
Focal Scripture: John 17:6-19

⁶ I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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.

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.

Sermon: Fulfillment

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19 (sermon)

Intro

Our scripture readings this morning all point to one thing. Indeed, our modern culture wants to paint the same word with very broad strokes.

That word is “fulfillment” meaning the achievement of something desired, promised, or predicted.

The world paints fulfillment as being something that can satisfy what ever your need is in the moment.

Such diverse things as a car, or a drink, or a movie, or particular outfit, or wealth, are all pointed to in our society as a things that will ‘fulfill’ you so that you will want no more.

The reality of what the world promises is that once those things are attained that the world is trying to sell you after a while don’t fulfill you anymore.

That’s why there are so many products that advertise themselves as “new and improved”.

If any commercial thing would really fulfill you there would be no need to attain another one.

Certainly not an 'improved' version of what we already purchased.

Commercials constantly offer us our self-worth as something that can be measured by what we own.

That's really not fulfillment. It's just acquiring stuff. Eventually even the best 'stuff' will break or fade or become obsolete.

Think about our computer equipment.

Every piece of technology is generally thought to be old once it hits the second year of existence.

Think about that smart phone you purchased several years ago. Or the app you downloaded last week.

The makers advertised that it would be 'all you need' but if that was the case we wouldn't have to be notified to download new updates.

You get the point.

Our scriptures turn the understanding of 'fulfillment' on it's head.

It paints a very different picture of fulfillment.

The scriptures show us that fulfillment can come only from Jesus Christ, who loves us more than we could possibly love ourselves.

And that Jesus, our scriptures this morning tells us that he functioned in a different kind of fulfillment. Fulfilling the scriptures that have been told about his birth, death, resurrection. And using that fulfillment of those promises to usher in a new generation of closeness to God Almighty.

i. John 17

As our gospel scripture John 17 opens this morning, we find Christ and His disciples in that hour that is approaching when He will depart from them. It is closely nestled between that last supper and the events of the Garden of Gethsemane.

Those last few hours before He goes before Pontious Pilate. The last few hours before His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

In those moments we find a resolute Christ who prays and converses with God about what is to come and what has already happened.

Our John passage is a moment when Christ is preparing his disciples by praying to the Father to embrace them, lead and guide them through the difficult moments that are to come.

He does not pray that they would be spared every single one of the difficulties in the life that is to come their way.

They will need much as they prepare to see Him on the cross and much more after Christ ascends back to the heavenly realm.

All that is unpacked in this moment of prayer between the Father and the Son. It is a prayer with God that is filled with the wholeness of God the Father and God the Son connected in one another.

And in His preparation for the cross, which is an integral moment in his fulfillment of His earthly mission, Jesus prays for His disciples.

Thinking not of himself and the work that must be done on the cross of Calvary, Jesus prays for his disciples assembled in front of him, and His disciples for generations to come.

His prayer is so earnest. So filled with the love of Jesus, Hear how he prays in verse 11, “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”.

There is power in the name of Jesus. Don't let anybody convince you otherwise.

The enemy would try to take that name from your very lips, because the enemy knows that there is power in the name, work and the person of Jesus.

There are a lot of movements in the world today that offer a false understanding of God. Each of those movements or groups has one thing in common.

They all seek to take away the power behind the name of Jesus by having their followers use another name.

Saints, do not be fooled by such trickery.

The name Jesus has the power to break strongholds and bring unity under the authority of God.

No other name has that power.

To claim that another name does is to take the power of His name right out of your mouth.

Remember, the scripture tells us that the 'enemy came to kill, steal and destroy"

One of the things the enemy would want to steal is your ability to believe and follow in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is the very name of the Risen One who shows His love for His disciples in this moment in particular.

What a picture of the love of Christ!

He prays that 'all those who have been entrusted to the Son should know the Father as the "only true God" and Jesus Christ as the one whom God has sent into the world (17:3)"

He prays for them and for you and me.

Oh what a wonderful loving Jesus! And in verse 13, "I am coming to your 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.

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”

Full measure of joy. And protection from the evil one. Full measure of truth in the Word of God. What mighty things he wishes to leave them with; truth, power, joy, protection, all in the name of love.

He’s praying that they would have God in abundance and that they would be fulfilled by God and God alone.

He doesn’t pray for them to have riches untold, or wealth, or land, or control of armies, or high position.

He prays that their lives and spirits would be fulfilled by none other than God himself. That the Word He placed in them would grow into a mighty life transforming relationship.

Our Acts 1 passage gives us a glimpse of how well the lessons that Christ taught them and the fulfillment of the prayer has been adapted into their very beings.

Here the disciples, being faced with the departure of Judas at his own hand, pray as they seek to be in communion with the work and the will of God.

This is a high stakes moment for them in Acts.

Much like the work of our beloved Mt Paran, the work is just as important and necessary as it has always been, but nothing is more important than what God wants for a given situation.

From beginning to end, the will and the work of God must continue.

It reminds us that in God, there is nothing that happens by chance, circumstance or happenstance, but under the careful knowledge of God.

That the work of the church is a monumental work. One that requires many hands and when one disciple, namely Judas, has left the picture, the work and the will of God cannot remain undone.

But notice how the disciples in Acts moved. They first prayed. They prayed as Jesus had taught and demonstrated to them.

Prayerful discernment is important in anything that we seek to do, and here the disciples model that.

The prayer is not for their will to be done, but for God to choose and reveal the person He has chosen to come to the forefront for the early church.

They pray for the fulfillment in the will of God.

Because as 1st John tells us in verse 9 “the testimony of God is greater. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts.

