

EASTER 7, May 28, 2017, Year A

- A great thing has come from the invention of smart phones: *they have become cameras!*¹ We can now quickly take photos of friends and family members, and easily share them with others. Martha and I have delighted in receiving photos of our kids and grandkids this way. Skype and FaceTime have provided even more vivid ways of staying close to family members. Through the same means, we can also share videos with each other.
- Recently, a parishioner sent me a wonderful example of this. Blair and Anne Thomas had just celebrated Peter's birthday. Using a phone, they took a video of him enjoying his special gift, a little guitar. The video shows Peter strumming it, and singing along. It takes a moment or two to realize what he is singing. But then, it suddenly becomes clear. *Little Peter is singing the Lord's prayer, word for word, and note for note ~ just like we do on Sundays here at Grace!* If we ever doubt *the transforming effect of our liturgy on our lives, and on the lives of our children*, a video like this immediately puts any doubt to rest.
- Now, *Peter's singing of the Lord's Prayer reminds us something important about time and about prayer.* We usually experience *time* by distinguishing and measuring *separate* moments in our experience, which are tied to *differing* places and *distinct* occasions. This is '*clock-time*' or '*world-time*.' Yet, there is *another* kind of time, '*God-time*.' Periodically, we can be surprised by how '*clock time*' seems to *stop*. This happens especially in liturgy and in prayer, when the separate moments measured by '*clock-time*,' meld together into '*God-time*.'
- Consider what happened when Jesus taught his disciples to pray.² As he did, he invited them to join him in what was *his own prayer*. In the process, *his prayer became their prayer. And then, his prayer became ours.* The content of his prayer, and the relationship with his Father that it embodies, has become the content of our prayer. Because of this, when we pray his

prayer, the 'Lord's Prayer,' we pray with him. We are *lifted up* out of the *individual* circumstances of our *own* lives. And, in the same *moment*, we are drawn into his eternal life, and into his enduring relationship with his Father. Through his prayer, and by his invitation, we *now* rightly call God *our* Father.

- This is equally true of *another* prayer that Jesus shares with us. It is the prayer we hear in our Gospel today, which Jesus prayed at the end of the Last Supper. Here we notice how a similar thing happened on two occasions. *First*, it happened when he taught them the Lord's Prayer. And *then*, it happened when he prayed at the Last Supper. On *both* occasions, *Jesus' prayer was not only something that happened 'then.'* His same prayer *happens 'now.'* And whenever we pray *either of his prayers*, it happens in *the same moment that we call 'now.'*
- This *'now'* is *'God-time,'* the *very different* time we enter *when we pray*, and especially when we *pray together* in the Eucharist. Jesus' self-disclosing prayer is at the heart of the worshipping community's Eucharist. *We need to remember this difference between the separate moments measured by clock-time, and the eternal and abiding moment of God-time.* For it helps us live into the heart of Jesus' prayer ~ the kind of Spirit-fed prayer we find welling up within ourselves here, today.
- Standing with them in that room, just before walking up to Gethsemane, John tells us that *"Jesus looked up to heaven."* And he said, *"Father, the hour has come..."* He did not mean something like, 'it's 9 o'clock, and we've got to go because our room reservation is ending.' He meant, *it is now!* *"Now is the moment. Now is when 'God time' is revealed and fulfilled."* So, we could rightly begin every Eucharist using the same words, *'Father, the hour has come.'* By saying these words, we would be true to his meaning at the Last Supper. Either way, whether using his words or those in our liturgy, *we encounter, and find ourselves drawn into, 'God time' reality.*

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- We need to notice another thing: Some Gospel words, which we hear several times this morning, have *expansive* and deep meaning. Among them is the verb "*glorify*," as well as the nouns, "*glory*" and "*name*." A clue to the mystery here is to observe this: *what the Bible calls both "God's glory" and "God's name," actually refer to God's identity and character.* Think of God's holy name revealed to Moses in Exodus, or God's glory displayed on Mt Sinai, and again in the Transfiguration.³ *These biblical stories record more than moments of astonishing spectacle, and wondrous marvel. In these moments, we apprehend God's self-revelation. These moments make available to us God's own light and inner being, and God's life-giving truth. In these moments of 'God time,' the 'hour' has now come.*
- So, *in his last prayer* with his disciples before the Passion, Jesus prays that he will continue to be *as near* to them and us, and *just as accessible, as he was before.* He prays that our Father will *continue* to be present to us *in the same way.* But he means even more. He is saying that, *through God's grace,* he will come to be *in us,* and *we in him.* Through Jesus, *God's own glory, God's own identity and character, is lived into the believing community, especially when we gather for prayer.*
- So, to sum up, *where do we encounter the name and glory of God?* There are two parts to the answer: we encounter the name and glory of God *in Jesus.* And, *in this moment of 'God time,'* we encounter God's own identity and being *among ourselves, in Jesus' beloved community.* The beloved community, of which we are a part, dwells in him. This is especially visible in our Eucharistic worship.
- *Let's ask a further question: What are the attributes of the beloved community that Jesus founded, and which in us embodies his own inner life?* Our Gospel identifies three important clues. The first attribute is that *we believe,* as he *predicted* we would. Second, *we keep his word,* as he *hoped*

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we might. And, third, *we love one another*, as he *commanded* that we should. *As we live into these holy practices, he is 'glorified.'*

- So, what do these holy practices *amount to*? As he promised that we would, *we become his witnesses*, even to the ends of the earth. *To what, then, do we give witness?* *First*, that *something happened to Jesus*. And, *second*, that *what happened to him, has also happened to us*. Therefore, we are not only called to be witnesses *to him*, and to what happened to him. *We are called to witness to what has happened in us*, by what God has accomplished through him.
- It would be far more comfortable, and far less self-involving, for us *simply* to be witnesses *to him*, as observers of his life and death, and his accomplishments. But, *it is much more self-involving to witness to the effect that those things have had upon us*. For we have become part of the story, *the story that we thought was initially about him*. But his story was *never really* about *him*. Instead, its about what he came to do for us, and on our behalf. Therefore, *his story is also about us*. *His story has become our story*. And, *because it gives us life and energy, it's a story we need to tell*.

John 17:1-11

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “**Father, the hour has come**; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

”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. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for 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. I 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And 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.”

Notes:

¹ {note for 2026 ~ the reference to ‘smart phones as cameras’ here is obviously dated! For many of us, our phones have replaced cameras entirely.

² See Matthew 6 and Luke 11.

³ See Exodus 3 and Exodus 24, as well as Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9.