Quite often in our lives there come periods of time when we are separated from loved ones. Often just before the separation, we convey vital information to them essential for their well-being. It is because of our deep concern for them; we omit the small talk and focus on the priorities in the few final minutes of our time together.

Consider what a husband would say before he departs on a two-week business trip, or a mother before she allows her child to play in the water, or a father before he drops his son off at college for the first time.

I remember y father’s parting advice before leaving me at university for the first time – don’t spend all your student grant on beer!

Arouud thois time each year students sit exams and then there will be graduation ceremonies when they are sent out into the world. Imagine if our Lord Jesus Christ himself were here to address the graduates. In today’s text we find Jesus commenting on graduates, especially those who belong to him.

We know from the four Gospels that Jesus recruited people to follow him, specifically the twelve disciples. For three years, Jesus trained his disciples intensively by public and private teachings, tutoring, lecturing, seminars, work projects, and internships. Sometimes Jesus taught on a one-to-one basis, sometimes his teaching involved all twelve disciples ,and sometimes it involved hundreds of people or more, such as his Sermon on the Mount. Others besides the Twelve followed Jesus, among them were Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Nicodemus. Some of Jesus’ disciples quit when they began to understand that the hardships of discipleship include suffering and dying.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew that he would die and leave the disciples by themselves. He prepared them to carry on his ministry. It was graduation time for the disciples. A few hours before the authorities arrested him, Jesus prayed to God: “I ask you to protect them from the evil one.”

Who is the evil one? In scripture the evil one is the devil, Satan, the fallen angel who fights against God and does everything to separate the faithful people from God. Jesus prayed that God would protect his followers from Satan, the accuser of the brethren. If you are a faithful follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is praying to God to protect you from the evil one. He is praying that we would be sanctified – in other words stay true to our calling to follow God’s ways. He prays that we would stay united.

In our society, getting to the age of 18 classifies you as an adult and you have great opportunities and responsibilities.

Perhaps you have had graduation parties and celebrations. Watching all the festivities is a strange, invisible, silent figure—the evil one. He is watching you just as he watched the Lord Jesus Christ and the disciples at the Last Supper and later at the Mount of Olives as Jesus prayed. The evil one, Satan, will do all in his power to separate you from God’s presence and love.

The evil one will subtly convince you to ignore the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:8-21).

Have you noticed that many young people stop coming to worship God on Sundays once they graduate from high school? They forget or ignore the commandment about keeping the Sabbath holy.

The evil one will work hard to convince you that your time, energy, thoughts, affection, and money should go to ungodly activities and things. If you fall for this, then you will break the commandment of worshiping only God and no other god.

The evil one will work hard to set you against your parents so you will not honor them. I was at a store recently and I heard a young child screaming at his mother because he could not get his way. I thought, in a few more years this boy will be cursing his parents to their faces, perhaps even using God’s name in vain; and when he does, the evil one will rejoice. Remember the commandment of honoring your parents.

The evil one will work hard to get you to desire things you really do not need, things that keep you from providing for yourself and your family once you have your own family. That type of want is coveting, or desiring material things that will take you away from God. A man came to church and asked for money to pay the rent for his apartment. When I asked him for identification, he could not produce it. I turned him down and he left angry. The church secretary noticed he was wearing a very expensive shirt and expensive boots. Later I learned that the owner of the apartment was the man’s girlfriend. He had lied to me. Desiring the wrong things can quickly separate you from God.

The evil one will work hard to get you to lie to your coworkers, friends, family, and even to yourself. If you bear false witness against your neighbor, you separate yourself from God.

The evil one will work hard to get you to kill someone. You may never kill anyone physically, but you can kill someone emotionally and spiritually. I went to see a dying man. As I approached his hospital room, I saw his ex-wife with her daughter. The wife was sobbing. I asked what was wrong. Her daughter said, “Dad won’t see her.” When I arrived at the man’s room, the door had a handwritten sign stating that his ex-wife could not enter. She suffered an emotional death. Instead of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, that man died an angry, bitter death.

