

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Inviting Everyone to Eternal Life** Third Week of Easter Wednesday, April 18, 2018  
8:15 AM Acts 8:1b-8; Jn 6:35-40 (There's nothing without hope in Scripture.)

I hate to be pedantic, but sometimes the Bible translations we have do not actually say what the Greek says. This morning it talks about “many possessed people,” but the Greek says “many possessing people.” Now you say what’s that? That’s the difference between active and passive. Who is possessing whom? According to the Bible, according to the Greek, it’s people who possess spirits, but this says spirits possess people. It’s a difference; think about it, but it’s not what I want to talk about.

**Today the gospel is again Jesus’ assurance that those who come to him will have eternal life.** Now the way in which the New Testament, especially the Fourth Gospel, but really the whole New Testament, frames the work of Jesus, it’s framed in the context of an invitation. **Jesus is inviting everyone into eternal life.** There’s an invitation to an eternal banquet, **a sharing in the divine life of God.**

Now in a way, we already share in the divine life insofar as we exist. **Everything that exists, exists in God, can’t exist any other way.** So St. Paul says, “In God we move and have our being—we live and move and have our being,” whatever order you want to put that in. And that’s true. That’s, you might say, even philosophically correct. It’s reasonable. It’s a true way of thinking.

**But in our awareness of God, in our minds and our hearts, we are often far from God.** In fact, sometimes we feel abandoned by God, which is actually impossible, as Jesus makes very clear here. **Never will God abandon us.** That’s what he assures: “And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what you gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day.” So God never abandons us. **And if we feel abandoned,** if we experience the emptiness

of God, in a way, **we are being deceived**. And there has to be some kind of truthfulness in us that acknowledges that we are being deceived, and **we can't go with that deception. As it were, we can't give into it**. You could call that kind of a deception a **"temptation" to lead us away from the truth**. Here is the truth. **Jesus came into the world so "that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life."** That's the truth. Anything that leads away from that is not true and, therefore, is a temptation, which we must resist.

But Christians often don't see things this way. **Christians have often distorted everything**. They act as if God abandons them. **They act as if their feelings or their awareness is somehow an infallible guide to reality**, when it is not at all. They allow themselves to be filled with all kinds of doubts when, in fact, that simply undermines their own being, their own happiness. So this is something really to meditate on and to be very clear about.

God never abandons us and **God never rejects us**, although at times, there are one or two times, **there are statements of rejection in Scripture. I can think of one: Matthew 25**, when the Son of Man comes and gathers all the nations and he rejects certain people, but why? Because "I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was thirsty and you did not give me drink. I was in prison and you did not visit me." And these he rejects and sends them off into what's called **punishment**. It doesn't say everlasting, but it says lasting. "Eonic" is the word used, meaning like eons: eons and eons. It's an expression that's supposed to be strong, but even that is not without hope. **There's nothing without hope in Scripture**. So that's what we have to keep in mind. Focus on God. Look to the Son and believe in him and have eternal life, and await the day in which he will raise us up.