again and leaving the world and all that—there was no way the disciples were ready for this disappearing act. We are told they keep intently looking up to where Jesus had gone with their mouths hanging open.

Yes, Jesus had been known to come and go—to pop into and out of rooms—rather suddenly and mysteriously ever since he came back from the dead but this time it looked different—this time looked—well—*final!*

The next thing you know is that there are two angels standing with them in their midst! Mostly if you want to see an angel, you'd guess that you'd have to look up, not

down, not beside you, not on the ground; but not this time! The angels tell the disciples that Jesus indeed will indeed come back one day via this route—in reverse—but it won't be on account of the disciples' staring uselessly into the clouds.

So having had their orientation returned to *terra firma* (*ground, earth*) the disciples hoof it back to Jerusalem and they pray a lot. A lot! They did pray to Jesus and to the Father—praying for guidance, for direction, and for the very power to do the work here on earth that Jesus had promised them. It was very clear for them to ask for the guidance and energy to Jesus' work well! And Jesus' Mother Mary prayed with them for her boy—her son.

### **John 17:1-11 (The VOICE Bible)**

17 Jesus (*lifting His face to the heavens*): Father, My time has come. Glorify Your Son, and I will bring you great glory<sup>2-3</sup> because you have given me total authority over humanity. *I have come bearing the plentiful gifts of God*; and all who receive me will experience everlasting life, a new intimate relationship with you (the one True God) and Jesus the Anointed (the one you have sent).<sup>4</sup> I have glorified you on earth and fulfilled the mission you set before me.

<sup>5</sup> In this moment, Father, fuse our collective glory and bring us together as we were before creation existed.

<sup>6</sup> You have entrusted me with these men who have come out of this corrupt world order. I have told them about your nature and declared your name to them, and they have held on to your words and understood that these words,<sup>7</sup> like everything else you have given me, come

from you. <sup>8</sup> It is true that these men you gave me have received the words that come from you and not only understood them but also believed that you sent Me. <sup>9</sup> I am now making an appeal to you on their behalf. This request is not for the entire world; it is for those whom you have given to me because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> Yours and mine, mine and yours, for all that are mine are yours. Through them I have been glorified.

<sup>11</sup> I will no longer be physically present in this world, but they will remain in this world. As I return to be with you, Holy Father, remain with them through your name, *the name you have given me*. May they be one even as we are one.

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John 17 gives us the chance to “overhear” an intimate conversation between Jesus and his Father—Talk about the ultimate eavesdrop!!!

We are privy and are sharing in a conversation between two members of the divine Trinity! That alone tells us that the things Jesus is praying about are already true: **that through the glory of Jesus’ ministry—we have gained access to the GOD of the universe! Jesus prays for the Father to be mindful, watchful, attentive of us, to protect us, and the mere fact that we get to hear Jesus ask for this is proof right there that all this is going to come to pass—it’s true already!**

**Jesus is praying for believers! We have no less than the Sovereign GOD of the universe on our side!**

There's a lot going on in this "High Priestly Prayer" of Jesus in today's lesson. **We learn that although Jesus has gone away physically and is now at the right hand of GOD the Father Almighty—the power of GOD the Father Almighty is right here with us by the Holy Spirit!**

**We here this morning are a people of glory protected by the glorious power and aloha of GOD! What a gift it is that Jesus let us listen in on his prayer!**

### **DOING THE WORD OF GOD**

So, on this 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter—7 days before Pentecost Sunday—what is the Word of God for us?

#### **1. ONE: ALL GOD'S ENERGY AND ALOHA IS WITH US—INSIDE OF US!**

- ✓ All GOD's power is inside our Church—all the people of our Church—young and old; Chinese-speaking and English-speaking!
- ✓ Because GOD's power is inside our church and people—then GOD's power is always in the service of aloha to everyone we touch, pray for and visit at their homes or at the hospital or the care home!
- ✓ There are no impossibilities for the Body of Christ @ TFCCCH! All things become possible!

## **2.TWO: OUR PRAYERS ARE POWERFUL!**

- ✓ When we pray—we've got no less than the Sovereign GOD of the Universe on our side!
- ✓ Some folk have said that prayer is a good medicine. Prayer has been associated with better outcomes following surgery.
- ✓ Our prayer allows a positive field of energy to emerge for those we pray for as well as ourselves and opens the door for a greater influx and inflow of divine activity.
- ✓ Our prayers as individuals and as we pray together—help create open systems that are more permeable to GOD's visions and energy!
- ✓ Our prayers make the impossible possible!

## **3.THREE: More on Prayer:**

- ✓ **You can pray anytime!** Praying is not just for church or worship. Prayer is meant to be ordinary—part of our daily lives!
- ✓ **Prayer is about what's on your heart!** Whatever you're worried about or thankful for or needs support and kōkua—**pray!**
- ✓ **We never pray alone!** Jesus is praying with us and for us! Tell Jesus your difficulty you're struggling with—and Jesus will know!

## **SENDING IN THE WORD OF GOD**

Last Sunday many of you wrote on the 3x5 cards and other things about your losses and things. Some of you pick up cards in the basket to pray for what was on the cards.

I brought the remainder of the cares (not taken by others) and gave each of the folks at our Tuesday Night Bible Study Potluck and each person around the table shared what was on the card! And I gave the final prayer for all that was shared. I took the remaining cards and prayed for each one!

Thanks everyone for sharing!

In closing someone shared this:

**Your most powerful  
Testimony is how you treat  
Others after the  
CHURCH SERVICE  
is over!**