

## Sixth Sunday of Easter, Rogate, May 22, 2022

**Readings:** Numbers 21:4–9, 1 Timothy 2:1-6, John 16:23–33

### ***The Father Answers Our Prayers Because of Jesus***

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you"* (John 16:23). To pray in Jesus' name is to pray as one who has been baptized. For it is in the water that He put His name upon you, claiming you as His own, making you a son of God with access to the Father. By His incarnation and crucifixion, our Lord Jesus broke through the barrier of sin which separated us from God, opening a portal to the Father. To pray in Jesus' name is to pray with faith in Him as the one Mediator between God and men, who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:1–6). Like Moses in the wilderness, Jesus is our go-between and intercessor before the throne of heaven. He was lifted up for us on the cross that we might be saved and restored to fellowship with the Father (Num. 21:4–9). Looking into this perfect teaching of liberty (James 1:22–27) we pray with boldness and confidence as dear children of God.

### **Sermon Transcript**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ. Amen.

So we have Jesus talking about asking in His name, trusting Him that He will give us all that we ask according to His Will. And He makes it very clear, we're not going to ask Jesus to ask the Father on our behalf. Jesus says, "You don't need me as the intercessor between you and the Father. Because you love Me, you have direct access to the Father, so you can pray directly to the Father in My name and He will give you the desires of your heart. He will give you everything that you ask." Now, the key there, is everything that you ask in My name, according to My will. And we need to remember that because the will of God isn't always what we might think.

Now we look at the Israelites and they never fully seemed to understand the will of God especially when they were in the wilderness coming out of Egypt. They're going around and they're coming around. They're trying to get around the land of Edom. They're trying to avoid this land. So they're taking this circuitous route in the wilderness and they get impatient. They're not grumbling and complaining yet, but they're going to get there. Right now they're just impatient. They're impatient with God and against Moses, so they speak against them. And I love the way they say, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? We have no food, we have no water. And we hate this worthless food." ...We have no food, but we hate this worthless food.... You have food. You just don't like it. It's not to your standards. In other words, they just got sick and tired of what God was giving them. It wasn't right. It wasn't what they wanted. They should have gotten something better or different.

Now, of course, you and I have never been in the situation where we felt like God should have done something different in our lives. It should have happened better. It should have been easier than it is. We shouldn't have to deal with this crisis or this struggle. We've never been in situations like that, have we? Yeah. I always like to look at the Israelites and I think, wow, they are so foolish and dumb and... Oh yeah, so am I. Unfortunately I don't get to claim any superiority over these Israelites, but it is interesting.

And I think it's very connected to what the disciples said. Because you notice, Jesus says, "Look, you love Me, you're going to ask Father. And if you believed in Him, I came from the Father and I went to this world. Now I'm going back to Father." And disciples are like, "Oh yeah, now we understand. Now you're speaking plainly. That's why we believe that You are from God. We understand this." And Jesus says, "Oh really? There's going to come a time, in fact, very soon." John 16 is right towards the end so we're in the time of the betrayal. He says, "You're all going to desert Me. You're all going to scatter to your own homes. And I will be left alone, but I'm not alone. The Father is with me." And so you can

hear the disciples going, "Oh yeah, we know what we're doing." And then suddenly they scatter. Well, is God still going to listen to them? Even though they absolutely betrayed Jesus?

So you go back to where you see this in the Old and New Testament, where the people of God failed to understand His will. And in both cases, but especially here in the Old Testament, you notice, what did they ask God for? Or well, they asked Moses. Again, they cannot go directly to God, they've got to talk to Moses to talk to God for them. With Jesus, we get to talk to God the Father, directly. But in the Old Testament, Jesus was not yet fully performing His death and resurrection. The access to God was limited now and so they had to go through that intermediary, Moses, the Law. So they went through Moses and they said, "Moses, you pray to God for us and ask Him to take these snakes away." So Moses prays. And it's interesting, God does not take the snakes away.

