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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
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The Work of Evangelism is to Glorify God

John 17:1-11

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Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

⁶ “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

⁹ “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

This is the Word of the Lord.

The Work of Evangelism is to Glorify God

1. by making His name known as the God who sent His Son, Jesus Christ
2. by making His name known to the Church in the world
3. by making His name known through the Church to the world

We pray,

Lord Jesus, You have risen and ascended into glory; pray to the Father for us that He would make His name known to us and through us, that we might share in the joy of eternal life with all who believe. Amen.

Moses asks assurance. The setting is approximately 1500 years before Christ and the people of Israel face the deadly journey into the land of Canaan. God has commanded the people of Israel to go forth; to leave Egypt behind and make their journey toward the promised land. Moses wants assurance that God will go with them and that His presence will not abandon them. So he prays to the LORD: "Please, show me Your glory."

The LORD responds with assurance. In His response, He reveals His glory. He cannot show Himself fully, for that would kill any sinner. Instead, He conceals and reveals His glory by proclaiming His name: "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed His name saying: 'Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping His covenant of love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he in no way will leave the guilty unpunished; visiting the iniquity of the fathers' upon the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.'"

This is the glory of the LORD – the proclamation of His name. His name is more than a title; it is the special revelation of who He is and what He does. This is His glory. He makes His name known as Jehovah God: the God who is faithful to His covenant; who has mercy on us and is patient toward us; the God who forgives sins while at the same time punishing any who reject His will and follow after other gods. This is the glory of God as revealed to Moses – a proclamation of who He is and what He does.

Jesus is a living proclamation; so He prays: "Father, the hour has come, Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." Jesus wants us to have His full assurance: that the LORD is with us and that He will glorified among us. And the way this happens is by proclaiming God's name in an even fuller revelation of who He is and what He does. "And this is eternal life, that we know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

Our upcoming Bible Class series on the topic of evangelism. It seems fitting then to consider the basis of that work of evangelism. To evangelize is "to announce who God is and what He does – how He has mercy; how He forgives sins; how He is faithful to His promises; how He gives us eternal life. In short, the work of evangelism is to make God's name known; in other words, the work of evangelism is to glorify God. And God is glorified when He is known as the God who sent His Son Jesus Christ; when His name is made known to the Church in the world; and when His name is made known to the world through the Church.

The Work of Evangelism is to Glorify God.

1. by making His name known as the God who sent His Son Jesus Christ

I can recall the experience in high school. It was supposed to be a group project, and yet, there was really only one person doing all the work. The whole group received an “A” yet there was really only one person who deserved it. The rest participated in name only.

Maybe you can remember being involved in a group project where one person ends up doing all the work. Maybe you have been that person. Maybe its a project at work for which you’ve poured hours and hours of labor and time into. Yet, along comes someone who steals your idea, who takes it to the boss first, who claims the credit you deserve. You do all the work, while someone else receives the credit.

Jesus prays: “Father, glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” To glorify God is to give Him full credit for what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. To glorify God is to make His name known so that no other steals away what is rightfully His; His glory is His divine presence revealed in the proclamation of who He is and what He does. Jesus prays that through His word and work, the name of God would be made known.

The work of evangelism is to glorify God by making His name known as the God who sent His Son Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is the revelation of who God really is:

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

This is His glory – that He would be known as the God who sent His Son Jesus Christ. To change this truth in any way is to rob God of His work and glory. To put our trust in any other refuge, any other work, any other sense of satisfaction is to undo the work that Jesus has done and to steal away the credit that belongs to God – participation in name only.

And unfortunately this is often exactly what we do. Luther describes this in his Large Catechism as he makes comment on the 1st commandment:

“A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. As I have often said, the trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and

an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God" (Luther's *Large Catechism*, the Ten Commandments, sec. 1).

We rob God of His glory when we find refuge, safety, or satisfaction in anything other than Him. In even the smallest way, this is idolatry and a violation of the 1st commandment.

Every other god that the world has ever named is a thief. It could be the god Allah who demands your works to appease His wrath; or it could be the god of the American dream which tells you money and possessions will keep you safe; or it could be the self-god within who tells you that the future is yours to make, to follow your heart, and it will be to your choices and design that good will come; it could be the god of desire who tells us we will find satisfaction in something that God does not intend to give us; God is holding back on us and we can find what we need outside of the life He intends for us. In each instance, we steal away what rightfully belongs to God's work and follow other gods.

