

Today is the seventh Sunday in Easter

Squeezed between 2 of the 7 major feast days in the church calendar

Can you name them?

It's in the Prayer Book on Page 15

All Saints Day...

November 1st

Christmas Day...

December 25th

Epiphany...

January 6th

Easter Sunday...

the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox

Ascension Day...

40 days after Easter Sunday

Pentecost Sunday...

10 days after Ascension Day

And Trinity Sunday

After the resurrection on Easter Morning,

Jesus appeared many times to the disciples for forty days

Then...

***Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.***

He ascended into heaven before dozens of eye-witnesses

Then... 10 days later... On Pentecost Sunday... which is ***next*** Sunday  
...his Ascension Day promise was fulfilled

*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.*

So here we are... wedged between two magnificent biblical events  
and we plead...

*Do not leave us comfortless,  
but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us,  
and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before*

On Easter, we proclaim, Christ has risen...

On Ascension Day we proclaim, Christ has ascended...

On the seventh Sunday after Easter... we are alone.

What a roller coaster of emotion they must have felt

They thought Jesus would become king...

And then he was crucified...

And he was gone!

And then Easter came...

And he was back!

And then Ascension Day came...

And he was gone... *again!*

And that's where we are on this seventh Sunday in Easter.

The *risen* Christ... is the *ascended* Christ...

Traffic reporters call it *stop and go*

NASA calls it *launch delay*

In football and basketball it's a *time out*

*And we don't like it!*

Maybe that's why we have the reading from Acts

Paul got a call from God

**Go!** to Macedonia

But on the way they met a slave girl with a spirit of divination

*She predicted things*

**Stop!** Cast out her demon...

**Go!** into town... and face the slave's furious owners...

*They were making a bundle off her predictions*

**Stop!** Get beaten with rods...

**Go!** Directly to Jail

*Do not pass go, do not collect \$200*

**Stop!** Bind up prisoners in chains

**Go!** Sing hymns and pray

**Stop!** As an earthquake trashes the jail

**Go!** The stocks and the doors are unlocked

**Stop!** Listen to the jailer about to kill himself

**Go!** Tell him *we're still here...*

**Stop!** Explain that if the jailer believes in Jesus, *he'll be saved!*

**Go!** Baptize his family

**Stop!** Eat with the whole Family

**Go!** Rejoice! The whole family became believers in God!

Wedge between Ascension and Pentecost

We **Stop!**... then we **Go!** ... then we **Stop!** ... then we **Go!**

*Oh Lord! Please send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us...*

Save us from this spiritual whiplash!

In the reading from Revelation... John hears the voice...

*See, I am coming soon*

To which he responded... *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

And don't stop! Come soon! Come NOW!

In the gospel reading, Jesus prayed for his disciples...  
*I ask not only on behalf of these,  
but also on behalf of those who will believe in me  
through their word,  
that they may all be one.*

Just as Paul and the Jailer became one  
United in Christ...

When people are united...  
They are more like God...

When we are one with each other  
*We Go!*

When we separate ourselves from each other  
*We Stop!*

That is what Jesus prayed

*As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,  
may they also be in us.*

*The glory that you have given me I have given them,  
so that they may be one, as we are one.*

*I will make it known,  
so that the love with which you have loved me  
may be in them,  
and I in them.*

You see, that is the real power of God  
Connecting unlike objects together... in deep meaningful ways...

Sometimes surprising... often unexpected...

I'll bet every one of you loves at least one peculiar food combination

Cheddar cheese on apple pie

Peanut butter and bacon sandwiches

Pickles dipped on orange juice

Balsamic vinegar on strawberries

Red wine and coca cola

M&M pizza

There are lots of mismatched combinations that are exquisite

But I can think of no other combination

That seems more complex

Than God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

How these three can be one is extraordinary!

Oh to be more like God!

Oh to find unity when seemingly unrelated!

That's why I love the lectionary so much!

I am thrilled by the idea that since the late 1600's

When the lectionary was first approved.

Churches have been praying the same scripture readings

Today we use the Revised Common Lectionary

Used by Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Episcopalians

Plus Moravian, United Church of Christ, even some Baptists churches

And with just a few changes, matches the Roman Catholic lectionary

And the Lectionary is *global*

*Used in North & South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia!*

In some ways... we are becoming one...  
**Not** stopping... but **going!**

There's this old joke  
 A group of people got to heaven.  
 During the welcome tour, they came to this huge building  
 Miles wide and miles long  
 The guide says... ***Be very quiet as you walk past...***  
 One of the recently deceased asks ***why's that?***  
 Oh... They're from that other denomination...  
 They think they're the only ones here...

Look... If Paul's ***jailer*** can get in...  
 If ***the thief on the cross*** next to Jesus can get in...  
 If ***I*** can get in...

Maybe there's more to following Jesus  
 Than cutting our own narrow path into the kingdom of God  
 Maybe... we can take a lot of other people with us...

Jesus said...  
***The glory that you have given me 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.***

In spite of every effort to tear us apart  
 In spite of every media fear fest  
 In spite of every spontaneous terrifying thought  
 There is hope... real hope... in the unity of God

In the back of the prayer book  
You'll find a bunch of great prayers  
For the church, for the people, for the government, for families  
One of my personal favorites is the prayer for Unity

It's in the Book of Common Prayer... on page 818

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
our only Savior, the Prince of Peace:  
Give us grace seriously to lay to heart  
the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions;  
take away all hatred and prejudice,  
and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord;  
that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling,  
one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all,  
so we may be all of one heart and of one soul,  
united in one holy bond of truth and peace,  
of faith and charity,  
and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.