

May 21, 2023: Seventh Sunday of Easter

Main Idea: “Not knowing” isn’t the same thing as “not seeking”—and in Christ, we are called to keep seeking the will and the reign of God in our time.

Our texts in Acts and John have three things in common: they talk about timing in a cosmic way, they put emphasis on looking up to the heavens, and they center around the act of prayer. From these we can glean two, overarching truths—that there are some things we are never going to know, and that we should keep trying to learn all we can learn, anyway.

In Acts, Jesus’ disciples ask a question: “Is this the time, Lord, when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” And in John, Jesus declares a fact: “Father, the hour has come.” This contrast serves to strengthen what Jesus tells his disciples in Acts—that it is not their role to know what God is doing and when. God’s timing is just that—God’s. It will never be subject to our thinking, our opinions, or our decisions. We will never be able to understand it, but we can still connect to it. We can still be active players within it, but we can still value it and pay attention to it.

This brings us to “looking up.” What are the disciples looking up for? Guidance. They need to be heard. What is Jesus looking up for? Accountability. He needs to be heeded. Looking up—this physical marker of a turn in attention—is a reminder to all of us that God is ready for our questions. Looking up is an act of seeking. God wants us to seek the ways in which we can plug into God’s timing.

Sometimes this seeking will be a solo venture. In this story Jesus serves as a model for us, showing us that direct, one-to-one communication with God is essential in the discernment of the everyday. But God will never require us to do the work of seeking alone. In Acts, the disciples gather in what we often refer to as “the Upper Room.” It is a place where they can be together, drawing inspiration, energy and encouragement from one another in their seeking. The Upper Room also serves as a model for us, showing us that although there are things we do not know—and cannot know—there should never be things that we stop exploring, reflecting on, and seeking.

Scripture Summary

Jesus prayed for God to love and care for his beloved disciples. His time on earth would soon end, but his love for his friends never would.



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*That they may be one,
as we are one.*

GOD'S WORD for Today

May 21, 2023
Seventh Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 1:6-14

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” ¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Psalm: Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

Second Reading: 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. ⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. ¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. ⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”