John 17:3 3This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.

Here we are, another day of going to church. I hope that in reality your attitude is one of excitement and joy when it comes to church. Please note and remember that it is God who has given and established church. The church of God is called “The Holy Christian Church.” We define that Holy Christian Church as: “all those everywhere who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior from sin.” Notice, we do not declare that only Lutherans are saved. Never have, never will. We simply state that all true believers in Jesus are a part and parcel of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion on Saints.

Now in that regard, perhaps it would be good for us to think for a moment about “the marks” of the Holy Christian Church. It is not just that there are two or three, or that there is a pastor or that there is some sort of ornate building set up for rites and rituals to God. Because the Holy Spirit is the one who oversees and establishes faith and confidence in Jesus, who “calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps us in the one true faith” we can then define some boundaries for the Holy Christian Church. Those boundaries are how the Holy Spirit works. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel in Word and sacrament. Without the gospel in word and sacrament, without the teaching that Jesus is Lord and Savior from sin and without the unique and awesome personal applications of the Gospel in the Sacraments, there is no church. So the marks of the church are “the gospel is preached and the sacraments are used.”

The marks of the Church are “the gospel in Word and sacrament.” The biggest problem we sometimes have in our world is that there are lots and lots of “visible churches.” Church bodies and congregations of people are found all over the place. So, which church to go to? Find that church that teaches and preaches the truth of God’s Word. Find that church that will lead you in the joy of Jesus as you Lord and Savior, a church that condemns sin and yet rejoices in forgiveness and eternal life. In a way, that is exactly what Jesus is directing us to in the words before us today. Let’s look at our text under the theme: **THAT THEY MAY KNOW YOU.**

I will direct your attention to the fact that our text is the High Priestly prayer that Jesus spoke and shared with his disciples on the night of Maundy Thursday while they were still in the Upper Room and before they left for the Garden in which Jesus would be arrested. In other words, last words of preparation and instruction before the Passion history unfolds and Jesus’ new direction as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords begins. I think we can then grasp these are important words. Indeed they are.

Please note that the High Priestly prayer of Jesus follows that lengthy set of instructions found in chapter 13 of John. In those instruction Jesus speaks of his work, the work of the Holy Spirit, the faith and trials of the disciples and the faith and trials of those to yet believe in him. It is a wonderful discourse and goes on for 3 chapters. And then Jesus in our chapter begins his High Priestly prayer. Jesus prays for himself. Jesus prayers for his disciples. Jesus prays for all believers to come. Jesus promises and prays for the work of the Holy Spirit of God. There is not much that Jesus leaves out of this prayer. Jesus in this portion of the prayer will pray for the glory of His Father and Jesus will once again pray for the faith of his disciples. Note that our words are taken from that first parts where Jesus is praying for the glory of his Father.

That’s seems odd, doesn’t it? That Jesus is praying for the glory of His Father. He says this: **“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. 2For you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to all those you have given him.”** What we need to grasp is that the glory of the Father is clearly wrapped up in the work of the Son. For that matter, all of us should already grasp that we only know and grasp the truth of the Father because of Jesus and what Jesus has revealed and done. It just goes to remind us that the Father and Son are wonderfully united and linked as a part of the Trinity of God. As Jesus says later on in this prayer: **“All that is mine is yours and what is yours is mine.”** There is no grasp of the true God, no worship and praise of the true God, no faith and salvation with the true God apart from Jesus who is the full revelation of the true God.

By the way, it is the victory of Jesus, the success of Jesus’ redemptive work that is the heart and core of God himself. The Father sent Jesus to be our redeemer. The Father sent Jesus to atone for our sins and give us the gift of eternal life. Jesus, by fulfilling and achieving the goals of the Father, by his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection to eternal life is the revelation of the full glory of God. The grace of God is declared and proclaimed in and through this Jesus, the Savior of the Father for us! All of this is exactly what Jesus reveals in verse 4: **“I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.”**

Now the reason I highlighted verse 3 today is because verse 3 is the whole point of the Father’s work and the reason that Jesus came in the first place. In other words, verse 3 really is a verse that declares to us the purpose and intent of faith. Verse 3 said: **“This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.”**  On this last Sunday of Easter, this Sunday after the Ascension of Jesus to eternal glory and authority (and this Sunday of Confirmation for KoK) it would be good to grasp this heart and foundation of faith.

