

May 13, 2018
Seventh Sunday of Easter

“Out of This World Life”

John 17:11b-19

“That’s out of this world!” We say that about things that are great, awesome, delicious, wonderful. I wonder where that expression originated? Perhaps with today’s Gospel reading?

Jesus prays to the Father about His followers: *“And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.”* Jesus is going out of this world. That’s a good, good thing, especially since it’s pretty clear the world is a nasty place for those who are Christ—Jesus is, after all, in a few hours after saying these words to be arrested, tortured and crucified at the hands of the world. Yes, this is the work He came to do to win forgiveness of sins, but that doesn’t change that the world sinfully rejects and condemns its very God who created it.

Jesus also makes it clear the world is a dangerous place for those who are in Christ. *“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”*

Yes, being ‘out of this world’ is a good, good thing. In a way, this is the Word of truth Jesus is speaking about—that the holy and eternal things of God are worthy to be sought and the passing things of a fallen world are of no worth in comparison. The Gospel good news is that the eternal Son of God joined the world and in His death and resurrection has saved His own out of the world.

Jesus is out of this world. This past Thursday the church marked the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Ascension Day really gets short shrift these days. Most churches don’t have a special service to mark it because nobody shows up. If folks aren’t in a calendared devotional reading it comes and goes without notice. But it is very important to remember that Jesus in His body has ascended; the He is out of this world.

St. Paul writes, *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* There’s the cross, but here’s the rest. *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Elsewhere he writes of how the Father of Glory *“worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”*

Most assuredly, Jesus is out of this world.

Why am I making such a point of this? Because you may be thinking you’re still stuck in the world and that might be a pretty depressing thought because like Jesus said, the world hates you. It’s trying to kill you. In a way it is killing you from the day you’re born. And if you think you’re stuck in a world that hates you and is trying to kill you, what’s the natural move? To try and make peace with the world.

This is a basic temptation, to forgo the things of God to chase the pleasure, power and peace one can find and make for one's self in the here and now. To say, "Forget bearing that cross Jesus talks about. Life is too short!"

Life is too short in this world, that's true. But Jesus is out of this world, and in Him, so are you. *"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."*

Are you stuck in the practice of some decadent sin of thought, word or deed? Do you live in pride, looking down on the lesser folk and "sinners" around you? Do you allow your tongue to freely thrash about, trashing others in gossip and spite? Is any of this proper for those not of the world but dwelling in the presence of Christ? Of course not! Realize that you are of Christ and thus not of the world. Let this reality trump these sinful dalliances or yours and bring them to an end! Repent and return to the word of truth that sin stands forgiven and you are holy—sanctified in the eternal person of Jesus.

This man Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father above the heavens with all authority placed in His hands. His promise is that you, human beings believing and baptized into His name, are to come through this world to that same eternity in His presence and glory. And despite how broken, painful and short earthly life may be now, it's not your life. Your life is in Christ in eternity. You are already out of this world.

This is the truth of Christ we hold dear; that we hold out against the temptations and afflictions of the world and it guides us on our journey though it as St. Paul says, *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*

Keep this in mind. Use this truth when tempted to make peace with the leading of the world of sin. I think we too often sell this Word of truth short. We think of the Word of God and of our Baptism and of the Lord's Supper kind of as little doses of forgiveness and grace to help us in our sojourn through life. But the Word of truth is that these things are the very ascended Christ in power and glory busting into the world and claiming us out of the world forever! These are life—the life which the man Jesus now lives forever! This is why we know Jesus as the truth, **the life**, the way. The reality is the one reigning at the right hand of the Father in eternity has us solidly in the palm of His hand already that is in eternity right now.

You are not of the world, so don't give yourself over to the world. Your treasure is in heaven. Your Lord is beyond the heavens in power. Your home is in His presence. This life in this world? This is kind of just the place you have been sent, just as Jesus was once sent, a place you endure in faith until you go to Christ or He comes back for all His children.

The truth is, in Christ, you're out of this world...in every good sense because you stand baptized into the Christ who reigns above and beyond the world now and forever. So live an out of this world life, shunning the sin and evil that is not your reality, and living in the Word of truth that is salvation in Christ.