Now you could think of these snakes in our own lives as the trials and tribulations of this world. Some of it are of our own making, by our own doubting of God and our own rebellion against God. Some of it is just the fact that we live in a fallen, sinful world and bad things happen because this world is broken. And how often have we prayed that God would take us away from this toil? That we wouldn't have to deal with this trial or this tribulation that we're facing in our lives? But God does not take it away. He doesn't promise us a good and peaceful and perfect life. No, He deals with the reality, we are still dealing with the consequences of the rebellion that sin brought into this world. Until He comes again, we still have to live in this broken world. So He makes it very clear, in this world you will have tribulation. There will be serpents among you that are going to bite you and sting you. And we still have to deal with the sufferings of this world. "But take heart," He says, "I have overcome the world." And in the wilderness, what does He tell Moses? "Put up a bronze serpent on a pole, and everybody that looks at that serpent will be healed." He didn't take the snakes away, they were still there. But if they were bit, they could look to the bronze serpent and they would be healed. Now I love this, this is probably one of the most important stories in the Old Testament. If you're going to have to pick anyone, this is probably one of the most important, because later on we hear Jesus saying, "Just like the serpent was raised up in the wilderness, so also will the Son of Man be raised on a tree." So the serpent on the pole is a precursor, is a sign of that which is to come, Jesus Christ on the cross. And the people who looked at the bronze serpent were healed and saved, just as we who look to the cross are healed and saved. But was it the bronze serpent that healed? Did that object itself have the authority to heal the people? No, it wasn't the bronze serpent that had magical powers. We know that later on, because later on in the future of the Israelites, they have the bronze serpent in the arc of the covenant. And they begin to believe that the bronze serpent is a magic, good luck charm, and they can pull it out and it can heal them and save them. They actually made it into an idol and it was finally destroyed because they put their trust in the object of the bronze serpent.

But God never intended them to trust the object. It was always trusting the Word. Why did looking to the serpent save them? Because God's Word said, "Look at that serpent and you will be healed." So they believed the Word of God, because God's Word does what He says it will do. So when He said, "Look at that and you'll be saved." His Word did what He said it would do. And so when His Word says, "It is finished." That Word did what He said it would do. The forgiveness of sins was finished. We can trust His Word for us. And that's especially important when the snakes are still around, when we're dealing with the trials and the tribulations, and we begin to get downhearted and discouraged. And we scatter and we begin to wonder if God really does indeed love us because we're suffering and dealing with this tribulation and trial that we don't want to face. And we begin to be weary. We begin to get depressed or anxious or worried. In those moments we hear the Word, in this world you will have trouble. God acknowledges that we're going to have trials and tribulations in this world. But he says, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." He overcame the world on the cross. And that Word is as true then as it is today. It's the same Word that said, "Look to the bronze serpent and you will be healed." It's the same Word that said, "Let there be light." And there was light. It is the same Word who continues to intercede for us every day.

We can call upon the Father. Why? Because the Father loves us. I love that phrase. Jesus is letting us know, look, yes, He did have to die to forgive our sins, but because He died, He brought us to equal status with the Son, that we have the

same access to the Father as the Son does. He's there reminding the Father, interceding on our behalf. Yes, you can listen to Joe and Frank and Patrick, because I have died for them. When it was finished on the cross, it was finished for you and me. Our guilt and shame was gone. Even when we flee and scatter, even when our faith, when our understanding of our faith fails us, we still hear these words, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." No matter what may come, no matter what we face in this world, no matter how chaotic this world gets, we can trust that God will work in our lives. So we are called to pray, not just for ourselves, but for our leaders and everybody else, that we might come to the knowledge of the truth. We know in this world we're going to have tribulation. In this world we're going to have bad government. In this world we're going to have all sorts of things that don't work the way they're supposed to work. But we pray that we might understand we can trust God. And no matter what may come, there's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which this is the testimony given at the proper time, "Take heart, I have overcome the world."

May that grace, and that mercy, and that peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.