

Exaudi, 2006
Text: John 15:26-16:4
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✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You downtrodden and you outcasts – you who were always the butt of jokes and never in the in crowd – you who have been cast out of the synagogues of the world for standing up for what is right – you who have been betrayed for holding on to your Lord – you who have felt your cheeks redden at being ridiculed for not going along with the crowd – rejoice in Jesus today and the Words of comfort he gives you in the Gospel lesson.

And you popular people - you who delight in ridicule and mockery - who have tasted the sweet savor of bitter words directed against the outcasts – you who have felt the thrill that comes from dominating another person with your cruelty - you who have caved in to the will of the crowd against your better judgment – you come today too, repenting of your sin and find your peace in Jesus today as well.

For the truth is that everyone in this sanctuary today has played both the bully and the one bullied, both the outcast and the one who casts out. It was St. Peter, after all, who was not only martyred for the faith, for going against the crowd and standing firm in the Lord Jesus – but also the same St. Peter caved in to

the fear of being cast out on Maundy Thursday evening when he said with an oath:
I do not know the man.

So like St. Peter repent of your sin and rejoice in the grace of the Lord.
Leave behind your bullying and accept your place as an outcast alongside of Jesus.
For he himself became the ultimate outcast to atone for your sins. He was cast out
of the synagogue by the religious leaders of his day; and God himself made Jesus
the ultimate outcast by placing on his shoulders all the sins of the world – even
your sins, Christian. There on the cross Jesus was spit upon, cruelly mocked and
ridiculed, and left utterly alone. But this was done for your benefit – that you might
never be truly alone, never truly outcast, never mocked to scorn. For Jesus on the
cross is taking your place – the punishment you deserved from God is poured out
on him.

And now you receive what Jesus earned: to be loved and befriended and
accepted by God the Father. And there is no greater acceptance and love. For men
are creatures of a day – like the grass they wither and fade in a short while and
cannot love you the way your Father in heaven can. To be accepted by the Father is
to be wrapped in arms that never falter, to be kept warm in a safety that is
threatened by no danger, to be loved by a love that knows no end because it has no
beginning; a Love that is simply what God IS.

Therefore rejoice in your sufferings and do not be surprised by them. For

what servant is above his master? What Christian will not like Christ have to bear a cross? When you are persecuted for standing firm in Christ, for doing the right thing, for giving up riches or fame or promotions or the respect of men so that you might honor God's will – know that the suffering you face in these times is cut from the same cloth as Christ's sufferings. Know that you are being dragged into the mystery of his love and redemption. And know that as Christ's wounds are his glory in heaven, so also your sorrow and hardship and suffering shall be transformed in the resurrection of the dead into glorious riches which have been stored up for you in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy.

And rejoice in Jesus' promise of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. For this Holy Spirit has stirred the waters of your baptism and made them living waters that give you new birth. This is who you are now: the reborn child of God. No one can take that away from you. Your salvation is secure in Christ for it is all his work and all his promises. This Holy Spirit who gives you new birth continues to enliven your soul by his Word – nourishing you in the true faith. And he prays for you and with you when you do not know how to pray. When you are too downtrodden and disheartened by the sorrow you face and the cross you bear, the Spirit sends up prayers and groaning too deep for words on your behalf.

And by the power of the Spirit operative through the Word of Christ, he gives you the very presence of your Lord Jesus Christ – who reveals to you the

Father's heart in the Supper of his Body and Blood. For in receiving the fruits of his cross, the same body born of Mary and sacrificed on the cross, and the same blood poured out at Calvary – in receiving these you have the sure promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation. For these pledges of God's love for you are now poured into you and you receive him who is Life and Resurrection. How can you who have been filled with Christ not also be raised and live with him? You simply have to live forever now in God's Kingdom for you are a member of Christ's body, the Church. That is why the Church is called the Bride and Body of Christ – for the two shall be one flesh, for by receiving Christ's body and blood you are built up into his body of which he is the head. Since the head of the body, Christ, is raised from the dead, he shall pull up his whole body with him into everlasting life and joy.

So rejoice! The Lord has heard your cry. He has given you all that he has. He loves you and you are accepted; he delights in you for Christ's sake. Now come, receive the proof of all this at the Table of the Lord's Body and Blood.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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