

Sermon Notes – June 1, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. John John 17: 20-26
Peace Lutheran Church
“The Flood of Christ's Forgiveness”

Our readings feature prayer and rejoicing amid unjust accusation and imprisonment. In such situations, Christ prays for us and redeems us in manifold ways.

The reading from Acts begins with an ambiguous interaction with an enslaved young woman (*paidiske*). Although past generations deemed it positively as an exorcism, the “spirit of divination” (*python pneuma*, 16: 16) is no demon. Paul's motivation appears to be annoyance, and his act silences more than empowers her. Certainly, Paul acts with divine power, but the act's intent and result are more mixed than beneficial. That the apostles pray and sing in “the innermost cell” (16: 24) at midnight is a portrayal rich in symbolism. Their steadfast faith does not reflect heroism as much as Luke's theology of the cross during the most difficult times; followers of Jesus experience an inexplicable joy from outside themselves, given by the Holy Spirit. Their experience invites us to consider the incarcerated today in other countries and how God in Christ stands with them. The jailer's question in verse 30 (“What must I do to be saved?”) likely refers to deliverance from personal danger, since escaped prisoners justified the execution of jailers (12: 19). Paul responds with a different focus: “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (v. 31). The jailer's “entire family” (v. 33) would have included his spouse, children, extended family, and servants. In communal cultures such as this, religious profession and devotion were household acts. The joyful sharing at the scene's end reflects a redeemed life.

The second reading concludes Revelation with encouragements and blessings. Many of the passage's images appear earlier in Revelation: I am coming soon (3: 11; 22: 7), Alpha and Omega (1: 8), washing of robes (7: 14), root and descendant of David (5: 5), and bright morning star (2: 28). The point of strongest emphasis is “Surely/See, I am coming soon” (22: 12, 20). The acclamation “Come, Lord Jesus” (v. 20) was common among early Christians (see 1 Cor. 16: 33, *Maranatha*).

In our gospel reading, Jesus prays for unity for His followers - in His day and beyond. With repetitive language, His prayer holds that such unity would show Jesus' significance to the world. That God loves believers is a given. Whether they *know* it or not, Jesus is compelled to pray (John 17: 23, 26). He asks for a unity between believers that is patterned after His unity with the Father: “I

in them and you in me, that they become completely one" (literally "completed into one," v. 23). Although the world is often characterized negatively in John, it is never beyond God's persistent love (3: 16). That God loved Jesus "before the foundation of the world" (17: 24) highlights His nature as love (see I John 4: 8, 16). Most noteworthy is the way Jesus prays, not just for first-century believers, but also for future believers. Long before we were born, Christ prayed for us!