I began by saying the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to God to protect his followers from the evil one. If you are faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, then he will pray to God, that God protect you from the evil one. If you follow the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully, God will bless you greatly and wonderfully.

How can you be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? First, you can be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ by loving God and loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40). Second, you can be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ by keeping your membership vows to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his body, the church (Ephesians 4:1-16), by coming frequently to worship, studying the word of God, praying constantly, serving God, and supporting the church with your generous offerings. If you are faithful then you can have assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ is praying to God to protect you from the evil one.

The evil one will attack you in many ways: temptations, illness, loss of a job, loss of friends, accidents, bad feelings, and moral confusion to name a few. When those things happen, keep your faith. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of your faith. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ loves you. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ died and was resurrected to give you new life. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is praying that no matter how bad things get, if you are faithful, God will protect you from the evil one.

**Taking Care of Last Minute Matters**

**Acts 1:1-11**

Whenever we plan a trip, we have to take care of a lot of details. Plans have to be made for someone to take care of the pets, flowers, mail, and other matters. Hours before leaving on the trip, last minute details have to be done.

Jesus had been on earth thirty-three years. He had completed his earthly ministry with his death and resurrection. For forty days he felt he needed to take care of last minute details. We need to know some of what Jesus said and did in the days prior to his ascension.

**I. Christ Assures the Reality of His Resurrection (vv. 1-3)**

Jesus took time during the forty days prior to his ascension to prove to his disciples the reality of his resurrection. They had seen him die, and they needed to know that he was alive.

Modern disciples need to hear Christ’s assurance about his resurrection. They would know that Jesus has the power over life and death. And, they would know that Christ is present with them today.

**II. Christ Teaches About the Priority of His Kingdom (vv. 6-7)**

Jesus taught constantly about the meaning of his kingdom. The disciples continued to misunderstand. Jesus wanted his followers to know that the kingdom meant a spiritual rule.

Christians need to keep kingdom priorities constantly before them. What are these priorities? Win the lost, edify the saved, gather in worship, minister to human needs, and live like kingdom people are the priorities of the kingdom.

**III. Christ Predicts the Power of God in Individual Lives (vv. 4-5, 8)**

As soon as Jesus ascended, his ministry would be given to his disciples. Whatever Jesus had done, they would do; Jesus promised his followers that they would not do his ministry in human strength. They would receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to serve God, and we have the power. We are called to holy living, and we have the power.

**IV. Christ Attests to His Completed Ministry (v. 9)**

Jesus would have never left earth if his mission had not been completed. The fact that he ascended back to the Father testified that everything necessary for the human race’s reconciliation was completed.

Believers do not have to work to complete their salvation. They yield to Christ’s completed and continuing work.

**V. Christ Promises His Future Return (vv. 10-11)**

Soon after Jesus ascended, some messengers came to some watching, stunned, lonely disciples. They told them that Jesus would come again. Who told the messengers? Jesus, of course. He promises his future return.

Christians live in hope for the Lord’s return. No promise of Christ has ever been futile. This promise is not futile. It is certain he will come again.

Jesus thirty-three years on earth were crucial. His three-year public ministry needs pondering. Also, don’t forget to study his last-minute instruction before and after his ascension. (Harold T. Bryson)

**Living Between D Day and V Day**

**Ephesians 1:15-23**

The Second World War gave to everyone who went through that era some indelible images. One of those was a word picture that has become a model of the Christian life. It is the distinction in the European conflict between D Day and V Day. When the Allies landed on the beaches of Normandy on D Day the war was not over but its outcome had been basically determined. The ultimate victory and the conclusion of the war in Europe was on the horizon. V Day would soon come.

As one thinks of the coming of Jesus in the flesh (incarnation) and his return in victory (parousia), a similar pattern can be visualized. When we as Christians celebrate Ascension Sunday, we stand between two important events and can look both backward and forward.