But there is a testimony that is vital, believing in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

There is no other name by which you may be saved. Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

Jesus is the fulfillment of scripture. He is the fulfillment of the story that began in the beginning with the creation of earth, moves through our lives changing us and making us the people God intended, and continues on until the end of the age.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the longing of the heart of man and the heart of God to reach mankind.

Jesus is fulfillment itself.

So what's the takeaway for today's reader of the scriptures?

The world offers big lies.

Psalm 1 reads "Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God. Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the LORD, and they study it day and night. They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do."

Success and fulfillment in life are found only in God. Only in active fervent relationship with God and His word.

You want success? Seek God first.

You want peace? You'll find it only in God.

You want life and life abundance? 1st John 5:11-12 “¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

You cannot find fulfilment without going through the cross of Christ.

You cannot find what your heart and spirit are yearning and aching for unless you go through Almighty God.

At this very moment our country is preparing to return to what was normal prior to the pandemic of more than a year ago.

Many of us only just discovered what was really fulfilling in the time when we were locked down with our family.

We had more time to pray, to seek God’s face and to study at the foot of Christ.

For many, we discovered a Jesus who was available to us and we discovered that the jobs and the things we possessed weren’t really fulfilling at all.

We discovered that our spirits really needed and longed to be together in worship, prayer and Bible study with other Christians.

As we emerge from the pandemic, let us individually and collectively pray and seek God's will for ourselves.

In Jesus Name amen.

CHALLENGE

Our challenge this week is to remember that we will find fulfilment for our lives only in God. Let us continue to reach out to Him and ask Him to fill the God shaped hole in our lives.

Let us draw closer to God in three persons as he has reached out to draw closer to us.

BENWDICTION

Our benediction this morning comes from [Romans. 15:5-6](#) – “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Go in peace knowing you are God’s beloved child.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ, AMEN.

If you found today’s worship service helpful to you please send us an e-mail at:

YourMtParan@gmail.com

We would LOVE to hear from you!

Our announcements

2ND Shot Moderna and 1 Shot J&J Vaccination Clinics at Mt Paran 10308 Liberty Road 21133

Sundays May 23rd and May30th

MODERNA VACCINATIONS WILL BE GIVEN AT MT PARAN CHURCH FROM 8AM – 1PM on May 23rd and 8AM-10AM May 30th. THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE SHOT. IF FOR ANY REASON YOU DO NOT WISH TO GIVE YOUR HOME ADDRESS, YOU ARE FREE TO USE THE CHURCH ADDRESS ON THESE DAYS.

PLEASE BRING ID (EVEN IF IT’S EXPIRED).

PLEASE CONTACT PASTOR JOHNSON AT YourMtParan@gmail.com or at the church office 410-655-6220 if you wish to reserve a vaccination. Be sure to include your Date of Birth, and contact number. There is no charge for the Moderna Vaccination.

I am overjoyed and thankful to God to FINALLY be able to say the following words:

Your leadership (Session, Deacons and Pastors) have voted to
reopen for in-person worship on Father's Day at 11am Sunday June 20th 2021

After more than a year due to coronavirus restrictions we are finally able to reopen to in-person worship by the grace of God! *Hallelujah!* This will be a service of joy, gratitude, high praise and thanksgiving unto God. It is by God's grace and mercy that each of us has come to see this day arrive.

WHY THE 20TH AND NOT EARLIER?

Sunday June 20th will be two weeks out for our members who received their second vaccination at one of our vaccine clinics and we already had vaccine clinics scheduled for the next two Sundays

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE ON JUNE 20TH

While we are thrilled to gather in person once again, there are some who will not be able to gather due to scheduling, distance, physicians' recommendations, or some may simply not feel comfortable gathering. That's okay. We plan on live-streaming the service and posting the recording later in the afternoon to each of our platforms. This will be the first time that we have streamed in this capacity, so please be patient with us.

More than a third of our regular attenders are children under the age of 11, who may not be vaccinated by our re-opening date. We want them to remain healthy and do not wish to endanger their health or anyone else's. Masks may still be required especially for them for a little while to keep our most vulnerable healthy. The CDC, Presbytery of Baltimore, Presbyterian Church USA, and our state and local governments are still working up Recommendations for Houses of Worship with children aged 11 and under. We will know what the recommendations are as we get closer to the re-opening date. Once the recommendations are issued, Mt Paran's leadership will need to pray, discuss, and make necessary decisions. We will notify you as soon a decision is made

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER TO PREPARE FOR THE REOPENING?

The building has not been in use consistently in more than a year. We REALLY need your help to get the building and the grounds in order. "Many hands make the work light", is a true proven statement. The Board of Deacons will be hosting two work parties on **Saturday June 5th and Saturday June 12th from 8am – 12noon**. More details will follow.

Finally, Covid-19 is a virus that likes to spread and create variants. We should be prepared to shift to doing some of our 'pandemic precautions' based on the spread of variants, like temperature taking, etc. should the need arise. We are all navigating the waters of a 'post pandemic precaution world' for the first time together. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we know the God who holds tomorrow!!! We put our trust in Him, as we show grace to one another during this time.

Let's all continue to pray and give thanks to God for bringing us this far. God is so good, and we are so blessed to finally see this day.

Please plan on joining us on:

Saturday June 5th and Saturday June 12th from 8am – 12noon for All Church Work Party

Sunday June 20th Father's Day 11am for a Service of Gratitude and Thanksgiving unto God!!

Let us continue to be in prayer in particular for those who are suffering and dying all over the world, especially in India. Let us ask God how He would like us to serve Him in bringing hope and resources to a world in desperate need.

Finally, I thank each and everyone of you for accepting the church's invitation to receive a vaccination! This truly paved the way for our church's reopening, and hastened the return to normal for our state and the country. God bless you all!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

And now a Special Announcement by

Elder Beatrice Muma regarding our Per Capita