Eternal life is about the true God. To know Him. I think that maybe we should ask just what it means to “know” God. Do you think this just some sort of academic grasp of God, you know, I have the stories and I know some passages and can recite a few things? Do you think this “knowing God” is only some sort of vague feeling, some sort of heart tug, some gut twangs, some sort of spiritual sense of “woo who?” If we just pay attention to our words we would grasp exactly what it is all about.

This verse says that to know the true God is to know Jesus Christ, who the Father sent! Now, I could spend my time going through the same question again, but that is unnecessary. Jesus in the verse that follows, gives us pointedly the meaning of knowing God. Listen to these verses: **“I revealed your name to the men you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have held on to your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8For I gave them the words you gave me, and they received them. They learned the truth that I came from you. They believed that you sent me.”**

Knowing God the Father is to know Jesus is to know the Word that Jesus has given. The Word is the truth that comes from the Father and is given to Jesus and is what we are to believe. Here is literally a summary of what our faith is. It is about God. About the truth of God. God is God. God desires to save us from our sins. God in love gave promise after promise concerning the Savior and then when the time had come Jesus came into our world to fulfill and keep the Word of God. In every way, God’s Word is true and faithful because God is true and faithful and Jesus, the Son of God is true and faithful!

Because of God’s Word, we believe that Jesus is sent of God and that Jesus has in His hands all that is of and from the Father. By the way, that really is the lesson of the Ascension of Jesus. This past Thursday night was actually Ascension Day. It is the day Jesus ascended into Heaven to take his rightful and Lordly seat at the Right hand of God. Jesus, by his Father, has been declared the Lord of lords, the King of kings who has all authority and power, who is the authority and power of the Father for the salvation and judgment of the world. All of this we know because of the Word of God. All is revealed in the Word of God. Jesus is the epitome and power of that Word of God. Even the Holy Spirit who is coming yet, is going to give us this inspired Word, to remind of everything Jesus taught and to lead us to be able to grasp the whole of the wonder and marvel of God’s salvation plan fulfilled in Jesus! Notice how I keep coming back to Jesus!

We are here for worship because of Jesus! We are filled with praise and glory, honor and thanks to God because of Jesus. We are God’s children because the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit who calls us to faith in Jesus and his work. We are made new creatures, called to be holy, lead to hate sin, yes, a people filled with a desire to do all we can to live to the glory of Jesus.

By the way, let’s just review the words of our simple Catechism in this regard (fitting to do so with Confirmands soon to step before us to declare their confidence and faith in Jesus!). It is fitting that we ask the question of how we too can glorify the Lord? Under the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: **HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME** we have this question: How do we keep God’s name holy? There is a two-fold answer: We keep God’s name holy by teaching His Word in its truth and purity. We keep God’s name holy when we as the children of God lead holy lives according to his Word. Pretty simple, isn’t it? There is a truth and purity of God’s Word, stick to it. There is a life that honors God as we live God’s way.

Here is the most wonderful part of this Word of God. You and I, sinners that we are, those who struggle with the trials, turmoils, challenges, temptations and lures of sin in this world, will, no doubt, fall into sin, yield to sin, give ourselves over to sin and so forth. If you think that not true in your life, them please come and see me, we have work to do. We are all sinners. We are all in desperate need of the gift of Jesus and eternal life. That is the wonder of our God. As we are called to faith, we see and view sin differently. We are lead to repent and with repentance the Lord is always willing and able to forgive our sins. God so graciously forgive us for Jesus’ sake. Forgives because he loves us. Forgives because His desire is to save us. Forgives because that is why Jesus came. That’s all it takes. That sorrow of heart and that trust in the goodness of Jesus. I can’t even begin to tell you how the Lord has so often, so graciously forgiven my sins simply because of this wonder of Jesus. And I am so grateful that God continuously works in me to strengthen that faith and assure me again and again of the gift of life in Jesus. That, Dear people, is the heart and core of our faith. That we have the Word that leads to Jesus that speaks to the grace of the Father that through the Holy Spirit we be given faith and life in Jesus’ name.

So all of the things we have mentioned then are a part of what it means to “know” the Lord. If you would let me also highlight for you the words from a sermon study book that I use sometimes when contemplating a text. The book is titled: Sermon Studies of the Gospel, Series A. Sometimes when I get stuck or just have a glitch that won’t let me write, I will read what is said in a book like this. It might just jump start me. In addressing the idea of what it meant to “know” the Lord here is what that book said: “