On the one hand, we are reminded that the Lord Jesus came to earth and, on the cross, won the “decisive” battle for our salvation. On the other hand, we know that our struggle against sin and evil is not yet complete. The ultimate victory celebration awaits our joining the Lord in his glorious victory procession at the end of time. The text from Ephesians under consideration here reminds us that while we live in this world between D Day and V Day, we can join with the apostle in his great prayer and sense our calling to live with both genuine understanding and vivid expectation.

**I. We Live with Understanding**

Because the world is not an ideal place, it takes a life of faith and commitment to succeed as a Christian. In this text the apostle clearly recognized the commitment of the early Asian believers (v. 15). But he prayed that in addition to their faith, the God who displayed his power in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ would give these Christians a divinely inspired (spiritual) sense of wisdom and of a God-manifested (revelation) knowledge as they lived in the world for Christ (v. 17). A knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done for us is absolutely essential for living the Christian life.

**II. We Live with Hope**

Beyond such understanding, however, the Christian also needs to live with a sense of destiny! The world is not just an endless cycle of ages as the Greeks thought. For those who know Christ there is both purpose and expectation in the world. Faithful believers (saints) can glimpse with expectant eyes the future hope in their Christian calling. Moreover, they can gain a vision of the wonderful inheritance that will be theirs in Christ (v. 18).

Yet even now they can experience a foretaste of the power of God in their lives—that same power that was evident in the resurrection and ascension of Christ (vv. 19-21). The supreme God has made Christ the Lord of the church so that the Body of Christ (the church) might experience the powerful presence (fullness) of God in their midst.

What Christian, therefore, can not fail to sing, “To God be the glory, great things he has done!” (Gerald L. Borchert)

**Listening with an Open Mind**

**Luke 24:44-53**

An open mind can be like a garbage can with the lid off —anything in the world may be tossed in! The Scriptures are replete with numerous warnings and admonitions regarding the mind. We are encouraged to “gird up the loins” to avoid “vain philosophy” and to be “continually transformed by the renewing of” our minds. Yet when it comes to appropriation of biblical truth, we must have an open mind.

**I. It Is Not Enough to Simply Hear the Word of God**

Paul reminds us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” ( Rom. 10:17 NKJV). But not everyone who hears the sound of a gospel word listens to the voice of the Spirit. In many ways our culture has become gospel-hardened. We have been innoculated with a sufficient dose of the good news to make us immune to authentic Christianity. John 3:16 printed on end-zone placards and bumper stickers is the modern equivalent of carelessly casting away the pearl of gospel truth.

**II. The Resurrection Was Not Enough to Open the Disciples Minds**

The disciples had been with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry. They had witnessed the many miracles. Now the resurrected Lord had appeared to them, but that alone could not generate faith. We cannot be argued into faith. We cannot be cajoled into listening to the Spirit.

**III. Only the Lord Can Enable Us to Listen with an Open Mind**

Luke tells us that the resurrected Lord opened the minds of the disciples as he reminded them of the Hebrew Scriptures that testified about him. How did he do this? We want a method, an approach, a program, or a formula to follow. We are not told. Surely the disciples had heard Jesus expound the Hebrew Scriptures before. Perhaps the difference was in themselves—for once, they appear ready to listen. What Jesus shared with them was not new; they had heard about the Messiah before. It is in the mystery of their encounter with the risen Christ that their minds were opened.

**IV. We Have Been Entrusted with a Treasure to Be Both Lived and Shared**

Soren Kierkegaard reminds us that a “witness for the truth” is one who is willing to be a martyr for Christ. It is not a title to be claimed glibly. There is more to being a witness than simply mouthing truths. Jesus did not rewind a mental tape player with a canned sales pitch every time he encountered someone seeking the kingdom. He modeled and shared a witness to truth that was personal and appropriate for a variety of situations. No two people are treated in exactly the same way. We must incarnate the truth and share an appropriate word of witness as we are empowered by the Spirit.

Barclay says that this passage stresses the reality of the Resurrection, the urgency of the task, and the secret to their power. Indeed, it does this and more. An open mind to the truth of the gospel is a gift that comes only through an encounter with the risen Christ. (L. Joseph Rosas)

**John 17:6-19**

What a powerful image this text offers; what a hopeful image for those of us who try to be faithful to the gospel, to serve the risen Christ, to be the church in the world. Jesus prays for us. Jesus prays for us that we might be faithful and well in a world that can be a frightening and dangerous place for those called to live and proclaim the gospel. Jesus prays for us.

