

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Intro

We seem to be living in **“in between”** times.

In our personal lives, we are in that **“in between”** time of full-on COVID lockdown and an ending of restrictions—but we're not all the way there yet.

We wrestle with the newest guidelines: to mask or not to mask—be inside or outside—distance or closer together.

In the Church, we are in that **“in between”** time too—between ASCENSION DAY and PENTECOST and the end of the Easter Season.

And in the bigger picture of things—we live in the **“in between”** time of Jesus' first coming and His coming again.

Our lessons reflect this **“in between”** time too as Jesus prepares his Followers for what is to come next.

So, let's see what we can learn about OUR LIVES as we live in this **“in between”** time.

## I. Gospel

A. As our Gospel reading begins, we find ourselves once again gathered with Jesus and his Disciples in that Upper Room on the night before he died.

1. Jesus is still speaking, continuing with what Scholars call his “Farewell Discourse.”

2. Now, he moves into that part directed to God as he prays for his Disciples in what is called Jesus' “High Priestly Prayer.”

3. He prays that as they continue to abide in his love they will take that love into the world, and as they do that God will be with them and guide them when Jesus is no longer in the world with them.

B. As Jesus prays, he makes an important point about life in the future.

1. He says, “*And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world...*”

2. And a little later, he prays, “*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world...*”

3. Now just what does Jesus mean when he says he does not belong to the world?

4. When Jesus says “**the world**” in this part of the Gospel, it means anything that is not of God—it is humanity organizing itself WITHOUT God.

5. So it’s no wonder that “**the world**” would reject Jesus and all that he represents.

6. So, Jesus is praying for his Disciples to be IN “**the world**” without being OF “**the world**”—or part of “**the world.**”

C. But, Jesus’ Disciples are still to be IN the world—actively living in it and bringing His message to it.

1. It would be easy for the Disciples to separate themselves from “**the world**”; but that is not what Jesus prays for them.

2. Because he loves the **unredeemed world** just as the Father loves it, those who are now the bearers of his message must remain IN “**the world.**”

3. Apart from their witness, there would be little hope for others.

4. So, Jesus now prays for God to be with the Disciples, just as God has been with Jesus.

5. **Just as the Father sent the Son into the world with the ultimate truth, Jesus now sends the Disciples out with the same truth.**

6. And so the Disciples are now entrusted with Jesus’ message of God’s Love and are charged with bringing it to “**the world.**”

## II. Matthias

A. And the first step the Disciples take in this new venture is to make their number whole again with the calling of **Matthias**.

1. We don't know much about **Matthias** other than what we read in our first lesson from Acts and other pious legends.

2. But it seems **Matthias** was an early follower of Jesus—perhaps one of the Seventy that Jesus sent out to neighboring villages in Galilee to tell them of the coming of Jesus.

3. Church tradition holds that **Matthias** preached and taught in Cappadocia (now Turkey) and along the Aegean Sea.

4. Some traditions hold that he made his way to Ethiopia where he preached and was eventually martyred around 70 AD,

- While other traditions have him dying in Jerusalem, either as a martyr or of old age around 80 AD.

5. Another tradition that seems interesting is that the Early Church theologian Clement of Alexandria refers to Matthias in such a way that identifies him as Zacchaeus. [You gotta love early church history.]

6. In any event, **Matthias**, as Lesser Feasts and Fasts puts it, “is an example to Christians of one whose faithful companionship with Jesus qualifies him to be a suitable witness to the resurrection, and whose service is unheralded and unsung.” (LFF p. 168)

B. So then, **Matthias** is a wonderful example for us of someone called forth to be a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection, simply as a result of their faith and practice.

1. **Matthias** was probably always helping out in the background—you know, serving on committees, stepping up when things needed to be done, willing to share from his own personal story of his interactions with Jesus and how he felt the love of God in Jesus at work in his life.

2. Basically, those things you and I are called to do.

### III. Being Jesus' Witnesses

A. For just as Jesus sent his Disciples to bring his message to the world—so now WE are the ones charged with bringing his message our time and place.

1. WE are now the ones called to be IN **“the world”**—not OF the world—not taking on the ways of the world—but to be examples to **“the world.”**

2. We are called to be IN **“the world”**—not separated from it—but IN the world to make a difference.

3. We are called to be IN **“the world,”** taking Jesus' message of God's love to all people and places.

4. And there is no better time for us to be IN **“the world”** than right now with all that is going on around us—both nationally and locally.

B. We have allowed feelings of polarization and distrust—of hatred and fear of “the other”—to develop and grow in our midst.

1. Where did this come from?

- It's not how things used to be—and it certainly is NOT of God.

2. So we can start right there—trying to bring down these walls that separate and divide us, and work to bring God's love to whatever situation we find ourselves in.

3. And COVID has only exacerbated an already desperate situation—and it's only going to get worse before it gets better—as people continue to debate and battle over wearing masks and getting vaccines.

4. There is such a lack of trust—such a suspicion of the other—that feeling that pervades of “if you don't believe exactly what I do—then you are wrong and to be shunned and humiliated.”

5. That's not what Jesus calls us to do in the Gospel and yet it's people who claim to be followers of Jesus who are the worst offenders.

6. As I said before, it is to whatever situation we find ourselves in that we need to bring God's love in our lives to try and pour soothing oil on troubled situations.

C. We are called to be like Matthias—recognized for how we live our lives—called out of the background—to be messengers of God’s love.

1. And the good news is we have our faith and our community here to support us and guide us in the carrying out of this work.

2. As one writer puts it: “Our faith does not weave a cocoon of safety around us ... It does not keep us from touching the world and being touched by it.

- Rather it is our reservoir of strength and truth, that sacred place where we gain the words and guidance we need as we build God’s Kingdom here on earth.”

3. Jesus is praying for us now—just as he prayed for his Disciples so long ago.

- Do you ever think of that—Jesus is praying for YOU—not just in a broad and general sense but SPECIFICALLY FOR YOU—right here, right now—Jesus is praying for YOU.

4. Jesus is praying for US as we strive to be the messengers of His love to our world—bearing that love and living it out in our lives—today and every day.

## Conclusion

I leave you with this to ponder:

The first command Jesus gave us was “Follow me!”

The greatest commandment Jesus gave us was “Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor and love each other, too.”

The commandment Jesus gave before he was taken from our sight was, “Be my witnesses.”

And so we are.

## Let Us Pray

Almighty God, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that your Church, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (BCP p. 255)