

John 17.6-19—Jesus Prays for His Disciples

- I. Introduction
 - a. Last week I described this prayer like this: 1-5 Jesus demands that the Father glorify him so that he may glorify the Father. In 6-19, Jesus prays for his disciples and the last section (20-26), Jesus prays for those who will believe.
 - b. I've thought of another way to think about it. The first section emphasizes the purpose for which the world was created—namely to glorify God. The second part stresses the mission of God through his followers which will soon be a collective group called the church. And finally, the last part of this amazing prayer is the harvest of the field.
 - c. May the purposes of Jesus' prayer continue to be fulfilled in us. Our purpose here at UHBC is to glorify God. We who are his followers are being kept by God for the purpose of being sanctified—set apart in godly character and set apart to carry on the mission of God in making disciples. Our primary field is this area that we live in—Union Hill. And certainly, we cooperate with other organizations that are working in many fields all over the world. One of those fields is the State of Tennessee to which the Golden State Offering helps those at work in this field.
- II. Main Point
 - a. In light of Jesus' departure, he asks the Father to protect your disciples while they are in the world yet set apart in character and mission for God's glory.
- III. Outline
 - a. 6-8 Jesus says what he has done and how the disciples have responded
 - b. 9-12 As Jesus leaves, he asks the Father to keep them in your name
 - c. 13-16 As Jesus leaves, he asks the Father to keep them from evil
 - d. 17-19 Sanctify them in the Truth and send out the truth through them
- IV. Exposition
 - a. This first section is very surprising in some ways. To know what we have seen out of the disciples makes it hard to understand how Jesus can say they have kept God's word. We need to explore this report Jesus prays and consider how the disciples have responded.
 - i. Following the grand purposes of seeking his glory the he may glorify the Father, Jesus now sums up what he has been doing over the last three years. He says there in verse 6, "I have manifested...or made known...your name".
 1. The incarnation of Christ accomplished the express purpose of revealing the invisible God.
 - a. Think of it like this: If I have a thought in my mind, you cannot see it. But if I speak words and describe that thought, then you can hear/see that thought.
 2. The name of God, as we've looked at before, is the character and glory of God. We saw that clearly in Exodus 33 and 34.
 - a. So, Jesus revealed the character and glory of God to these disciples.
 - ii. God loved the world by giving his Son. And his Son came and gave them God's word. The Father gave those who were his to his Son and they received him and his word.
 1. While many others received Jesus and his word, the context of this prayer is specifically talking about the eleven disciples that are present with him.
 2. They are described as "have kept your words" at the end of verse 6. With their track record, you might want to question this statement.
 - a. However, there's something to be said about them remaining with him through all of this.
 - i. When many turned their backs on Jesus because of his hard sayings, Peter replied on behalf of the group: (Jn. 6:68-69) ⁶⁸"Lord, to whom

- shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."
- ii. When at great risk of traveling through areas that hated Jesus: (Jn. 11:16) ¹⁶ Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."
 - iii. Hear the willingness of Peter in (Jn. 13:37) "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."
 - iv. A commitment that says I'm not going anywhere and I'm going to do what it takes to work things out in love and truth is a noble and rare. Let's be all in.
- b. I think we need to hear specifically what Jesus says they have kept. There, beginning in (Jn. 17:7-8) ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.
 - i. "The disciples had not displayed mature conformity to the details of Jesus' teaching, but they had committed themselves unreservedly to Jesus as the Messiah, the one who truly reveals the Father" (Carson 559).
 - ii. There are a lot of things they do not have figured out but they know what is important for now.
3. I want to pause here for a moment. There are many who have genuine faith in Christ that do not yet know too much about the details. And there are also those who know more details. We must love each other wherever they are.
 - a. Let have patience with each other. Let us learn from one another.
 - b. This is the point where the church as a whole has been lazy. Like parents, we know what it's like to demand our orders and expect them to get it. Full and complete obedience or we blow our top.
 - c. We must be willing to walk with each other until Christ is formed in each of us. Let's do the slow, hard work of making disciples which is teaching them to observe/keep not just repeat Christ's commands.
 - d. However, I would also raise this question, what would Jesus' evaluation of you be? Have you kept his word?
 4. Maybe the order that Jesus gave will help us think more in terms of a process than immediate conformity.
 - a. Jesus gave them God's words.
 - b. They received them.
 - c. They have come to know them in truth.
 - d. And finally, they have believed.
 - i. I've watched this process happen in my life and many others at various rates of speed. We just need to be faithful to share the word.
- b. Obviously, Jesus revealed God's name not only in himself but also in all the words he gave them from the Father. Now, Jesus asks that the Father keep them in your name.
 - i. I think it's better to say "asking" rather than "praying" in verse 9. I will explain why in a moment.
 - ii. But first we must hear Jesus draw a clear contrast between his disciples and the world.
 1. (Jn. 17:9) ^{NAU} **John 17:9** "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours

