

We are at the end of the Easter season. Throughout this time, we have been reviewing all the blessings we have because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. We discussed how we have peace knowing that we are forgiven. We spoke about how we are led by our Good Shepherd. We saw how we can live for Christ because he lives in us. We even witnessed how our relationship with our God is a perfect friendship. When we greet each other with “Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed!” we are also rejoicing in everything our God gave us when he rose again, just like he said.

In today’s lesson we hear Jesus essentially praying to his Father that we receive all the blessings we sing about at Easter. But how does our Lord give us everything? How is God keeping his promise to us? When we look closely at what our Savior says in his Maundy Thursday Prayer we find the answer in a very familiar blessing, a blessing that we can at times take for granted. Let’s look again at what Jesus says so we can see how Jesus answers his prayer.

Once again, we return the upper room on Maundy Thursday. Jesus is finished speaking to his disciples about everything that is going to happen. The meal is over, and Judas is already gathering a crowd to meet Jesus in the Garden. But, before they leave, Jesus stops to say a prayer. Jesus’ prayer had three parts to it. He first prays to be glorified by what he is going to do that weekend, he then prays for his disciples, and then he prays for all believers. Our section falls during Jesus’ prayer for his disciples.

He says: ***Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled***

Jesus prays for their protection so that they may continue to be one with him and the Father through faith. During Jesus’ ministry he showed his desire to protect them by stilling storms, warning them against poor influences, rebuking them when they went off track, or even by taking them to a quiet place to pray and study.

But Jesus wasn’t going to be there with them anymore. He knew that after he succeeded in saving the world he was going to ascend into heaven again to make full use of his glory by ruling all things for the good of his people. He was still going to be with them, but they were no longer going to have him speak to them personally. He wasn’t going to be there to bring them back in line when they became side tracked by the events or teachings of the world.

We have never had Jesus standing with us in the same way as the disciples. We have lived our whole lives without Jesus’ visible presence. Yet, Jesus’ prayer for our spiritual protection is granted. It was granted with his disciples as they all remained in the faith. It is still holding true for many today that despite living in a world bent on removing Christ from its life there are still many who haven’t fallen away or gone astray from the faith.

What did God use to answer his prayer? Jesus tells us: ¹³ ***“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.***

Did you catch it? Do you see what Jesus is referencing throughout this prayer? He tells us that he has given us his word. He wants us to be made holy by his word because the word is God’s truth. God’s Word is the answer to God’s prayer. This is the blessing we have that gives us everything God wants us to have by keeping us in the faith. Should we be surprised?

Jesus always referenced the Word when pointing out that he was the Savior to come. He pointed to his Word on Easter when he confirmed to his disciples that he really was alive and not a ghost. The Word has always been the tool that God uses to connect his people to him and all the blessings we receive because he rose from the dead winning the victory over sin, death, and the devil, for the world.

Our God tells us how we can receive the blessings of the resurrection. He tells us how we can have everything Jesus prays about. We find it in his Word. That makes it easy for us but doesn't it at times seem as if relying on God's Word is the hardest task God could give?

We want to be united, protected, always safe, loved, and holy. But when we are dedicated to the Word of God we often find everything to be different in the world. Instead of being united we often find that God's Word divides. Just look at how many denominations are out there. There isn't much unity in the world. Instead of being protected we are considered enemies of the world because of the word. God's Word often gives us persecution instead of protection. That means we don't feel real safe or even loved due to the world's hatred of what we believe. And holy? In fact, when we stick with God's Word we often feel the opposite because we are constantly reminded that we are not holy.

We don't always believe that the Word is working at granting Jesus' requests. However, when we see a disconnect, it isn't the Word getting things wrong, but it is us because we are not really holding on to the Word. God's Word is the answer to Jesus' prayers and to ours as well if we let it.

If God's Word can speak without our interference there wouldn't be any divisions in the Christian Church because God's truth is clear. But when our sinful nature tries to get its own way God's Word starts to get distorted. If God's Word had the final say, then there wouldn't be persecution or hatred because everyone would love God first and then their neighbor as themselves.

In fact, the devil wouldn't even be a threat because it is God's Word that makes him flee when it is taught in all its holiness. Finally, we would never question our holiness because we would only see the cross Jesus died on as the answer to all our sins.

But, we do let our sinful nature get in the way of the Word and the result is a disaster. We must get out of our own way and let God's Word speak to us, so the Holy Spirit can keep on granting Jesus' requests for all of us.

Jesus answers his own prayer by giving us his Word. When we are in his word the blessings of Jesus' resurrection and ascension become ours. When we let the Word of God dominate our lives Jesus gets what he wants and so do we. We are united because we are united with God through a faith only the Word can provide. We will then be protected, safe, and loved, because we belong to our God who protects us and keeps our souls safe from hell and the devil. This can only come from a love that wants only the best for us.

Today is Mother's Day and this is when we reflect on the love of a mother. And while it is good of us to honor our mothers and thank them for their love, Jesus surpasses the love of a mother because his love never fails and gives us more by giving us eternal blessings. One of those blessings is the knowledge that we have been made holy by his resurrection and one day will get to experience that glory in heaven when we will see our Savior face to face in perfect unity.

All of this becomes ours through the Word. Jesus did everything for the world but only those who believe it to be true will receive it and God gives us the faith to believe through the power of his Word of truth.

God's Word is the Holy Spirit's powerful weapon to bring his people salvation. It is God's word that makes Baptism powerful to save by washing away our sins. It is God's Word that connects us to Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper in a miraculous way to confirm our forgiveness. It is God's Word that brought you to know Jesus is your Savior by paying for your sins on the cross and rising again on the third day.

Therefore, cherish God's Word. Don't let his word be compromised for the sake of fake unity. Even if hearing the truth is through an internet feed it is still better than going to a church without the truth that has a live minister. Feed your souls with the water and bread of life found in Scripture. Just like it wouldn't be wise to go without eating it isn't healthy to go a day without feeding your soul.

Jesus' prayer is that one day we will be with him in heaven. His ascension testifies to us that he is preparing a place for us. Until then we are to remain in the world. How then do we make sure we don't lose the hope Jesus' resurrection gives us? Be in the Word and never stop and the Holy Spirit will continue to strengthen your faith so that none of the blessings Jesus' won will ever be taken away from you. Amen.