



Fifth Sunday of Easter – May 15, 2022

“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

Question of the Week: *How has your faith walk affected your relationships?*

• **First Reading: Acts 14: 21-27**

“It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

• **Responsorial: Psalm 145: 8-13**

R: I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.

• **Second Reading: Revelation 21: 1-5a**

“Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth.”

• **Gospel: John 13: 31-33a, 34-35**

“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”

Reading 1: Unintended Consequences

14:26 “they sailed off to Antioch, from where they were given over to the grace of God for the work that (they) fulfilled” These verses marked the end of Paul’s first missionary journey. When he landed in Antioch in Syria, he was home. Having finished his trip, he entrusted his efforts to God’s grace.

On our faith journey, we must come to expect the unexpected. As the old saying goes, “Be careful for what you pray, you may get it!”

In the midst of Paul’s first missionary journey, there is success that produced new problems. As we studied last week, Christian preaching like Paul’s had two affects. First, it split the Jewish synagogues into Nazorean (i.e., Christian) and non-Nazorean camps. Where there was a split and the Nazorean Jews were expelled from the synagogue, a new assembly (church) was created. Second, Paul’s preaching encouraged

non-Jewish peoples to join become believers (without observing the Jewish Law) and join the

new assemblies. As a result, new assemblies formed by Jewish Christians were quickly becoming non-Jewish. There was a external pressure from the non-Christian Jews, and internal pressure from the growing numbers of incoming Gentile converts.

Paul’s exhortation to the believers [23] and his attention to organizational structure [24] confirm the affects of missionary efforts like Paul’s. There were problems of persecution and unexpected growth. There were established churches who needed attention. But, notice that these problems preceded Paul’s efforts and indicate Christianity was rapidly spreading before Paul preached in Asia Minor. Paul contributed to the missionary effort with his attention to the non-Jewish believers [27]. We will see his defense of his mission in next week’s study.



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The early church did not expect the growth that Paul's efforts provided.

Q: Are we surprised when our prayers are answered or when our relationship with God changes? How do we react?

Psalm: Style and Substance

Q: When was the last time you were impressed by the look of a building or star or media production? Did the look impress you more than the content? Why or why not?

Do you remember the fads of your youth? Did some of these fads endure with time? Some of these fads were a certain look, a way to dress, a hairdo, an attitude. Some survived because of the personalities involved. Sinatra set the tone for crooning. Miles Davis exhaled the “cool.” The Beatles outgrew their haircuts but not their influence. These and many other stars left a cultural legacy built upon not only their talent, but their look and attitude. Their image was as important as their output.

Sometimes the Scripture contains verses that depend upon style. Psalm 145 is such a series of verses. This psalm is more stylistic than thematic. Each line of the psalm has a subsequent letter of the Hebrew alphabet (imagine a poem where the first line began with a word beginning with the letter “A,” the second line began with a word beginning with “B,” the third with “C,” etc.). Such a psalm was limited in thought because the focus was on form.

The psalm can be divided into the following themes:

- 145:1-2: personal praise.
- 145:3: a transition that extolled God's grandeur.

145:4-7: the consistent activity of the faithful throughout the generations in praise and witness.

145:7-8: the mercy and goodness of the Lord.

145:9-12: creation giving praise to God.

145:13: a transition about the glory and trustworthiness of the Lord.

145:14-20: God's care for the faithful.

145:21: personal praise.

Notice there are some repetitions. The psalm began and ended with personal praise, like bookends; the center piece of the psalm was the praise of all creation. The faithful praised God throughout the generation, while God cared for his faithful (implicitly from one generation to the next). The transitions in the psalm spoke of God's glory.

While the theme of praise threaded through the psalm, the content of the praise depended on the structure of the psalm, not the thought process itself. The verses did not build on one thought to another; they seemed to jump from one image to another. Still, the psalm held together with the idea of praise. (We can assume the original Hebrew engaged the ancient reader far more than the English translation we have today.)

Style can rise to the level of substance, even in Scripture, yet it should never overtake the spirit of the verse. Worship, like other parts of the Christian lifestyle, requires a style, but is never reducible to style. In praise, style is a means to an end, giving glory to God.

Q: What is your style of worship? How important is that style to you? How does it support your life as a Christian?

Reading 2: The Presence of God

These few verses acted as a transition from the



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defeat of Satan to the glory of the eternal Jerusalem. Three points define the transition: recreation of the universe, unity of heaven and earth, and the effects of God's presence with his people.

First, the recreation of the universe should not be seen in terms of destruction, but in terms of cleansing. With the defeat of Satan, the created order was freed from evil. In the ancient world, the seas were an unknown source of evil; the sea monster, Leviathan, was considered malevolent enemy of humanity (see Psalm 74:13-14). Isaiah 27:1 saw the defeat of this monster as a sign of the death of evil and the salvation of the righteous. So, the elimination of the sea meant the elimination of this source for evil. Hence, the destruction of the old order and the creation of a new order should be seen in moral terms. The moral universe had been recreated. Evil had been permanently eradicated.

