

FIRST LESSON: Acts 11:1-18
SECOND LESSON: Revelation 21:1-6
THE GOSPEL: John 13:31-35

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 19, 2019

“A New Game Changer”
Sermon Preached by Pastor Gary Ulrich
American Lutheran Church of Sun City

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you through God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I tell you this morning I'm excited. I'm happy. I'm being with the people I love and being with the church that worships God the Father Almighty, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit all into one mystery. That has to be exciting. And this morning, this morning we get a whole text involved in that God, that Jesus talking to us. So, I tell you what. It's a real game changer to me. And I would like to get right to the text. Is that OK with you? If it's not, I got to get right to the text anyway, because that's how I prepared this. OK? So we'll just keep going this way.

This text, and the text was the Gospel lesson I read to you, was given to us by Jesus the Christ himself, the Messiah, the Son of God. He talked about the glorification of the Son of man, the good news, the holy Gospel, the salvation plan. Get this – the journey of you and I in all that we see and all that we do in our attitudes. Let me just briefly say who this message is given by. Oftentimes, we try to separate: that was the Father, that was the Son, that was the Holy Spirit. Which one am I attached to? Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, of one substance with the Father, who along with the Father and the Son has come forth and along with the Father, has brought forth the Holy Spirit, a comforter, a helper, a supporter, brought forth and combined within this mystery of God, one God for us all. It's all here, I'm telling you. Great God almighty, we're listening to God, that powerful being, that lovely being that guides and holds our life, our attitudes, and our faith, and brings us back into a relationship with him.

Now let me set the scene, the Gospel message. Are you with me? Jesus is in the upper room on that night, on that very night in which he was betrayed and just before the Passover meal, Jesus laid aside his outer garments. And he showed and portrayed a servanthood, a humility, and his salvation in a single act, and that's called feet washing. He washed the disciples' feet. He sends the apostles out with this example and this example for us all. Jesus showed how to love as a humble servant as He came to wash away our sins. Clean us and invite us into His Father's house - reconciled, righteous, clean, and free. Foot washing – foot washing wasn't too lowly for Jesus. The disciples

couldn't turn away from this act of humility. For Jesus, the disciples could not turn away, and that's so good as we can't turn away from this. The apostles were to serve the master, not be the master. Sometimes we get this mixed up in our evangelism or who we hear that they say, "You gotta listen to me, because I'm the one." We are messengers; we are people that go out and tell the story. They were to be messengers of Jesus Christ's message, "Prepare for whoever receives the living message of Jesus, His sacrifice, and God the Father's love and favor, the total love and favor of this beautiful, powerful God we worship."

Next, Jesus dismisses Judas. He dismisses Judas, he dismisses the betraying into His death. Jesus' journey to the cross has begun. No stoppin'; Judas is leaving the room. He then turns and he addresses His disciples and says, "Now, now the Son of man is to be glorified." The Son of man is to be glorified, and God's oneness picked Him up and glorified Him. Jesus saw that His death, as the moment of His glory in God, would lift Him up. "Behold my Son, in whom I am well pleased," God broke through the heavens and said at the transfiguration. "I am totally pleased." God said then, "Listen to Him. Listen to Him." And now we listen to Him.

St. John also tells us that this wasn't something that just came about. This was something that was prophesied, because he says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that whoever believes in Him, whoever believes in Him, shall have everlasting life." Now Jesus talks to us in John. Listen to Jesus' words. "Father, I brought glory to You here on earth by doing everything You told me to do. And now, Father, reveal my glory as I stand in Your presence, the glory we shared before the world began." And then St. Paul tells the Philippian church, and he speaks to us. He says, "Yet it was because of this that God raised Him up to the heights of heaven and gave Him a name which is above every other name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, under the earth, and every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father almighty." That's your mysterious God at work here.

