Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Before today’s narrative was the ascension of Christ described in today’s first lesson. They are still focused on when the kingdom will be restored to Israel. He clearly and succinctly stated it is not for them or us to know the times or periods the Father has set by his own authority. However, we will receive power when the Spirt comes upon us (our baptism) and we will be witnesses to the world of the Good News of the risen Christ through the Father with assistance of God’s Spirit. The Spirit nurtures us and faith communities on an ongoing basis. When Jesus said they would receive the Spirit and be witnesses as they were watching he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. As they were looking up two men in white robes standing among them queried “ Why are you looking up? The Jesus who has ascended to heaven will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven.” Their focus should now be on being witness to the world, the as we are called to do in our baptism. They then went into Jerusalem to the upper room and devoted themselves to prayer along with certain women which included Mary, Jesus mother, and his brothers. Praying amongst Jesus followers continue. Jesus modeled constantly praying, it was part of his ministry. Jesus even modeled a prayer for his disciples and for us, the Lord’s Prayer, which we pray, from prayer requests, daily, and during worship every Sunday. We also pray other prayers in our weekly liturgy (some proceeded by where it says “let us pray” and includes prayers of intercesion) where our liturgy focuses us on the objective Means of Grace and Sacrament and the truth of scripture instead of us focusing our own subjective and unreliable emotions.

Today’s narrative is in the last Sunday in Easter but takes place after the Last Supper at the end of his final instructions to his followers, and at the start of his Passion and Easter. Jesus is talking with his disciples at the end of his ministry as he prays his longest prayer in any of the gospels. When Jesus looks up and prays it reinforces his total dependence upon his Father. The key themes of the Farwell and High Priestly prayer are 1) the glorification of the Father and finally 2) petitions for the unity of the disciples through love. The disciples see Jesus look up, the same way they would look up during his coming ascension, as he talks to his Father and discusses both his relationship not only with the Father but also his disciples. Jesus makes it clear that his Father is the source of authority over all people but also not only his being but the ability to give eternal life. What is eternal life? We do not want to ignore that Christ defines it for us in Verse 3:3And this is eternal life, that they may know you (that’s the disciples and us), the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Got it? Eternal life is knowing God and Christ, being made aware of God through the words and actions of Christ with the help of the Spirit.

ForJohn people were created by God for a relationship with God, which is defined in verse three. Our eternal life is our relationship with the eternal God. We begin on our faith journey by belief in Christ. The glory of Christ and the glory of God are intertwined. The glory Jesus brings for the Father is through God and is fulfilled through Jesus crucifixion and resurrection. The humiliation Jesus suffers in humility and obedience to his Father becomes one of glory. It is almost as Jesus has experienced the coming ascension as he tells his followers “to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” later in John.

Listening to this prayer we no longer need to learn about the character of God. When we see and hear Jesus we discover God’s purpose and love are disclosed in Jesus. But we also learn about ourselves. We are part of a world that is hostile to God and Christ yet are still loved by God. This is what we cling to in our lives. We accept that fall short iof the glory of God but yet because of our belief in Christ we are open to God’s unconditional love and grace and we will be righteous when Christ comes again the same way Jesus ascended.

Carl Trueman, a Christian Theologian, writes in Reformation 21 Martin Luther’s theology of the cross was the notion that God reveals himself under his opposite; or, to express this another way, God achieves his intended purposes by doing the exact opposite of that which humans might expect.  The supreme example of this is the cross itself: God triumphs over sin and evil by allowing sin and evil to triumph (apparently) over him.  His real strength is demonstrated through apparent weakness.  This is the way a theologian of the cross thinks about God that God’s glory comes through humility.

The opposite to this was the theologian of glory. In simple terms, the theologian of glory assumes that there was basic continuity between the way the world is and the way God is: if strength is demonstrated through raw power on earth, then God’s strength must be the same, only extended to infinity. To such a theologian, the cross is simply foolishness, a piece of nonsense. Many churches talk about the cross, but the cultural norms of many churches seem no different to the cultural norms of—well, the culture. They often indicate an attitude to power and influence that sees these things as directly related to size, market share, consumerist packaging, aesthetics, youth culture, media appearances, swagger and the all-round noise and pyrotechnics we associate with modern cinema rather than New Testament Christianity.

There is glory in the resurrection and as such the cross is a symbol of love. God’s love for his people who wants us to love the way Christ demonstrated love and be united in love to the world. Go in peace and witness to others about God’s love for them and for us. Amen.