

The Lectionary with Vicar

The appointed readings for this upcoming Sunday are taken from Acts 1:12-26; I Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11 and John 17:1-11. I encourage you to open your Bibles and read through these passages with me.

Acts 1:12-26

Today we read the story of the Apostles replacing Judas with Matthias. While there are a lot of things that could be discussed in this passage. I really want to highlight two. First, there is a special emphasis on eyewitness testimony. The options for replacements both needed to have eyewitness testimony of Jesus' entire ministry. This is one of the reasons that Jesus' brothers were not considered for the role, because they were not His followers until after the resurrection. What the disciples wanted was to ensure that whoever was chosen to fill this role of leading and teaching could tell people about the whole ministry of Christ, so that their message could be on the firm basis of eyewitness testimony.

The other element of this passage to consider is the importance of prayer in the life of the early church. This was discussed a few weeks ago as one of the things the church has done since the beginning, and here we see a devotion to prayer even before the day of Pentecost. They are gathered in prayer when Peter rises to address everyone. They pray before drawing lots to choose the replacement for Judas. Every action they take is rooted in prayer, and they finally express trust in God when they find two candidates and leave the decision up to God's providence.

I Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11

Peter finishes off his letter by once again returning to the theme of suffering as a Christian. As we read this section of the text, we can note the contrast between present suffering and future glory. We suffer now, just like Christ suffered, and so we will be glorified just as Christ is glorified. It provides hope for those in the midst of suffering that their sufferings will only be temporary.

All of this is demonstrated based on this idea that we are to have communion with Christ. What happens to Christ, happens to us. When we follow in Christ's footsteps, we will see His suffering and His glory in our own lives. And because of this communion with Christ, we also have communion with one another. Chapter 5 verse 9 points out the fellowship we share with all Christians in our common suffering. This is one way that we share one another's burdens, suffering together does make the suffering more bearable.

There is, however, a note of warning, and we are warned on two fronts. First, Peter warns that we will face God's judgement. This alone should be enough to drive us to Christ in order to seek His mercy, but Peter also warns his audience about the Devil, roaring like a lion. When we are tempted to complacency, Peter reminds us that the Devil will try to lead us into sin and away from Christ. If we are not alert and watchful, one sin will lead to another until we are consumed and walk away from the life giving gifts that God offers to us.

John 17:1-11

Finally, in our Gospel reading, we read the Words of Jesus from the Last Supper. Jesus' also comments on the theme of glory and glorification. He talks about how His works give glory to God, and how our works can also glorify God when they are done in His name. Likewise, God give glory to Jesus, which is accomplished at the resurrection. We then receive Christ's glory when we live according to His commandments and walking in love for Him.

This is because the relationship we have with Jesus in some ways mirrors the relationship that Jesus has with His Father. The Father sent Jesus into the world to do His work. In the same way Christ sends us into the world to carry out His commandments. The Father and the Son are one, and Jesus prays that we may also be one. So it is that just as the Father gives His glory to Jesus and Jesus glorifies the Father, we also glorify Christ and receive glory from Him.

So what is the end of all this? We know who God is. "This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." At its heart, the life of the Christian is knowing God and being known by Him. In doing this we are made one with each other and one with the Lord. We know God and trust Him and come to Him, and through this we have fellowship with God and with one another. It is this fellowship that Jesus talks about which will bring us through all the sufferings and trials of life, it will bring us through the world, and it will guide us in our decisions as we prayerfully turn to God for all our needs.

A Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You have been glorified by Your Father at Your resurrection from the dead. Grant that we, Your people, may give glory to You, that we may come to be with You and share in Your glory. Only through You and in Your name can we accomplish this, and it is in that name that we pray. Amen.