

May 24, 2009  
Easter 7

*"Jesus Prays for Our Protection"*

### **JOHN 17:11-19**

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*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

Have you ever met someone who carries with them an actual prayer list so they can continually pray for people who are in need? I have. The person I am thinking of was once a member of this church, who has now gone home to be with the Lord. His name was Lorenz Heinze. He carried in his pocket a little notebook that included a list of names of people for whom he was always praying. Some of you sitting here this morning have been the beneficiary of this man's constant prayers when your name was on this list.

One night a young man was walking down the hall of his home, and he heard his grandmother talking to someone. He looked through her bedroom door and saw her on her knees praying, praying for different people including him. She prayed that God would keep him safe and use her grandson to serve faithfully in his kingdom. He never forgot his grandmother's love and the prayer that she prayed for him that night.

The night before he died, Jesus prayed fervently to his heavenly Father for his beloved disciples. The Holy Spirit guided the Apostle John to put these words down into the pages of the Bible so we can actually listen to this prayer that Jesus prayed. This morning we want to kneel down next to Jesus and listen to him as he prays to his heavenly Father. You see he is not just praying these words for his beloved disciples who were with him the night before he died. He is also praying these words for disciples of all ages, including you and me.

#### **Jesus asks the Father to protect us**

Listen as Jesus prays. "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-the name you gave me- so that they may be one as we are one." Jesus calls his heavenly Father, "Holy Father." Later in this chapter Jesus calls him "Righteous Father." He prays that his Holy and Righteous Heavenly Father might protect his beloved disciples by his powerful and holy name. When we pray "Our Father who art in heaven" we are not just addressing some

generic god who is the same for all people but with different names. We are not praying to some nebulous force in the universe. We are speaking specifically to the one true God, the heavenly Father who gave us the gift of His beloved Son to save us.

Jesus prays, "Father protect them." In verse 15 he prays, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one." Jesus tells his heavenly Father, "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you have gave me." The Old Testament had predicted that Jesus' enemies would strike the shepherd and the sheep would be scattered. Jesus warned Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. The disciples did not take this warning seriously. Jesus protected his disciples by reminding them that he was their Savior and their loving shepherd with words such as, "I am the good Shepherd. I give my life for the sheep." And, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, for they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Jesus did not want his disciples to be lost forever as happened to Judas. He told his Father, "None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that the Scripture might be fulfilled." The Old Testament had predicted Judas would be lost. He was responsible for turning against Jesus even though Jesus repeated reached out to him in love.

When we were children, my dad or mom would tuck us in at night and say our prayers with us. We usually prayed the familiar prayer, *"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. This I ask for Jesus sake, Amen."* It was a prayer for protection through the night. Making it through the night is usually not much of a problem. It is much harder to make it through the day with all the temptations that come from Satan, from the world around us, and from deep within our hearts that still have the corruption of sin. Martin Luther's Morning Prayer has these words, *"I thank you my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me through this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen."*

What Jesus wants is that we would not follow in the footsteps of Judas and turn ourselves over to Satan. That is why he prayed to his Father, "Holy Father protect them.. so they may be one as we are one." At the beginning of this prayer Jesus said, "O Father, give me the glory I had with you before the world began." Later in this prayer he says, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you have loved before the creation of the world."

I am holding in my hand a card. On one side of the card I might write down the names of people who are sick and suffering who need our daily prayers. On the other side are all those people who are in danger of turning their backs on Jesus, who no longer sit at Jesus feet and hear his Word as they once did in their lives. We join our Lord Jesus in praying for their protection. In the musical Les Miserable, Valjean stands at the barricade and prays that the Lord would bring Marius home from war. "God on high, hear my prayer, in my need You have always been there. He is young, he's afraid, let him rest, heaven blessed. Bring him home. Bring him home. Bring him home." We pray for those we know and love. "Bring them home. Bring them home. Bring them home to the place Jesus has prepared for us."

As we think of people who have turned their backs on Jesus, we think of how much we need personal protection from the evil one so the same thing does not happen to us. Listen again to the warning in Ephesians 6 that says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Our soldiers are able to wear Kevlar vest that offer them some protection from bullets fired at them. God's Word is the best protection we have against these attacks of the devil.

As we listen to Jesus praying for his disciples, we realize our ascended Lord is still praying for us at the right hand of the Father. Hebrews 7:25 says, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he lives to intercede for them." Romans 8:34 says, "Who is he that that condemns? Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." Did you ever wonder how many prayers Jesus is praying for you every day, and every hour, as he continually asks the Father to protect you? We need these prayers because of the dangers that face us every day.

Why doesn't Jesus come and take us home, not tomorrow or the next day, but right now? Why does he leave us on this earth? In his infinite wisdom he has chosen us to bring the message of his salvation to people who are still without hope. That's the only reason we are still living on this earth and exposed to daily temptation.

### **He asks the Father to sanctify us**

If we are going to reach out to people, we need more joy in our lives. Listen to Jesus pray for this greater joy in your life and mine. "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them." Earlier in the evening he had told his disciples, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy might be complete." In John 10 where Jesus spoke about himself as the shepherd for the sheep he said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full." When you know how lost you were without Jesus, and when you see how he has rescued you and brought you home to himself, it fills you with a joy that radiates to people living around you in the world.

How do we get this full measure of joy that Jesus speaks of here? Jesus prays, "I have given them your word and the world has not hated them." Nothing will change your life more for the better than the extra time you spend in God's Word. Here on the pages of the Bible God lets you enter into his mind and understand and believe his plan to rescue you when you were lost. Here in the Bible you can come face to face with how far you have fallen short of God's glory and how you cannot pay off a single sin even if you are the nicest person in the world. Here you discover how carefully God the Father carried out the plan to have Jesus suffer and die to make full payment or atonement. 1 John 4 says, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." Here in the Bible you come face to face with God's promises to bless and keep you.

By getting into the word you become different from the world around you. That is why Jesus prayed to his Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify

them by the truth. Your Word is truth." Sanctify means to be set apart. Because of God's Word that enters and changes your life, you become a city within a city. You become part of a group world wide who are branches attached to Christ the Vine. Your good works flow from a love for Christ. The world does not like what it sees in you, especially your belief that salvation is only found in Jesus' name. The plan is not to take you out of the world, or to put a bubble around you, but to let you be a city within a city, a light shining in the darkness, sheep who are joyfully following the shepherd and not ashamed of what they believe. "Father, protect them. Keep them safe. Use them for your glory. Then bring them home." Amen.