2. Of course, God loved the world by sending his Son. But the clear distinction made here by Jesus is based on the fact that these disciples are the Father's. That's how verse 9 ends: ...because they are yours!
 - a. This theme has been stated at least 6 times throughout this pray. (Jn. 17:10) All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.
 - b. The Triune God is in a unique relationship with those who believe. Those who believe have committed their lives to following Christ. This wasn't a one-time event but rather a lifelong allegiance to their Savior, God and King!
 - c. As I heard one Romanian pastor say, "The One who bought must own me" (Josef Tson). His wife Elizabeth would often urge him on after he said this by say, "You said you were ready to die for him, then go do it." We all need a wife like that.
 - d. We are ambassadors for Christ. It is only fitting that God keep us in the name of whom we represent and glorify him on earth!
- iii. And that is exactly what Jesus is asking the Father as his departure is imminent. (Jn. 17:11) Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, [just] as we are one.
 1. Another reason why Jesus would not pray for the world is because he was asking for those who had kept his word be kept in his name. By definition, the world was not keeping God's word so to ask for them to be kept in it wouldn't make sense.
 2. "The world can be prayed for only to the end that some who now belong to it might abandon it and join with others who have been chosen out of the world" (Carson 561).
 3. There are some amazing things in this prayer. The purpose for which Jesus asks the Holy Father (we will talk more about that title at the end) is that they may be one, JUST AS we are one.
 - a. One obvious observation is they cannot be one unless the Father keeps them in the name.
 - b. I don't want to overstate this nor understate this. Yet I think it's all the things we've been talking about. Ultimate allegiance to the Name that was made known to them through Jesus' coming in the flesh and the giving of God's word.
 - i. I might summarize it like this: let's love the Lord our God with one heart and one mind.
 - ii. We must be on the same page. That's why we have a statement of faith. Let's be eager to maintain the unity of the faith.
 - iv. Jesus recalls about his time with his disciples and how he kept them in the name while he was with them.
 1. The loss of Judas Iscariot was not a failure on Jesus' part. He was described as the son of destruction that fulfilled what was written in the Scriptures. His pattern of life and the choices he made clearly point to his fraudulent faith. Jesus is able to keep his own.
- c. Several reasons are present for which the disciples need the Father to keep them in the name to maintain oneness...unity.
 - i. By nature, we are selfish. It is good to be set and immovable in the name and ways of God. But we could be set and immovable in the wrong things.
 - ii. Add to that problem an evil enemy who is lurking around to see where he can cause disunity.
 1. I think satan had rather start a long, embarrassing fight in a church than to take it down with one swift blow. There's far more damage from the fighting to be done to the image of God. Gossiping and talking about others in secret are like cancer. The whispers in SS or in the form of a prayer request are deadly to the body.

- iii. So, Jesus asks that the Father keep them from the evil one. He doesn't come announcing who he is and what his intentions are. That's why the image of a wolf in sheep's clothing is helpful and scary.
- iv. Jesus could have prayed all of this later but he said it while still in the world for the benefit of his disciples.
 - 1. Think about it like this: "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me. (Robert Murray M'Cheyne p. 179)
 - 2. Whether Christ is praying for his disciples in their presence or interceding for them in heaven which he does, it is for the purpose of his joy being filled in them.
- v. The disciples will soon discover their urgent need to pray as Jesus has instructed many times already. I can't help but think these are some of the most important things to ask for.
 - 1. Indeed, were they not taught to pray, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."
 - 2. How eager are we to maintain a spirit of unity?
 - 3. They will have to trust the Lord to answer according to his perfect will. "God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knows" (Tim Keller).
 - 4. You should be praying for protection and unity in our church every day. You could be the one causing disunity. Ask the Lord to search for any wicked ways in you as the psalmist did.
- vi. We might think that the best option for our protection would be for God to take us out of the world. Or, why doesn't God throw that serpent into his cage?
 - 1. Suffering is part of the means by which God uses to carry on his mission in the world. We sheep sent out in the midst of wolves.
 - 2. Jesus' plan, there in verse 14, was to give these disciples God's word while Satan and the world hate them.
 - a. Oh my! Notice the end of that verse. You are hated because you are not from the world anymore. In fact, you are not from this world just as Jesus is not from this world.
 - b. You have a new, permanent residence of unending joy in the presence of your Savior awaiting you. Who cares that you are momentarily hated?!
 - 3. Jesus insists that the Father not take them from the world but to protect them from the evil one while in the world! I'm unwavering on my belief that God can protect us from that snake. But this enemy is not to be underestimated and toyed with.
- d. What will protect us? God, right? Yeah, but by what means? We pray for a hedge of protection but what do we mean by that? (Job) I think this last point is part of the means by which God protects us. When Jesus demands that God sanctify them in the truth it is the truth that sets us free and world needs the truth to be set free from their bondage.
 - i. Earlier, Jesus addressed the Father as Holy Father. If God is to sanctify (make holy) Jesus' disciples, then the One doing it must be holy. God did not go through any process to become holy. He is holy. And therefore, He who is holy can certainly make us holy.
 - ii. But how does this protect us? How does hating what God hates and loving what God loves protect us?
 - 1. When Paul says to put on the breastplate of righteousness to protect our hearts from the evil arrows of the devil, what is it we are putting on? Is it just a piece of armor with the word righteousness written on it or is the image telling us to put on righteousness to protect us? That's right. Righteousness.

2. Sin destroys. Just think through how damaging a lie is.
- iii. But how does God do that? Do we sit down with him? Are we taken up to heaven for training?
 1. We have what we need—God’s word. The Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are sufficient to train us in righteousness.
- iv. I’ve often thought of verse 19 in terms of Jesus setting the example for the disciples to follow. As any of you know, example isn’t sufficient to make anyone set apart in truth.
 1. Certainly, Jesus was their perfect example but I think we need more than that. That’s why I am convinced that Jesus is consecrated—which is the same word used when the first-born lambs were set apart for sacrifice in Deuteronomy 15:19.
 2. In other words, Jesus the Lamb of God sets himself apart for the perfect sacrifice for our sins that we might be set apart in truth.
 3. (1 Cor. 1:30-31) ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

V. Response

- a. Let’s be serious about the glory of God. Let’s be intentional about continuing the mission of God. And let us pray for people to come to faith in Christ as God sends us out into the world on Union Hill or wherever we are.
- b. We must also be serious about being sanctified to be effective in the mission of God.