



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Easter 7

May 21, 2023

Living In-between

Acts 1:12-26

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The reading that we heard from the book of Acts today tells us what the Church did in the time between Jesus' ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus told them to *wait in Jerusalem until they had been clothed with power from on high*.¹ They were waiting. Ten days they waited. But it probably seemed longer, as each hour and day dragged by. Waiting isn't easy.

But waiting is the way of it with God. We want *what* we want *when* we want it - but God gives in His own time. He made Abraham wait 25 years for his promised son, Isaac. He made the people of Israel wait 400 years in Egypt before He brought them out. He waited thousands of years before fulfilling the promise He made in the Garden - to send a Savior to crush the serpent's head. But those are not wasted years. God uses that time, working and preparing His people for the works that He will do. Work and preparation that isn't always easy.

Well, in comparison to all that, ten days doesn't sound so bad! But what was the Church doing those ten days, waiting in Jerusalem? The text tells us they were praying. And what were they praying? The psalms. The prayerbook of the Bible. That is what they had learned from Jesus. And from praying the psalms, the reading from Acts tells us that *they hear of what happened to Judas*² and *they learn that another should take his place*.³

They had undoubtedly heard these words before, but now, in Jesus, they heard them in a new way. They were encouraged by them. For what a shock it must have been for them when Judas turned against Jesus, and so also against them. Judas who had been their close friend, and who had learned with them, taught with them, and baptized with them and with whom they shared everything. They thought they knew him! Yet here in the psalms they learn that while *they* were shocked, this was no surprise to God. Here it had been written a thousand years earlier about Jesus and indeed it went just as it was written of Him.

But then they also learned that another should take Judas' place. The work would go on. Their office as apostles would go on. God would not give up on them. Though Judas betrayed, Peter

¹ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4

² Psalm 69:25

³ Psalms 109:8



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Easter 7

May 21, 2023

denied, Thomas doubted, James and John sought glory, and they *all* struggled to believe - God was going to use them. Though the men who fill it are sinful and flawed, the Office of the Holy Ministry would go on. And so, they fill the office left vacant by Judas. Or perhaps better to say, they turn to God in prayer to fill the office. And the lot fell to Matthias. And once again, the Word of God is fulfilled.

But it's not just the Church then that lived in an "in-between" time - so does the Church now. For we live in the time in-between Jesus' first coming in the flesh and His second coming in glory. And just like with the Church then, it isn't an easy time. There is waiting. There are trials and struggles of faith. There are shocks, doubts, and fears. We are the betrayed and we are betrayers. And, as Peter told us today, there is ***your adversary the devil prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.***⁴ That someone was them. And that someone is you.

Oh, you don't see the red-suited guy with a pointy tail and pitchfork - he is much more subtle than that. He bears his fangs *at you through others* - when those you thought you knew and could count on shock and hurt and betray you. He bears his fangs *through you at others* - when you devour someone's reputation with gossip, chew people out because things weren't going your way, or bear your fangs to get what you want. And seeing all this sin and hurt and betrayal in the world, in the Church, in others, and in ourselves, it can seem that perhaps God's not waiting at all, but has, in fact, left you and forgotten about you and turned His back to you. And with such thoughts, the devil is seeking to devour your faith and, like Judas, tempts you to seek another way than God's way.

So, what's a Church to do? Well, the example of the apostles is a good one. That in this in-between time, we stay in the Word of God and prayer. For it is the Word of God that will sustain us in our faith, even when faced with the attacks of the devil; his assaults both from without and from within. It is the Word of God that keeps us, encourages us, strengthens us, and teaches us that though *we* are often shocked and dismayed, our Lord never is. And He is working for us and for our salvation. For today, in the Word of God, we heard something else: **we heard Jesus praying for us.** Jesus, who Himself was betrayed, who knew how hard this in-between time would be. He prays for those who have been given to Him by the Father - His disciples then, and His disciples now.

For the hour had come for Jesus now go to the cross and be *glorified* there. The glory of the cross is everlasting, for it is the glory of God's everlasting love for sinners like us, that would cause Him to come for us and die for us. And, in fact, Jesus' time on the cross was His "in-between" time - when the holy and perfect One hung in-between two criminals, the sinner in place of us sinners; and when the One who was both true God and true man hung suspended in-between God and man, in-between heaven and earth, the sacrifice for sin to reconcile us to our Father.

And because of Jesus' in-between time on the cross, because of His death and resurrection, we

⁴ 1 Peter 5:8



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Easter 7

May 21, 2023

are kept and protected in our in-between time. And for this Jesus prays. He prays that the fruits of His cross be manifest in you. He prays that the Father might keep you in the baptismal name that has been washed over you and into you. He prays that you may be one with Him and with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. He prays that you may be made holy in the Word which forgives your sin and declares you a child of the heavenly Father. And His prayer is heard. These are the very blessings you have received in Christ and from the glory of His cross.

How else can we explain how the Church is still here? The Church which is the object of the world's wrath and the devil's attacks; the church *split, torn in pieces and filled with heresies*; the church which is the victim of our own sinful failures. Surely not because of us, but because of Jesus, there is a Church and will always be a Church, where the glory of His cross is still proclaimed, the wonder of His forgiveness is still given, His Spirit is still bestowed, and His Supper still feeds and strengthens. For though He is now ascended, Jesus hasn't stopped working for you, and is still praying for you, taking all our weak and faltering prayers and voicing them to His Father. And in Him, your prayers are heard.

Perhaps it does not always seem like it. Life in this in-between time is tough and seldom seems to get easier. But here again, the example of the apostles can help us, and remind us that the Word of God and prayer **aren't really what we do - they are what is done for us**. For through the Word the Spirit strengthens, gives, encourages, and comforts. And when the trials and struggles and hurts and betrayals of this in-between time drive us back to the Word of God and prayer, then we are blessed. For in the Word of God we find Jesus, and we find that while what is happening to us may shock us, it is no surprise to God.

So, to us, as we live in this in-between time and await Jesus' second coming - we who *have been* clothed with the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism - to us, Jesus says, **don't devour one another, devour Me**. For now, by eating His Body and drinking His Blood, we receive His power from on high brought down to us here, and are strengthened to go out from this place, into our callings. Not to make a name for ourselves, but bearing His name. That may mean suffering for a time, but be not afraid. For *He who has gone to prepare a place for you⁵* will keep you, until He comes again for you. When, finally, all the Word of God will be fulfilled, and *we like saints before us will see Him face to face*.

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

⁵ John 14:3