Prior to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus gathers his disciples and offers his final instruction concerning what is to happen to him and how that will shape and define their life together as the church. Following his instruction, with the disciples still gathered, Jesus prays for them. “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. . . . Holy Father protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (vv. 6, 11). More than likely it is not the first time Jesus had prayed for his disciples; it certainly is not the last. But here, in his most difficult hour, when they should have been praying for him, Jesus looks up to heaven and prays for his disciples. He holds the church up to God and asks for the continued well-being of those who have followed him. Given what is awaiting him, Jesus understands the reality of evil and the hostile nature of the world. He knows that his followers are likely to face persecution and great peril, even death, because of their fidelity to his name. Nonetheless, just as God sent Jesus into the world, so now Jesus will send his followers into the world to continue the work of the gospel, that they should be one, even as Jesus and God are one.

Now we should be clear, the point here is not some kind of sentimental unity and superficial lack of dissension within the church so that our lives can be free of conflict. No, the issue is the unified witness of the church to the gospel. In asking God to protect the disciples following his death and resurrection, Jesus is not promising the church a life free from hardship or suffering. Rather, Jesus demonstrates that although the world might hate us, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the church’s intimate relationship with God and with one another, through Jesus, will enable and empower us to persevere in faithfulness. Jesus prays for us so that we might be something that apart from him would be impossible: the church. Jesus also asks that his followers be sanctified in the truth for continued growth in godliness and righteousness. He prays that our lives might each day come to resemble his own. He prays that our hearts might be one—one with him and one with one another.

I once had the privilege of attending a gathering where Mother Teresa was the honored guest and speaker. As she reflected upon her ministry with the poor, she remarked that she often prayed to God that she would not lose her grip on the hand of Christ. How comforting to know that a saint of the faith needed to pray that prayer. Even more, it is comforting to know that Jesus prays that prayer on our behalf as he asks the Lord to keep us united in love with him.

In praying this prayer Jesus invites us to join him in the unique way of life we know as Christian discipleship. What might it mean for pastors to pray this prayer on behalf of those who have been entrusted to their care? Of course we cannot pray the prayer as Jesus did because we are not to equate who we are and what we do with who he is and what he has done on behalf of the church and the world. But what if Jesus’ words and way with his disciples became the way we live among those whom we serve? What might our ministry look like if we spent as much time holding the church before the Lord and asking God to protect and sanctify the church as we do complaining about what is wrong with the people we are supposed to love and serve? Not to focus all of our attention on pastors, what if, as members of the body of Christ and fellow followers of Jesus, we devoted as much time and energy to praying for one another and asking God to support, protect, and sanctify one another as we do gossiping, back-biting, and complaining? If the church commits itself, laity and clergy alike, not only to praying this prayer but to living it as well we just might, by God’s grace, come to resemble the beloved community we are called to be.

As I pray and read Jesus’ words I am mindful of the mystery and beauty of the Holy Trinity—one God in three persons. I am mindful of the holy communication, the intimate and eternal bond of love that exists among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Christ we are invited to share in the relationship, the community, the fellowship, that exists at the very heart of God. In Christ we are caught up in the divine life. God has given us to the Son in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We belong to Christ and thus we belong to one another. The church is an icon of the Trinity in as much as our relationships, our fellowship, our holy communication points to the life of the blessed and Holy Trinity. So in praying this prayer Jesus says, “This is who you are.”

What good news—Jesus prays for us. Through his prayer, his unceasing intercession on our behalf, we become more than we would otherwise be. Through his prayer we become the church, God’s gift for the life of the world.

