

Rogate

17 May, Anno Domini 2020

St. John 16:21-30

Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

There are some events that change the way everything is done. The discovery that the world was round. Two world wars. The internet. The terrorist attacks of 2001. And, of course, a world-wide pandemic. These things changed life drastically for better and for worse and in some ways that will never be undone.

But none of these events were as revolutionary, as unpredictable, or as reality changing for all mankind as the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Of course, 99% of the world had no clue what was happening. "Oh well, another criminal suffering under the iron fist of the Romans and made an example for the rest of us." If you didn't know about the earthquake or the temple curtain being ripped from top to bottom, then from your perspective nothing happened. The Jews, the Greeks, the Romans and anyone whom He had offended along the way were pleased to have the troublemaker out of their hair. He's dead. It's done. Let's get back to the way things were.

Not possible. The way things were is over...forever. The death of Jesus and His shattering of the chains of death made good and sure of that. All of our sins were paid for. No more looking forward to the Messiah who would set us free from our enemies and the curse of death. Jesus has fulfilled it all - the prophecies, the promises, the demands of the Law, God's righteous anger against our sins. Jesus did it all on the cross and now He lives! How could anything ever be the same? NOTHING is the same. When we look at this world and our life through the Son of God hanging on the cross, we see that everything has been turned on its head - what we thought was good is shown to be bad, and what we want to call bad the Lord calls good. Everything has changed. Death no longer has to hang over us as impending doom and the terror of standing before the judgment seat of God being held accountable for all that we have done.

Our relationship to God has been fundamentally changed. When you are drawn up out of the waters of the font, because of Jesus, you are not the same as you were when you went in. As we look at God through the lense of the crucified Jesus, we see a very different God than the one we would expect, the one that our consciences are terrified of. We expect a God who holds everything we do against us, who is just itching to punish us for every misstep and transgression, who could snap at a moments notice and make all our atoms go "POOF". And so when we look at the cross, we don't quite know what to do or think. Our hearts, weighed down by guilt, find it so hard to believe that God would have done that for someone like us; that the One who we have ignored, dismissed, disobeyed,

and at times even denied - could so willingly take our punishment for us; suffer torment, death, and hell to save us.

The atoning death of Jesus has changed everything. There is nothing left to fear about God for all who love the Son and believe that Jesus came from God. In Jesus, you don't have to wonder if God cares about you. In Jesus you don't have to wonder if He will help you. Jesus died and is alive. You are forgiven, free of the guilt of all your sins - past, present, and future. That changes everything! Through Jesus you can call God Father and ask for His help whenever you are afraid, whenever you are in the midst of temptation or doubt, whenever you have fallen into sin, whenever you are in any need. And you have the promise that any prayer that is in keeping with the cross of Jesus will be granted.

Jesus says today "Ask! Call upon your heavenly Father and He will give you all you need and your joy will be full because your name has been written in the Book of Life." That is what makes us confident to pray - what Jesus has done for us. We pray because we have been baptized, where God said "I am pleased with you. I take pleasure in you. I love you and I am your Father." We pray because of the Body and Blood shed for us. When our heart is confident of that truth, then we don't need anyone to tell us to pray. Faith prays. Faith prays because of who God says He is and what He promises to do for us. We pray because we have a heavenly Father who loves us dearly. Our Father is the one who gives us every good and perfect gift. Our Father is the one who defends us against all danger and harm, who sends His mighty angels to watch over and defend us even as we sleep.

So, children of God, pray. The Father loves you. That is not a question up for debate. You have no reason to doubt it. If you do, look at the crucified Jesus who now lives. You don't need someone better than you to ask for you. Your Father has promised to hear YOU and answer YOU. Pray because you have needs and He will take care of you. It doesn't matter how trite you think those needs are. Ask. Pray because you are daily surrounded by so many temptations and enemies. Pray because God has invited you to pray. Pray because He has daily provided for all your needs of body and soul. Pray because He has sent His Son to redeem you and make you His child. Jesus died and is alive. Everything has changed. You are forgiven. Pray, praise, and give thanks.

In the Name of +Jesus.