



# ST. MARK'S ON THE CAMPUS

## Episcopal Church

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The Rev. Jerrold Thompson  
Sermon for the Seventh Sunday of Easter  
St. Mark's on the Campus  
May 20, 2007

The Seventh Sunday of Easter is also the Sunday after the Feast of the Ascension, which was Thursday. We find ourselves at one of those in between times in the church year: in between the Ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

For those of you who grew up in a Reformed tradition that did not make much of the Ascension, you might find its meaning a bit distant. What strikes me this morning is that if the doctrine of the Ascension is somewhat distant for some of us, the picture we have in our gospel during this in between time is *not* distant. You might think that in this in between liturgical time, the followers of Jesus would find themselves to be a bit bereft, a bit *without*. Even in our collect for this morning, we pray, "do not leave us comfortless." The risen Christ has ascended, but what next?

We all know how it can feel after a major life event. What does the loss of a spouse mean? I've graduated, and I'm excited about my job, but what is it going to be like? The picture we have in the gospel – the context we have this morning for in between times -- is not a time without comfort, but rather a time of sustained intimacy throughout.

"The glory that you have given me," Jesus prays, "I have given *them*, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become *completely* one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved *them* even as you've loved *me*. . . "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but *I* know you; and *these* know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Distance is not the reality here, but union. Union with God in Christ -- a union which manifests itself in union with each other. Do you know union with God?

There are times when some of us have a deep and abiding sense of union with God, a sense of God's presence living with us. Over the years I've come to think of a direct *awareness* of that union with God as a gift, a gift that some of us receive and some of us do not, just as we all receive some gifts from God but not all of them. Simply because we have faith, simply because we trust, we do not have a direct awareness of union with God.

Some of us sometimes have a sense of the presence of God; and some of us rarely have that sense. And from talking to people over the years, I'm aware that it's easy for us to feel as if we SHOULD have a direct sense of God's presence *all* the time. But the picture our gospel gives us is a bit different than that.

In his prayer, Jesus reminds us that you and I manifest God's presence to each other with every loving act. The presence of God is found by some in mystical experience, but most of the time we find God as we love each other. In fact, few Christians *are* mystics. Most of us experience God in the very rudimentary activities of daily life, as we love one another and make the God who dwells in Christ and in us known – known to each other and known to the world. Our faith fills simple, loving actions and makes them far more than just rudimentary; faith invests them with a meaning and presence far beyond the rudimentary.

Daily life filled with love – God's love.

Daily life filled with union – union with God and each other.

Daily life struck through with the presence of God.

During in between times. *All* the time.

"Father," Jesus prays for us, "the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved *me* may be in *them* - and I in them."

Thanks be to God.

Amen.