**Topics**

* [Graduation](http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/topic/Graduation)
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* **Add to Bin**
* [2](http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/2783/protect-them-from-the-evil-one)

Members: John 17 the sermon titled "The Meaning of Life" by Brett Blair

In Act 5 scene 5 of Shakespeare's Macbeth, the character Macbeth has heard that the queen is dead and he knows his own death is imminent. At this time he delivers his famous soliloquy:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow
creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, Out, brief candle
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
and then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot. Full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

Is Macbeth right? Is life nothing but a shadow having no substance, no meaning? Writers and philosophers since recorded time have tried to answer the question. I don't think any of them have been successful in answering the question to everyone's satisfaction. Someone once said that "Trying to speak about the ultimate reality is like sending a kiss through a messenger." I understand their point: Something of its truth is lost in the translation.

What is the meaning of life? A philosophical question to be sure but this is not only the philosopher's question. It is a genuinely human question and therefore a question that we all ask. It might be a question that is asked in despair or hope, out of cynicism, or out of sincere curiosity and a deep desire to have goals and guidance in life. However we raise the question about the meaning of life, it is our most basic and fundamental question.

1. He Prays for Our Protection from the World.

2. He Prays That We Might Know God.

The rest of the sermon can be found by joining Sermons.com.

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Members: Please see Luke 24 the sermon titled "Don't Get Into Things!"

"Don't get into things!"

How many times did you hear that directive as a kid. Mom had to run to the store for a minute or Dad was tied up on a project in the garage. Knowing what children will do when left to their own devices, the last ditch effort of "out-of-sight" parenting is the generic and ultimately unenforceable order - "Don't get into things!"

Like that ever stopped kids from burrowing into the back of closets as Christmas closed in. Like that ever kept the curious chemist from testing things like putting Mentos in soda bottles or trying to melt chocolate chunks into "hot chocolate." Being empowered by freedom coupled with being unsupervised makes it far too tempting for any and all of us to "get into things."

Jesus' resurrection was the miraculous "happy ending" his disciples had never imagined possible. His physical presence in their midst, eating and talking with them, filled them with wonder and confused joy. Then his "opening up the Scriptures" opened their blurry eyes to read God's drama of salvation, of which they were now a part. Receiving Jesus' blessing and witnessing his ascension finally brought these disciples to a place of faith that they had never before inhabited. They were first-hand believers in the resurrection. They took to heart his promise of the gift of the Spirit. Their faith went almost overnight from being unhinged to being untinged and untroubled by doubt...

The rest of this sermon following the outline above can be obtained by joining [http://www.sermons.com/signup](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=0019t-4sNyDUXVmljrgQR_esrJkrTQEHoJqzGBg-PlB82AA7QXJuDoVmI3CS6OUHBXSU8gOMuJ4aSZgEnT5w1TSrXAIwDHBPBluVJO-3dp4aouUMcHqXIJU65Gn0KSmnhdZ)

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All Shall Be Well

It was Julian of Norwich who wrote those inspired words that 'all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' They are words that are particularly poignant tonight because they sum up the transformation in the followers of Jesus that we celebrate on Ascension Day, for on this day strange, as it may seem we celebrate Christ's leaving his disciples.

But his leaving them is not a somber occasion. It is full of joy and hope and reminds us how their lives had changed, of how they had come to trust in God's ultimate purpose for them and believe that all will indeed be well because Christ will always be with them.

Matthew Peat, All Will Be Well
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Don't You Believe in Shoes?

There is a story by Hugh Price Hughes titled, "The City of Everywhere." In this story a man arrives in a city one cold morning. As he gets off the train, he sees that the station is like any other station except for one thing everyone is barefoot. No one wears shoes.

He notices a barefoot cab driver. "Pardon me," he asks the driver, "I was just wondering why you don't wear shoes. Don't you believe in shoes?"

"Sure we do," says the driver.

"Why don't you wear them?" asks the man.

"Ah, that's the question," the driver replies. "Why don't we wear shoes? Why don't we?"

At the hotel it is the same. The clerk, bell boys, everybody is barefoot. In the coffee shop he notices a nice looking gentleman at a table opposite him. He says, "I notice you aren't wearing any shoes. I wonder why? Don't you know about shoes?"

The man replies, "Of course I know about shoes."