Second, heaven and earth become one with the descent of the new Jerusalem. Many ancient people built their cities and temples upon a heavenly (hence "eternal") pattern. Since there was some basis in the Torah for the Temple, it was considered the dwelling place for God. It was divinely ordained in the Law, so it should reflect the dwelling of YHWH in heaven. With the destruction of the city and its Temple in 70 A.D., there was no dwelling for his presence. So, a question arose: When will the presence of God return to earth? John the Elder saw this in the return of Jerusalem, the heavenly dwelling place for God and his people. With the descent of this new city, God was with his people. Heaven and earth were now one.

Third, now that God dwelt with his people, evil would permanently be banned from existence; so its effects would be missing (death, mourning, crying, pain). He would comfort his people forever, because he "tent" with his people. His

presence would usher in a new order, a perfect order, an order of perpetual newness.

In the over all structure of this section, John wrote in the familiar "A-B-A." The passing of the old and the appearance of the new (part "A") highlighted the immanence of the divine with people ("B"). Notice the changes John lists were a direct result of God's presence.

Image what could happen with the presence of God among us. John the Elder many have seen the effects in images that were larger than life. But, we can see the effects of God's presence in the small, but definite changes within people. When he is present, there is the destruction of evil, the presence of good. God is the ultimate change agent.

Q: How has the presence of God changed you? How has he changed you for the good?

Gospel: The Power of Example

Q: What was the best faith witness you have ever seen? Why was it the best?

Set aside, for a moment, the faith-works controversy. What remains the most powerful witness to the Christian faith? The moving story of repentance against all odds. Or, a simple act of love. What has more power, word or deed? Jesus did not merely speak of God's love. He showed the world the Father's love on the cross. This was his glory. This was the way he communicated God's love to us. This was the way he expected us to follow.

13:31 Even though Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper, John seemed to write them in hindsight and for his audience. In the time frame of the Last Supper, Judas had just left. Now was the time for the glory of the Father to be revealed in the Son (in the crucifixion). In



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this sense, God glorified the Son as revelation. But, both the Father and the Son were glorified. The assumed subject of the sentence was the Christian community. They were the ones who gave Jesus glory through their worship and evangelization. Hence, there was a “dialogue” of glory. God revealed his glory in the death of his Son. The Christian community responded with glory (i.e., rising reputation) in their community life.

13:32 [If God might be glorified in HIM,] This phrase is not found in the best manuscripts, but is found in the best translations for dramatic flow.

“God will glorify HIM in himself” Jesus was not only a vehicle of revelation. He enjoyed a personal, unique unity with the Father. Hence, the Father would not only reveal himself through the crucifixion. The Father would also show the world that, through the death of Jesus on the cross, his Son was indeed one with him.

13:33a “Children, I AM with you (only) a little while longer.” By using the phrase “I AM” that referred to the Jewish title for God (YHWH), Jesus equated his presence with that of God.

13:34-35 “Love one another” John used the form three times as a literary device: once as a command, once as a result of his love, once as evidence of his followers. For John, love was the proof of God’s presence, the cause of the Christian community, and the identification of Christians.

Q: How is God honored in the example we leave for others?

At the moment of his pending betrayal, Jesus declared his glorification (i.e., his coming reputation). The glory of Jesus’ death was one theme in John’s gospel; God would use a death of humiliation and pain as a catalyst for his glory (reputation). For John, the cross was the sign of God’s presence and a cause for faith in the

Father. Jesus’ death and God’s reputation, then, were linked [31].

Love was the means that raised the status of crucifixion from the profane to the sacred. In the cross, Jesus showed God’s love to the world through self-giving. When Jesus gave himself on the cross, the Father revealed himself as a selfless God. His focus was upon us. The Father loved us through the Son’s death. In this way, John could declare that the Father’s glory was in the Son and the Son’s glory was in the Father [32].

When Jesus was no longer with his followers [33], how could God’s glory continue to shine? Through the love of his followers. Love united the community in one mind and heart; it united the community to God [34].

Love is the best way we as Christians can evangelize others [35]. The way we treat others speaks volumes about our faith and invites others to join us. Love, even in the smallest of measures, is the best way to spread the glory of God.

Catechism Theme: General Ministry of the Church (934-943)

There are two types of ministry in the Church: a general ministry all Christians are called to and a specific ministry individual members within the Church are called to. The general ministry is to serve the world. The specific ministry is to serve the members of the Church in the name and person of Jesus. These specific or “sacred” ministers who serve the Church (bishops, priests, and deacons) are called “clerics.” All other Church members are called “laity.” (934, 935)

The three aspects of general ministry are the roles of priest, prophet, and king. As priests, all Christians are called to pray. As prophets, all Christians are called to witness for Jesus through their words and actions. As kings, all Christians are called to lead others as Jesus did, through



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loving service. (941, 942, 943)

All Christians are called to witness by example. The example of prayer, word and deed, and loving service.

Q: How has the love of Christians help you through times of testing? How did these Christians express their love?

Jesus gave an example of God's presence in the world. We are to continue that example. The love Jesus gives us is the same love we share with others. That love defines us and motivates us. It is the love that grows beyond words.

Reflect on ways you can show God's love to others. Plan two or three ways to share his love this week.