That is why we quickly realize that the only one who deserves to have His name inscribed on what is called "good" is God and the Son whom He has sent. Only Jesus can pray:

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world existed."

In Jesus, God passes before us in His glory. He proclaims the name of the LORD in the work He has done. He proclaims the name Jesus, meaning: "Jehovah saves." Hidden in this man, hidden in suffering, hidden on the cross, God passes by and proclaims; 'Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping His covenant of love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. And in no way leaving the guilty unpunished.'" In Christ, God forgives sin and punishes the guilty at the same time; that is to say, Jesus becomes both the love of God which forgives our sins and the justice of God which will not clear the guilty.

In this way, the project is finished. It is finished and has become ours in baptism. After the work is all done, God wants your name to be part of His glory. Rather than having it stolen away, He gives it to you out of His grace and inscribes your name to His work

in baptism. This is eternal life, that you know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

2. by making His name known to the Church in the world

Moses approaches the mountain of the Lord. The people await his return. There He stands face to face with the Lord and prays that the Lord would not abandon His people, but would bring them to the land of rest according to His promise. Moses is the mediator who stands in the presence of God and returns to make the Lord's name known to the people of Israel in the wilderness.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this work. He has ascended on high to appear in the presence of God and prays to the Father on behalf of the Church:

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me."

The work of evangelism is to make this name known to the Church in the world; that we might believe that God has sent Him. He gives us what the Father has given to Him – that is, He gives us His Word and His work; He gives us the gospel which declares the good news and continues to give.

And this is an ongoing work of our Lord. He has ascended into heaven that He might continue to rule and mediate for us. He continues to pray for you who are in the world. He knows that this journey is hostile and that the world is sinful. He knows the temptations you will face, even as He has faced; and so He brings you assurance – He sends His Spirit through the Word that we would be one even as the Father and Jesus are one.

And so in His Spirit He lead us to repent of our sins, He give us His forgiveness, He unite us in our confession of the truth. This is how He sustains us as we journey from this wilderness, to the promised land of the resurrection and eternal life.

The work of evangelism is to glorify God by making His name known to the Church in the world.

3. by making His name known to the world through the Church

This glory of the LORD went with Israel and it was made known by the appearance of a cloud. A cloud descends upon Mt. Sinai and a cloud goes with them as they journey. In a cloud, God signifies His presence, resting over their place of worship and making His name known. This revelation of His name was not only to Israel; but also to the world through Israel. There in that place of worship, as the Israelites gathered and offered sacrifices, God's name and work were being proclaimed; His promises were made known; there God was sending a signal to all the world: this is eternal life that they would know Me and the promised Messiah who I send. The work of evangelism is to glorify God by making His name known to the world through the Church.

The cloud of glory has rested upon the Church. Here where Christ is proclaimed, we find the glory of God. So it becomes for the Church a beacon, a sign and calling to all the world that this is the God who sent His Son Jesus Christ. The work of evangelism is to take this name with you as you return to your callings in the world.

10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

Your presence in the world glorifies God. Here you receive Christ through the proclamation of His name and reception of His sacraments so that you leave filled with Christ and His glory. You go with Him in you and working through You. It becomes to the world a beacon, a signal, a calling proclaiming who God is and what He does.

This is your testimony – that by the words you speak and the works you perform, God would be glorified. You are little Christ's in the world, proclaiming that God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, forgiving and faithful as you become merciful, gracious, slow to anger, forgiving and faithful. So also we acknowledge that God by no means pardons the guilty – so you find yourself in daily repentance and forgiveness; never approving of sin, whether in something you've done wrong, or in a conversation at the water cooler or by resisting the temptation to join in with sinful activity and asking forgiveness when you do. In such a way, you are the cloud of Christ, He is with you working through you so that the world would know His name.

They will not always receive your words or witness. Many will not and will persecute you for it. The world is hostile and an enemy of Christ. As we read from 1 Peter *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. (4:14)* Yet some

will hear your word and believe that Christ has sent you and that God has sent Christ. Either way, God is glorified in you and through you He is glorified in the world.

The work of evangelism is to glorify God by making His name known – by making His name known to the Church in the world and by making His name known to the world through the Church. In this He is glorified; in this we have eternal life.

Amen.