"Then why don't you wear them?" asks the stranger.

"Ah, that's the question," says the man. "Why don't we? Why don't we?"

After breakfast he walks out on the street in the snow but every person he sees is barefoot. He asks another man about it, and points out how shoes protect the feet from cold. The man says, "We know about shoes. See that building yonder? That is a shoe manufacturing plant. We are proud of that plant and every week we gather there to hear the man in charge tell about shoes and how wonderful they are."

"Then why don't you wear shoes?" asks the stranger.

 "Ah, that's the question," says the man.

Dr. Robert E. Goodrich told this story in his book, What's It All About? Then he asks, "Don't we believe in prayer? Don't we know what prayer could mean to our lives? . . . Of course we do; we know about prayer. Then, why don't we pray? Ah, that's the question. Why don't we pray? . . . Why don't we?"

Robert E. Goodrich, What's It All About, adapted by King Duncan

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The Joy of Living New Life Is Beginning

The feast of the Ascension reminds us of two facts: one is the resurrection means we are deprived of the physical presence of Jesus as he was known in history to his disciples; the other fact is the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, is able to make him known and present to far greater numbers at the same time than would be possible in human form. So the disciples are being told, we are being told, while this is the end of one significant experience, it is the beginning of another one. The historical Jesus is no longer present; the cosmic Christ has received all authority and will be with us until the close of time. (Matthew 28: 18-20) Our Easter celebration is coming to an end; the joy of living the new life in Christ is still just beginning.

Kendall K McCabe and Michael L. Sherer, Path of the Phoenix, CSS Publishing Company
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What Makes Ultimate Faith Possible

I suspect that what makes ultimate entrustment possible is all the little entrustments that we learn to make all along the way. We hope wisdom is cumulative, and the more we learn to entrust in matters small, the more graceful we become in our ultimate entrustments.

Our goal, I believe, is to come to that point where we can say with Walt Whitman:

My terminus near,
The clouds already closing in upon me,
The voyage balk'd --

the course disputed, lost,
I yield my ships to Thee ...

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless;
My brain feels rack'd, bewildered;
Let the old timbers part -- I will not part!
I will cling fast to Thee, O God,
though the waves buffet me;
Thee, Thee, at least, I know.

Arguably, entrustment (or faith, if you prefer) is the most important resource we can develop. Without it, we would all hole up somewhere, with our only excursions beyond being those of absolute necessity. The obverse dimension of this is, of course, the cultivation of trust-worthiness. It is as our entrustment is vindicated that we develop the capacity for more of it.

I don't know who taught you to swim, if ever you learned, but I do know that you would not have learned to survive in the water if there weren't a teacher present whom you trusted to make the learning environment a wholly safe one for you.

I don't know who taught you to ride your first two-wheel bicycle, but I do know that in all likelihood you would not have learned were it not for that trustworthy other who ran alongside of you, as you wobbled from side to side, on that day when the training wheels were first removed.

A child would not be able to take the first step onto a school bus and leave Mom and Dad behind were it not for the fact that, preceding the first school bus ride, there were firmly in place a series of successfully completed developmental tasks, reflective of the child's experience that others in her life have proved themselves trustworthy.

Ironically, this reliance on the trustworthiness of others eventually leads to the ability to trust ourselves -- our little inside voices, senses, and intuition. We can swim. We can ride the bike. We can go off to unfamiliar territory, establish ourselves, and be successful. Louise Kaplan has written beautifully about this process:

"... we manage to hold together when the world lets us down. Although we feel temporarily abandoned and vulnerable, constancy prevails. We retain enough of a sense of our personal worth and the worth of others eventually to convert disenchantment and disappointment into challenge. Constancy enables us to bend with the shifting winds and still remain rooted to the earth that nourishes us."

Robert A. Noblett, Sermons for Sundays in Lent and Easter, CSS Publishing Company

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Every Link of the Chain

Idlers of a seacoast town watched the village smith day after day as he painstakingly wrought every link of a great chain he was forging. Behind his back they scoffed at such care being taken on such an ordinary thing as a chain. But the old craftsman worked on, ignoring them as if he had not heard them at all.

