

The Victory and Ever After In Christ

John 17:11-19 Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. ¹² "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

In the first century a Greek philosopher recorded the story of a slave girl from whom a sandal was stolen by an eagle. In this story the eagle flew to the king of Egypt and dropped the sandal in his lap. Apparently, the king was so intrigued by the shape of the sandal, and the manner in which it came to him that he order his servants to search the land to find the owner of the sandal. Finally finding the slave girl of course he married her and “the girl lived happily ever after.” That is thought to be the first recorded telling of what we know as the story of Cinderella.

No matter which version you read of the story you made have heard growing up one thing is always the same. She marries a monarch and lives happily ever after.

This is the same not only in Cinderella but in most stories. In most stories’ evil is defeated, the good guy becomes monarch and everyone lives happily ever after.

We however know better. We know the truth is that when someone gets married that is only the beginning. Getting married is the easy part. Living as a married person day after day is much harder. Learning to forgive, to understand, to compromise, to put the other first, that is the hard part.

Similarly, when the hero wins and becomes king that is the easy part, being a good king day after day is more difficult.

On Thursday we celebrated Jesus’ ascension. He defeated Satan and death and the devil and ascended to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God the Father. He was crowned king.

The disciples saw the risen Lord ascend. That was the great day. The day of his coronation. Concerning that day, the scriptures say

Psalm 47:5 5 God has gone up with a shout, The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Psalm 110:1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

The victory is his and through him ours.

If this were a fairy tale it would be at this point that we would be told, Jesus and the disciples lived happily ever after. But of course, that is not the case. Rather now the disciples had the difficult job of living as disciples of Jesus, as Christians, in a world that hated Jesus.

Up to this point the disciples had it relatively easy. They just had to follow Jesus around. He was there with them, as he reminds us in our text. He kept them from the hatred of the world and Satan. But now they had the difficult daily task of living as his disciples and so do we. We have also seen his death and resurrection, his ascension and coronation. We also rejoice in his victory through which we also are victorious. But now we have the task of daily living as Christians.

Jesus is well aware of this. See how he prays for us before his Father. "Holy Father, keep them through your name," and "the world has hated them." He is aware of the difficulty of the life ahead of us. He therefore prays on our behalf that we might be kept by the power of the father.

This Sunday is a Sunday of transition, we are moving from the glorious victory of Christ's resurrection and ascension into the festival of Pentecost by which the apostles and we are sent out into the world to daily live that faith.

This is why the first Psalm is such perfect psalm for this Sunday. It speaks of the two paths that lie before us on a daily basis. The way of the sinner and the way of the righteous. It talks about sitting, standing, walking, that is it talks about daily living. But daily living as what? In the way of the righteous or in the way of sinners? That is the struggle to daily walk in righteousness, to follow Christ.

The victory is ours through Christ but the happily ever after is not here yet. We remain in the world and the world hates us because it hated him. We have the victory, but we still must continue to struggle in this life.

However, this daily living as Christians is not something we need to fear for two reasons. One it is not a wearisome burden but the fullness of joy, and two we have this promise from the Father to guard and keep us through it until the end.

When two young people get married, they know that wedding is not the end but just the beginning. Yet hopefully they do not fear that daily living as a married couple, because they also know the joy that can come through it

Jesus also says in our text: **John 17:13 that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves**

This daily living to Christ bring joy. Our Psalm for the week, Psalm one describes those who live in Christ in the following terms.

Psalm 1:3³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

This is a wonderful description of what it does in your life to live to Christ.

There is no doubt that marriage can be work but it is work that is well worth it. When you put the time in in a marriage it produces fulfillment and joy. It produces great fruit.

So too is this daily living with Christ. It produces fruit. It can at time be difficult, but it is well worth it.

Yet it is not we who produce the fruit but the Father

The victory is ours through Christ and the happily ever after is not here yet, but we have this promise from Jesus that the Father will guard us keeping us safe as though we were a precious stone, which indeed the apostle peter reminds us that we are.

Even though Psalm 1 was written 1,000 years before Christ notice how it perfectly reflects Christ's own word. God brings about the fruit of the tree but he does it through his word. The Psalmist will "meditate on his law day and night." And Jesus says, "sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth."

It is God who will keep us secure in the faith, and this he will accomplish through his word and the gift of the Holy Spirit which he will send.

If you go to a graduation ceremony you will probably hear somebody and probably more than one person giving last minute advice to the students. Go and do this. Go and do that. This is what makes for a successful life. Make sure you remember this or that.

But here Jesus does not do that. Rather than give us a list of things to make sure we do so that we will have a successful Christian life, he knows that we need more. He goes to the father, "you keep them." And this the Father does.

Jesus' plea here is recognition of our complete inability. He does not pray that we would sanctify ourselves, because he knows that we can not do that. He prays that the Father would sanctify us.

In many ways this prayer of Jesus would be insulting if we did not know how true it was. He does not even bother to give us directions. Such as here is how you can make sure you follow the path of righteousness. He does not even bother to tell us or his disciples, make sure to stay on the path. But rather knowing how hopeless we are. Knowing how sinful we are. Knowing how we will daily walk right off that path. He goes right to the Father. You keep them. The Father is holy, "Holy Father." The son is holy, "for this reason I sanctify myself." We are not.

Yet we are kept by the father, we are sanctified through the Son. Because he died for our sins therefore, we are like trees planted by the river.

It still not going to be easy. We are still going to live as those who are hated by the world. But it is his power that will keep us. And it is his blood that has sanctified us.

Amen