

You Gave Them to Me

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER [a]

May 28, 2017

JOHN 17:1-11

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on Earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. ⁶ I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

The Father gives gifts to his Son, and it is you and me. You and I and our children, those who have gone before us in the Church, those who are brothers and sisters now in the Church, those who follow in generations to come—we are all a gift from the Father to his beloved Son. John 17:6:

[Jesus said, “Father,] ⁶ I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.”

How do we speak of Jesus as Son to the Father? This is obviously not a biological sonship and fatherhood, as we usually know it, where the father joins himself to the mother and that union of male and female produces a child.

The eternal Father in Heaven and the eternal Son—it clearly cannot be that biological union where the child would have DNA from the mom and dad. Yet, throughout Scripture, God the Father does speak of his Son. And the Son is there with the Father in eternity, neither made nor created, for there never was a time when he was not.

So how do we know the Son to the Father? How does the Father see the Son? How does the Son see the Father?

We hear Jesus pray, and in those words, we hear what his Father is to him:

“Father, ⁶ I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.”

As Son, Jesus is one given-to by the Father; he is one receiving every good gift from his Father. As Father, God the Father is one who desires to give every good gift to his Son. So Jesus speaks of the gifts given him by his Father. Matthew 28:18:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been *given to me*. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

The Father gives all authority to his Son. His Son already has all power—he’s God the Son, and all creative power is already in his hand simply by nature of him being true God.

But the Father then gives him a gift—it is all authority in Heaven and on Earth. It is the authority to make disciples of sinners, to bestow the holy Name in Baptism, to bring those living in shame into honor and eternal life; it is, in short, the authority to forgive sins both before the face of the Father in Heaven, and in the lives of sinners on Earth. But he receives it all as gift from his Father.

If we want to see what it means for Jesus to be Son to the Father, we will be looking upon Jesus receiving gifts. If we want to see what it means for the Father to be Father to Jesus, we will see him bestowing gifts. And he is bestowing gifts through the words he gives to his Son.

So Jesus prays, speaking to his Father of the gifts:

⁶ [Father,] I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

[John 17:6]

The Father has given us, you and me and our children, as gift to his Son. Upon that, our salvation depends.

If it were upon us giving ourselves to God, upon our dedicating our lives to God, that our salvation depended, then we would be lost.

But the Father has given you and me to his Son as gift. And his Son has received the gift given him by his Father's words, and his Son speaks those words from his Father to us in the Gospel, so that we may know that we belong by way of gift to the Son. And the Son will not lose us, will not let us go, will not depart us, but is with us always, even until the end of the age. Upon that our salvation depends.

We are gifts from the Father to the Son.

And it would take us a whole lifetime and more to even start to scrape the surface of what that means for the depth of God's mercy to us.

For the Father has given a gift to his Son such that, in that gift, he has also given him the gift and the mandate to go forth, to become human along with the sinners, to take their sin upon himself, and to give his life as the ransom for all, so that of all those given to him by his Father, the Son loses not one. Upon that gift from the Father to the Son, our salvation depends.

The Father bestows gifts by speaking a word. If there is no word spoken by the Father, there is no light created on the first day. For, before there was anything created, when there was only the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Father spoke a word, *Let there be light*, and in that word he bestowed the

gift, and there was light.

Before there was man and woman, the Father spoke a word, *Let us make man in our Image*, and at the speaking of the word, the gift was bestowed. Genesis 1:27:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

And God spoke a Word, and the man and the woman heard the gift, and there was marriage, male and female joined together as one flesh, and there were children, and there were generations, all as gift of the Father's Word.

The Father bestows gifts by sending forth a word. And where he sees the man and the woman turn away from his Word; where he sees sinners turn from gifts and demand to have the things of creation not from the Word of the Creator but from their own power and devices; where he sees us using our words not to speak kindness, to deliver mercy and grace, to bring encouragement and comfort; where he sees us using our words not to bestow gifts but to bring guilt and cover with shame, the Father bestows another gift: His Son, the Word made flesh, the Word sent forth from the Father to save sinners, the Word who is his own Son and to whom he gives the gift of the sinners he loves and for whom he desires mercy and grace and life.

So he gives us to his Son. And his Son receives the gift of us and our children, and the Son takes up the gift from his Father of going to the cross to atone for our stinginess with gifts, and he loses of us, he loses of all those given him by his Father, not one.

And ascending to his Father, he prays for us. By that prayer, we are kept in the Lord's Name, we are sustained in the promise of Baptism; by that prayer, the Father keeps us in oneness with him and in oneness with one another. Upon that prayer spoken by Jesus, our salvation depends. John 17:11:

**[Jesus prayed, "Father"]¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.
¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."**

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