

The Seventh Sunday of Easter, Cycle A

Acts 1: 12-14

Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

1 Peter 4:13-16

John 17:1-11A

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The key word in our readings today is “glory.” “Glory” appears again and again, in one form or another, *throughout* our readings and prayers. But “glory,” like “grace,” is one of those words that we can repeat over and over without ever thinking about what it means.

We usually associate “glory” with heaven, as in “*glory* to God in the highest,” or with Christ’s Second Coming, when he “will come again in *glory* to judge the living and the dead.” But there is also “glory” here and now. After all, “heaven *and earth* are filled with his glory.” And presumably, for the time being, it is this earthly “glory” which is our greatest concern, since it is nearest to hand.

We encounter “glory” in some unexpected places and situations. We naturally associate “glory” with triumph, with celebration of victory, but that isn’t the context in which we find it in our Gospel today. There we find Jesus saying, “Father, the hour has come! Give glory to your Son that your Son may give glory to you.” We would expect to find these words after the Resurrection and before the Ascension. But in fact, we find them spoken at the Last Supper, in the moments before Christ’s Passion and death. Clearly, then, “glory” is somehow associated with suffering and loss. On his way to the right hand of the Father, Jesus must pass through the Cross.

And so must we. In our second reading, Peter tells us that God’s

spirit of glory will come to rest on us, to the extent that we share in Christ's sufferings. It is in *suffering* for Christ that we glorify his name. So we come nearer to glory when things are at their worst than when everything is going our way.

We don't have to go out and look for trouble. In the course of things, suffering and loss will come to us. The question is how will we respond. Will we curse God and die, as Job's wife advised him to do? Or will we embrace suffering for Christ's sake, and rejoice to be allowed to follow our Savior's own path to the Father?

If we are to take the latter course, we will need a lot of strengthening: strengthening that flows from Jesus' prayer for us. Our Savior said, "For these I pray -- not for the world but for *these* you have given me, for they are really yours. . . It is in *them* that I have been *glorified.*" And the fruit of his prayer is the Holy Spirit, our advocate our comforter, the Spirit of glory, whose coming we will celebrate next week, at Pentecost.