Eventually the chain was attached to a great anchor on the deck of an ocean vessel. For months it was never put to use. But one day the vessel was disabled by a breakdown in its steering apparatus while nearing the coast in a storm. Only a secure anchorage could prevent the vessel from being driven onto the rocky coast. Thus the fate of the ship and hundreds of passengers depended on the strength of that chain. No one knew of the care and skill that had been lavished on each link of that chain by an obscure smith who was only doing his best. The chain held, and the ship, its passengers and its crew were saved. A man from a "different world" had saved the day.

Keith Wagner, In a Different World

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A Church Is a Family

Charles E. Jefferson once described the difference between an audience and a church. He said, "An audience is a crowd. A church is a family. An audience is a gathering. A church is a fellowship. An audience is a collection. A church is an organism. An audience is a heap of stones. A church is a temple." And he concludes, "Preachers are ordained not to attract an audience, but to build a church." I hope that everyone in this room understands that critical difference. If the Lion's club or the Kiwanis club is torn with dissension, it is a shame. But when the church of Jesus Christ is in turmoil, it is a tragedy. Christ depends on us.

King Duncan, www.Sermons.com

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In Light of His Departure

Randy Smith, Jesus Prays for His Disciples

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 Truly Accepting God's Teaching

If your kids see you putting other things ahead of God, they will become discouraged and disillusioned, like a young Jewish boy who once lived in Germany.

His father was a successful merchant, and the family practiced their Jewish faith. But then they moved to another German city, and the boy's father announced that they would no longer attend synagogue. They were going to join the Lutheran church.

The boy was very surprised and asked his father why the family was joining the Lutheran church. His father's answer was something like, "For business reasons. There are so many Lutherans in this town that I can make good business contacts at the Lutheran church. It will be good for business."

That boy, who had a deep interest in religion, became so disillusioned with his father that something died within him. He said to himself, 'My father has no real convictions." The incident helped to turn him against religion with a vengeance...

The rest of this illustrations and many additional illustrations and sermons for Ascension and Easter 7 can be accessed at www.Sermons.com.

