**“Kept”**

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Acts 1:1-26

1 John 5:9-15

John 17:11b-19

Ascension / Easter 7

Jesus prayed: “Holy Father, **keep** them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given Me. **I have guarded them**, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that **they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves**. I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that You **keep them from the evil one**. **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world**. **Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth**. As you sent Me into the world, so I have **sent them into the world**. And for their sake **I consecrate Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth**.”

Christ is, now, risen **and ascended**! He is risen **and ascended, indeed!** Alleluia! Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Kept (a)

It was the night Jesus was betrayed: taken for a rigged trial then executed for the very purpose for which He’d come (to bare in His death the sins of the world, crushing sin in His own body, so that we who sin yet are sorry for that may be saved by His forgiveness). It could easily have been the night before His ascension, though (or the morning thereof), because it was all **one continuous motion** of sacrifice then resurrection since death couldn’t hold Him, 40 days of proof that He’d raised, then a dramatic **return to His Father and the realm and reign He had of Heaven**. First, though, **JESUS PRAYED FOR OUR SUSTAINANCE IN HIS VISIBLE LEAVING.** **We’re** (with the 12 or the 110 who most-immediately followed Him) the **“them”** and the **“they”** of every one of His petitions to the Father. “Keep **them** in Your name which You have given Me, Father, that **they** may be one even as we are one.”

What Jesus had asked-for that’s **perfectly** **consistent with the Father’s will**, that (you know) **He will get**. So we (who Jesus are “given” to Him by God’s name, baptized into the divine Godhead in the “name” of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit, receiving the promises attached to that by faith and staying in God’s Word and will) are **“kept” / sustained / protected / guarded and reserved-away-from the full effects of the Evil One** … **of a place and a kingdom that’s no longer of this world but still in it for the time** … and **like Jesus incarnate in that respect, an alien here yet purposed while here, to then ascend ourselves through what will be our own deaths and then resurrections and ascensions to a place really HOME after having worked for however many years here in a strange land … the, now,** **strange-land-since-adopted-by-God of the fallen earth**.

It takes God to **continue us** here. It was what Jesus prayed the Father would **provide for us** once He returned to provide that also Himself, **bridging earth with Heaven by Himself and the Holy Spirit**. **His Word He left** … and **the Spirit He sent**. Every benefit of the cross and resurrection brought the glorious nature of divine presence (Heaven) to, at least, a hinted view on an earthly plane. **Unseen**, it’s still **exceptional**. **Unseen by eyes**, it’s still **seen by an indwelling and growing knowledge called “hope”**.

Keeping also

And disciples (or, literally, followers because we **care to “follow”**), “keep” this “hope” which imparts itself in “wisdom” “**cherished**”. That’s, probably, the best word I can think of to describe how we, too, “**keep**” and **stay** **sustained / protected / guarded and reserved-away-from the full effects of the Evil One**, by “**cherishing**” that left-for-us Word of God / Jesus, **practicing** its guidance of us and **enjoying** (if not always having fun with) its influence given opportunity that we allow and help facilitate.

How instructive is the one event that Scripture records of disciples’ activities during the brief (10 day) “pause” between His personal protection and the sending of the Holy Spirit promised for Pentecost. They returned to Jerusalem from watching Jesus ascend to be and stay gathered in the “upper room”, **counted heads** and **remained tight and protective of each other**, “**devoted**” (Acts says) to prayer and the continuous proclamation (Peter led this) of God’s actions and Words in history, **discerning** (so knowing the importance of, for instance, the number 12 for the apostles’ quantity: **that complimentary** to the 12 tribes so the number of representing the fullness of the Church as God’s people), then **diligent** to pray themselves and move ahead / **ACT** (hence the name of this Book of the Bible) seeking and following God’s will (that they asked for and felt assured-in by the “wisdom” that they collectively knew they had from Christ) to fill out the number of the 12 with another who’d also witnessed everything.

If there is a **lesson to be learned from how that “core early Church” dealt with those days**, then a study just of Acts 1:12-26 would **spell it out**.

Kept (b)

If you ever “feel” in limbo, or progress seems visibly stagnant or un-noticeable, and you’d soooo like to know that you are, indeed, **progressing by God’s grace and usefulness to Him and some practical directedness toward the Kingdom that will be obviously divine and blessed**, then **watch the first “disciples” and the “women and Mary the mother of Jesus and His brothers”, named and numbered, and doing according to a formula of keeping (as we’re kept) in the name of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)**. That, certainly, means a lot in **content** and **identity** and **directness (or Lordship)** and **submission**, but it’s a **“remembrance of your baptism” with all that that implies**. It’s knowing yourself as God’s, and **acting like it**, **receiving from Him / in “dialogue”, prayer but after listening to uniquely Him first**. It’s **praying according to His will** and **knowing what that is**, so **asking in compliance with it**. It’s **an “amen” to every Word He’s ever spoken to you (about you and about Himself for you)**.

Next weekend, you will hear that the Holy Spirit was sent (liberally but **pointedly** sent). You are, not only, part of that **history**, but its “**beneficiary**”. For today, join the “Acts of the Apostles”, which is still a Book (and history) continuing to be written (to include our “Acts”). I doubt the first Christian Church (in those gathered in the upper room) had everything **perfectly “figured out” (we hear of the highlights)**, but they knew **“in-Whom” they were**, and **trusted** and **moved** **accordingly**.

God promises that, as **we do so** **(accordingly) ourselves**, **we will have His ears in prayer and conversation**. He will **sustain us / keep us**, having **given to us His Holy Spirit by water and promise in baptism**. And there are so many benefits yet to be uncovered and unpacked (revealed to us) in His Word that we have … **until we have the everything else of life perfected in Heaven**.

Christ is risen an**d ascended!** He is risen and ascended, **indeed! Alleluia!**

Thanks be to God, in +Jesus’ name, amen.