

*After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.*

*6"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.*

*11And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.*

Next Sunday is Mother's day. If you have not decided on a gift and a card it is time to get at it. Time to choose something.

What will she like? A piece of jewelry? Something to wear? A decorative bush to plant in the yard? Hand lotion or perfume? Something you have made with your own hands? Will you take her out to eat? Serve her breakfast in bed? What will she like best of all?

That is the hard part about giving gifts – knowing what another will treasure. To get it right and to see her eyes light up and a smile break out like sunshine - what a special thing that is!

Is that what happened when God gave Jesus you? Did Jesus smile from the bottom of his heart? Not a polite, "Thank you Father." but a "Wow, you mean this one is really for me?" "Just what I have always wanted!" "You sure do know how to give a gift, Father!"

When I read the gospel reading today I was struck by how many times Jesus spoke of the ones the Father has given him. That is you. Jesus was praying to his Father in heaven – in a short time he would be going out to the Garden of Gethsemane where he would be arrested. By midnight he would be on trial, at dawn brought before the Roman governor Pilate, by noon the nails would be driven into his hands and his feet, the cross would be lifted up. But before all of that Jesus was praying. He prayed saying that his work was to give eternal life to all whom the

Father had given him. For them Jesus would endure all that the next day would bring – Jesus would give his life in suffering for you - that is how precious you are to Jesus.

And what is this eternal life that Jesus wants for you? Praying to the Father in heaven Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Jesus did not talk about playing harps and floating on clouds, Jesus did not talk about seeing grandma or grandpa some day, Jesus said that eternal life is knowing God the Father, and knowing Jesus Christ. Not knowing about them, being able to repeat the Apostles’ Creed by heart or to say Jesus is God’s Son, but knowing the only True God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

This weekend five eighth graders will be confirmed in their faith – together. Each will make a promise to God about their continuing to be together. They will each be asked, “Do you intend to live among God’s faithful people, to hear God’s word and share in the Lord’s Supper?” And they will answer as so many before them have answered, “Yes, by the help of God.”

This promise is so important and the keeping of it so important for it is in the gathering of God’s people that we come to know God and know Jesus. Here it is in this gathering that God as promised to reveal God’s own self. In the word and in the supper God shares Jesus with you – Jesus, the very love of God sacrificed on the cross for you entering your ears as a word – on your lips his body and blood – filling you up with God’s own self that you might know God and Jesus forever.

When I made those promises in 1961 I had no idea how much my life would be blessed through my keeping them. In five and a half years I was six hundred miles from home at college – a stranger to everyone and everyone a stranger to me but through the Word of God and the Lord’s Supper I knew that God was with me. Eighteen years after my confirmation I was in that same church for my mother’s funeral, a year later we commended my father to the eternal care of God. To be strengthened by God’s word through that time and to taste the life of Jesus in the Supper gave me hope for them and courage to live in this world without them.

When I made my confirmation promises I knew only a small fraction of what I know now: books and books and books I have read about God - conversations with Christians and non- Christians - so many sermons I have heard. While I am thankful for knowledge and information I have gained my faith has not really changed all that much. The day of my confirmation I was convinced that God loved me though there was no good reason that God should. But I knew that God did.

And I trusted that God always would love me.

I hope that you have that same trust – faith in the love of God.

Since I began talking about gifts for Mother's day I would like to end there as well. I think that a lot of my life has been motivated by wanting my parents to be proud of me – having the hope that they could be proud of me even when I failed.

Maybe the Christian life is just like that knowing God and knowing Jesus and wanting to live in a way that gives God joy. I hope for that for you five who are being confirmed - that you will know God and God's love and live in ways that will bring God joy.

I hope that for all of us. Amen.