I love this quote from C.S. Lewis: The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.”Isn’t this true in our lives today? Turn on the t.v. or the radio, or open the newspaper and within minutes, our minds are overwhelmed with advertisements. Competitions for brighter, whiter teeth, a flatter abdomen, a more popular reputation when you buy the right kind of car or beer, and a calmer day when you drink the soothing coffee that’s good till the last drop. Because Jesus is one person with two natures (divine and human), he is able to bridge the gap between God and humanity. His close relationships, both to God and to human beings, provide him with the special authority for bringing the gifts of God to the people of God.Christ as the ultimate bridge. Jesus was aware of all the wild chaos coming at us from the world, and the need for our spirits to first be fed, and receive food, and so Jesus prays for the disciples …. and Jesus prays for us. \*\*\*“To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.” ~ Karl Barth Martin Luther also said: And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, We shall not fear for God has willed God's truth to triumph through us. Let this world's tyrant rage, in battle we'll engage, his wrath we can endure for lo his doom is sure, one little word subdues him."The question is not whether or not "the evil one" exists. It is about who Jesus is, and the protection and care that he provides. God's Word has power and truth. PAUSE ((((((((( Another way to understand what Jesus is doing here is like a story that I recently read about a mother somewhere in the States who left two young children to look after themselves while she went on holiday with her new boyfriend. Of course, the courts punished her. Yet if she had had loving parents who would look after those children while she was away, it would not have been necessary to leave them alone. If she could have entrusted those children to a loving grandparent... This is what Jesus is doing. Entrusting his disciples, his children in faith, to a loving parent as he goes away. Just as small children are at risk left alone, so are we at risk left alone without anyone guiding us and protecting us from evil/the evil one. That evil exists in this world is not in doubt. We need God to protect us and keep us safe. In John's Gospel 'the world' does not refer to the physical universe as we know it, but the world that has rebelled against God, chosen darkness rather than light, and is opposed to its creator. This world is not the world that determines WHO the disciples are - nor should it determine WHO WE are. This is the reason that Jesus places them – and us – in the hands of God – to keep the disciples safe from the darkness of the world that rejects God and to keep them and us free from the darkness and sin of the world, to be set apart (to be set apart in Temple language is to be able to enter into God's presence). \*\*\* Shortly before his death, Mark Twain said this: A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle;...they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. It (the release) comes at last--the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them--and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence ...a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever. What is the meaning of life? A philosophical question perhaps, but more than that, it is the most basic and fundamental question that we all ask. Whether we ask in despair or hope, out of cynicism, or out of sincere curiosity and a deep desire to have goals and guidance in life. Jesus deals with this question and answers it – not in the context of an argument with the Jewish leaders or in the Sermon on the Mount, or in a discussion with his disciples. Instead, Jesus deals with the meaning of life in the context of prayer. Many scholars call this Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. [Pause] The Disciples are in the upper room, now. They have just finished the Passover meal and Jesus is thinking about his crucifixion which will occur within the next 24 hours. Imagine being there with Jesus as one of the disciples…. Jesus and his disciples were very close, intimate friends. They willingly shared their deepest desires with him. You know, the kind of friend who you could come to their door at 2:30 in the morning and ask for a drive to Toronto – for whatever reason? He is also the kind of friend who is willing to give you his last $200.00 even though it means waiting till another paycheck to buy his long awaited treasure. Jesus is also like the friend who will share his last piece of chocolate birthday cake without telling you that he didn’t get one for himself. And Jesus knows he is about to leave his disciples alone in the world. So Jesus goes before God to intercede for them and to pray for them in light of Jesus’ departure \*\*\* We are still much the same today. At any point throughout our lives, there come periods of time when we are separated from loved ones. Interestingly, it is common to share vital information to them essential for their well-being just before the separation. Often, it is because of our deep concern for them that we leave the small talk behind and focus on the priorities in the few final minutes of our time together. Consider what a husband would say before he departs on a two-week business trip, or a mother before she allows her child to go off to camp for the first time for a week, or a father before he drops his son off at college for the first time. Jesus is about to depart from His disciples in a physical way via the cross. In verses 6-19, Jesus prays to God for two things for his followers, two things specifically that he yearns for, from the depths of his heart. His main concerns in light of His departure are clear: The first thing that Jesus Prays for is Our Protection from the World. The second thing that Jesus shares with God in prayer is that We Might Know God. We might think that these prayer requests are specifically for those Jesus was presently leaving behind, it is important to hear that these are Jesus’ utmost desires for His church. (Randy Smith, Jesus Prays for His Disciples) \*\*\* The disciples number one priority and purpose was the continuation of the mission that Jesus had from God and the physical church is one way to keep sharing the Gospel with the world. And our choice of lifestyle and how we live everyday life – the people are the church – through our actions to prayer for our world is another important way to share the Gospel with the world. In other words: If your kids see you putting other things ahead of God, they will become discouraged and disillusioned, like a young Jewish boy who once lived in Germany. His father was a successful merchant, and the family practiced their Jewish faith. But then they moved to another German city, and the boy's father announced that they would no longer attend synagogue. They were going to join the Lutheran church. The boy was very surprised and asked his father why the family was joining the Lutheran church. His father's answer was something like, "For business reasons. There are so many Lutherans in this town that I can make good business contacts at the Lutheran church. It will be good for business." That boy, who had a deep interest in religion, became so disillusioned with his father that something died within him. He said to himself, 'My father has no real convictions." The incident helped to turn him against religion with a vengeance. That young boy later moved to England and began to write. His name was Karl Marx. As the father of communism he wrote the "Communist Manifesto," in which he called religion "the opiate of the masses." I wonder if world history would have been different had Karl Marx's father heeded the admonition of the great "Shema" of Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Your kids know whether you love God with all your heart. What they want to see is parents with such love and reverence for God that they bring Him into every area of their lives and put him first in everything. Kids want to see whether their parents love God enough to obey him. Will you obey God? Will YOU pray? Amen.