

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ whom He raised from the dead. Amen.

Introduction: Jesus prayed, *“Holy Father. . . Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth”* (17:19). Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Word incarnate. . . has risen from the dead, and is still living today, still bodily present with His Church. Like you just confessed in the creed, Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand, where He speaks with the Father on our behalf (Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3): It’s what you heard Him praying to the Father in the Gospel lesson (17:19). By sitting at the Father’s right hand, Jesus delivers His crucifixion and resurrection to us.

It is good for us that Christ is risen and ascended (16:7), yet why does Christ’s ascended flesh become a temptation for doubt and distress? Since He ascended, Jesus is not present with us in the same way as when He walked, healed, or taught. Wouldn’t it be nice if He remained just like before? Wouldn’t that make it easy to prove the resurrection to all those atheists and scoffers laughing at Christ’s ascended flesh? In this woke world, have you ever met someone whose disbelief or despair causes them to heap scorn on God, mocking the one true faith, and along with Him, us Christians?

If only we could buy those scoffers: a plane ticket: to see the living body of Christ, to see His hands and side! Try staring down God incarnate, and all skeptical smirks would fall off. They would repent of their scorn, and we would gain a brother or sister in Christ.

But that’s not how it works. Instead, Jesus gives us the Holy Scriptures: Accurate, historical, eyewitness reports of the resurrection, and the Holy Spirit works through them. The Scriptures are enough to know that Jesus rose, enough for saving faith. Jesus said, *“If they will not hear Moses and the Prophets,”* [the Scriptures], *“then they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead”* (Lk 16:31). John explains why those who saw the resurrection with their own eyes: recorded God’s testimony: *“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name”* (20:31).

The world scorns, abuses, and mocks Christ and His Church: both when He walked on earth and when the Spirit testifies of Him in Scripture. The world hates us because it hates Jesus (17:14). People don’t like the idea that Jesus is God, because it means that, we’re not. It’s easier to scoff than to trust, easier to follow the temptation to rely on our own reason or strength, to live only for ourselves, to pretend we don’t depend on God.

Rather than listen to God’s own testimony: the water, the blood, and the Spirit (1Jn5:7-8), people turn to false sources of authority. St. John wrote against critics saying Jesus was not really God. Today, we face the same unbelieving scorn, as the world identifies as independent from an intelligent God. No one likes the idea that they are a sinner in abject need.

Instead, the unbelieving world loves its own strength, hating God, hating us for confessing Christ. Our world quickly becomes more and more scornful. Not only will you get strange looks when you pray out loud before a meal, but this past year the most important meal of all time has been framed as evil! Activists, politicians, and corporations try to restrict/cancel the Gospel.

Christians can live in the world, but ultimately we do not fit with the woke culture around us: Christians *“are not of the world, just as [He is] not of the world”* (17:16). Kansas is beautiful,

but ultimately it cannot be our home, our life. Our life is from God the Father, through His Son Jesus, who prepares eternal life for us in His death and resurrection, reconciles us to God, and brings us the way to joy: life as it should be, free from evil, abounding in the joy of the Holy Trinity.

We're not fully there yet, but we have the gift now. Even if the world sometimes seems like a violent and terrifying place, fear not! You have an advocate with the Father. Jesus is the propitiation for your sin, and has already conquered death and hell: We simply wait for history to run its course. On the Last Day, every knee will bow and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord. In eternity, all suffering is reduced to half a breath between confessing "ascended into heaven" and "will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead."

Jesus asks the Father to sanctify us in the truth; that is, in His Word which is the truth; that is, in Jesus (17:19). We must continue hearing God's Word; we must continue receiving Jesus. It's why our family dragged us to Sunday school, read the bible with us, and prayed for us: Because the Word sanctifies us and keeps us in the true life of God the Son (1Jn5:11).

While we wait for that Last Day, God has given for us to wait, but wait actively: not idly or uselessly. Pastors preach, you hear, and everyone delights in the testimony, the Gospel of Jesus, which sanctifies: "*As [the Father] sent me into the world, so I have sent [my disciples] into the world*" (17:18). The disciple Matthias made twelve apostles again, but sharing the Gospel is also the joy of every Christian:

It starts right here in the divine service, when the Gospel is shared by hearing, by pouring water on infants, by setting the Body on tongues. It continues in the home, when dad leads prayers "*Deliver us from the evil one*" each day or mom sings hymns with the family. The best way to share Christ's joyful testimony is to receive Christ. Do not be afraid or embarrassed to receive this joy, nor to proclaim it by your actions.

Next time you meet a scoffer of Christ, or while catching up with someone who has neglected God's Word, you have opportunity to share Jesus' victory over death, starting with simple conversation. Try imitating 1st John and the line of questions found in Scripture (1Jn5:5): Ask this conversation starter: "Who is Jesus?"

It won't immediately put them on the defensive, but it'll tell you what their authority is. How they know anything about Jesus? Point to the testimony in the Scriptures. Point to the risen and ascended human flesh of Jesus, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who rules over Heaven and earth, who comes now to His Church at this table.

Jesus prayed for them as well as for you, not that the Father would "*take [you] out of the world, but that [the Father would] keep [you] from the evil one*" (17:15), that the Father would "*deliver [you] from evil.*" **And the Father delivered: His Sanctified Truth, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Amen.**