Now Jesus talks to His disciples. Don't put out there that He's talking to the 12. He's talking to the 12 but as this comes alive, He talks to us also. He's talking to us, and He talks to them so dearly. "Dear children, listen to me. Where I am going, you can't go. I alone will redeem you. I alone will reconcile you to the Father. I alone will bring you into the friendly, holy righteous relations between you and God." Now, did you hear that? That's what Jesus is saying to us. Listen to Him, because next He brings a new commandment, a crowning moment of command, a new behest, a new precept, a new rule in our hearts intended to regulate, direct, focus our thoughts, our behavior, our action. It's deep. It goes deep into us. A new command apart from the Old Testament laws, the legalism, the eye for an eye, the tooth for a tooth. It goes against all that,

because it combines everything that He said, and it gives the Gospel message, the Gospel action, the Gospel witness to all people, even to our enemies. That's a rough one, because we all have people we don't like. We all have, maybe, enemies.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christian brothers and sisters, this is a crowning, everlasting moment of faith in the living words of Jesus. This is a real game changer. He says, "Keep loving. Keep loving each other, just as I loved you that you, too, may keep loving one another." The words of Jesus are translated to express a continuous love, not just a pat on the head, but a deep love that He's talking about with His whole passion and love and beauty and salvation. Keep loving, a love that Jesus brought into the world, a faultless and perfect love focused on salvation for the one love, a love that is a witness to the glory of God, bestowed upon Jesus and His redeeming gift, Jesus teaching life and death, God's love for us. A love that is shown and expressed in our feelings, in our innermost motivations and actions of comfort and understanding and humiliation and forgiveness and a faith that focuses directly into salvation. A love that transcends and touches our attitudes and forgiveness to others and to prayer, praying for others, to thank and to praise, and to recognize that God is with us always, each of us. We are not alone. A love that we know and recognize is the binding and building block of our unity as a people of God, our community, our congregation. That love and that expression of love is more powerful than the petty arguments we have about things. I guess I can say with a shout, "If there's a door that blocks our way, knock the door down." The love that knows no doubts about God, that's shielded and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, God's gift of the Lord and giver of life that precedes, comes forth from the Father and the Son and that is within each of us. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit as that Spirit works in us. And works in us and binds us together inside of our problems, inside of our crises, inside of our opinions and our attitudes, all showing God's grace, God's glory in Jesus Christ, and God's glory through us as disciples, and it mutes. It mutes all those who spread their disjointed and evil-laden philosophies and quotes of religious idols and practice that theirs is the way to go.

Yes, something new. Away from compromising of the old ways, away from the legalism, away from the justifications of behavior, even dealing with that old Adam in us that tries to constantly distract us and tempt us with ourselves and our own egos and wants and wishes and pleasures and greed, and say to himself "Pledged as the enemy of God and the prince of this world, trying to separate us from God." And Jesus speaks to us again, "I have said these things to you that in Me, you may have peace." That peace that He just talked about, salvation, composure, and love of God, and not being alone. Salvation at hand, that you have peace in Me. In the world, you have tribulation, you have persecution, you have crises, troubles, you have a mess in the world. But take heart, be lifted up. I have overcome this world. And John gives us

some more messages of Jesus, that we're not alone. "I will ask the Father," Jesus said. "He will give you another helper. He will give you something that is with you all the time, a comforter, an advocate to be with you forever, even talking about the spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit that imparts and communicates and makes known and helps you with decisions and found in Jesus Christ." And then Jesus says the world does not understand this. It cannot know this, because it doesn't know Jesus, the Christ. Yes, or it doesn't want Him.

Yes, a new commandment. Keep loving. Keep loving one another just as I have loved you. You also should love one another. Something new, even with the struggle of sinner and saint within us, the old way, the old Adam working in us, the world of fear and doubt and discord and death itself working in us, Jesus' words, the living words of that most powerful, loving God to you strikes these old ways dead. Yes, the love, the honor and the power of the divine in us, finding new life, rejoicing constantly, reborn and securely reconciled to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, as mystery that only believers that can faithfully believe, as the truth in their lives can get us to do many things. Pastor has made the message very clear to us, and the excitement of this message that we should reach out. We do it this way. You just heard the story, the total story of Jesus Christ, and I'll say it in the song we often sing, "O, don't you love to tell the story, the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love." Oh, don't you? God bless us all. Now we go with that peace as we journey forth. Amen.