

COLLECT: O GOD, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting, Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Lesson: Acts 16:16-34

Psalm: 97

Second Lesson: Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17,20-21

Gospel: John 17:20-26

THE SERMON: In today's Gospel Jesus prays for his disciples. In verse 9 Jesus prays, "I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.... (vs 14) I passed your word on to them and the world hated them because they belong to the world, (vs 16) They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. (vs 18) As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (vs 20) I pray not only for these but for those also who through their words will believe in me (vs 21) May they all be one, Father, may they be one in us.

Jesus is still at supper with his disciples, he has broken bread and shared wine with them, instituting the eucharist. He has washed their feet

and there at the Last Supper he prays for them. As Dr. Martin Luther King said, Jesus knows there are some difficult days ahead for the disciples.

Jesus knows their strengths and weaknesses; he also knows the challenges of the world. He has sanctified the disciples taking them out of the world and setting them aside to do the mission of his ministry. He has taught and watched over them. He has given them the power to heal, cast out demons and to convert them to followers.

He knows that within hours he will be taken and the march towards his crucifixion will begin. He does not pray for himself, but he prays for the disciples. Through his experiences with them he has equipped them for the continuation of his ministry. They know that God has sent him into the world and they now know he is the Messiah, the Anointed one. Jesus wants them to have the strength to go on although they will be challenged and assaulted by the world. He wants them to believe they are not alone, but that he is still with them. Jesus wants them to believe that God loves them just as he loved him.

Jesus prays that the world will recognize that God was in him and the love that prompted God to send him into the world, that same love, has been poured into the disciples. He prays this love will propel them to go on into the world, preach the Gospel, heal the sick and create new followers.

He wanted God's help and protection for the disciples so that through their work in the world, the world would know that they, like Jesus, did not come to condemn the world, but to show God's love. They would preach the Gospel, in words that Jesus had given them by word and example. They would also show the power of the words through physical healing.

They would restore sight to the blind, cure the sick, cast out demons and later, Peter would restore Dorcas, a female follower of Jesus, from death to life.

As further insurance for the disciples, Jesus after his resurrection will breathe on them and give them a help mate, the Holy Spirit. Then on the day of Pentecost, the disciples will in a fiery display and a rushing sound of wind, that must have sounded like a tornado, receive the Holy Spirit and the ability to preach in many tongues/languages. The day of Pentecost now allows the disciples to teach and spread the Gospel throughout the world.

The day of Pentecost has become known as the Church's birthday. The Holy Spirit and the Gospel could now be shared with all people of the world.

If Jesus had to pray, what about us? We are assaulted by many bad things happening in the daily life of our nation and the world. Thanks to the marvel of television and social media, as the news correspondent, Edward R. Murrow used to say and show, **YOU ARE THERE!** We are witnesses to events as they are happening or as they have just occurred.

On Tuesday of this week, the bad thing was the shooting of the 19 fourth graders and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas. At Robb Elementary School, 10-year olds were shot to death in their class rooms. Minutes before there had been a joyous Honor Roll celebration and proud parents had come to the school to see the children being awarded. After the ceremony, some of the parents allowed their children to come home early. Others told their children to remain at school and finish out the day.

The finish of the day was a horrible event. This elementary school in a Texas town of less than 20,000 people was blasted into the news cycle. Innocent children in a normally safe space now decimated. Young lives ended way too soon!

It is said: “The worst thing a parent can experience is the loss of a child.” Even if the child has a medical condition that will end in their death, the parent will attend, love and be with the child until the end. They will have presence and be able to talk with and show affection until the end. They may think they are prepared for the child’s death but reality and the onset of grieving shows them that they weren’t. They did though have a chance to say goodbye. It might not have been with speech; it may have been just their presence at the bedside. Their grief is still barely hard to bear

Can you imagine the grief a parent has when a child is instantaneously snatched away. *(Pause and think)* **Do you know how they are feeling?** Is it even possible for you to feel as the parents, families, and even friends in Uvalde are feeling this morning? If you were there, what could you say or do to comfort them? Is it even possible?

You are there, you are a part of the families standing outside of the school telling the police forces to go inside, to do something. You are there even as you watch it on television, on your computer, through the lens of your camera or social media. You are there.

How do you feel? Are you going to pray for the departed souls of the children, the teachers and the surviving children who were also in the school? Their hearts now have a large gaping hole, that they may never ill.

Are you going to pray that God gives them strength and comfort to deal with the days ahead

I can't pray for comfort; I can pray for strength in the days to come. But to pray for comfort is extremely difficult for me. In the Gospel of Matthew 2:18 it states, through the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "A voice was heard in Rama, wailing and loud laments; it was Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing all consolation, because they were no more."

This death is different for me. Because **I think it may happen again**, you know it has happened before. So, how can I pray for comfort at a time like this?

You may ask the questions: Why did God let this bad thing happen to innocent children or what would Jesus do? My answer is I don't know.

Jesus prayed for his disciples and the nation is certainly praying for the families in Uvalde.

Tell me, do you think prayer is enough?

Amen.

Rev, Lionel Starkes