

Easter 7  
May 17, 2015

*"Jesus Prays for Us"*

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**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.*

I can't tell you enough what a privilege it is to tell people, "I am praying for you." You listen carefully as someone shares a problem they are having. You tell them, "I will be praying for you." You keep your promise. You pray for them not just once but as often as possible.

It is also a blessing to be on the receiving end of prayers. A few weeks ago we received an email from Molly Webb thanking our congregation for all the prayers on her behalf. Some of you sitting here this morning have been the recipients of lots of prayers from members of this congregation and your pastor.

Today we are going to listen in on a prayer that Jesus prayed in the presence of his disciples the night before he died. As you listen to this prayer, you realize Jesus is not just praying for his disciples with him in that upper room but for Christians of every age. He is praying for you and me. Let's listen as he prays for our protection and then as he prays for us to be sanctified or set apart from the world in which we are living.

**He prays for our protection**

Jesus prays for our protection. "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 power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."

Our Father in heaven is able to protect us because he is a powerful and awesome God, just as Jesus is our all powerful Lord and God. This past week I talked with a young man who is very devoted to the Lord. He reads his Bible daily. I asked him where he was reading and he said he was finishing up the book of Job. We discussed how it is not always easy to follow the conversation between Job and God and Job and his friends. But then he said something that shows us how powerful our God is. He was fascinated by how the

Lord our God told Job to look up in the stars to convince him of his power to care for him. Remember the words in Job 38. "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their season?" God wanted to show Job that he was so powerful and so awesome that he could even work good out of the tragedies he was going through in his life.

Think of how often you pray to your heavenly Father for protection. If one of your family members is traveling you pray for them to have a safe trip. If they are facing important surgery you pray for their safety. You pray for your children and grandchildren to be kept safe from harm and danger. Jesus is praying for our protection that we might continue to be one as he and the heavenly Father are one.

Just think of it. You are one with Jesus and the Father. Later in this prayer Jesus prays, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." The ultimate safety and protection and security we have in life is being one with God our heavenly Father through Jesus his Son our Savior. We are God's children through Jesus. Jesus is the vine and we are branches. We are closely connected to him. He is our Shepherd and we are his sheep. Romans 8 says, "Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus prays that his disciples and you and I might never lose this closeness we have with the Father and with him.

How painful it must have been for Jesus to see one of his beloved disciples lose that close connection with him and his heavenly Father. He prays, "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 the Scripture might be fulfilled." The Scripture predicted that one of Jesus' disciples would separate himself from Jesus. Oh, how often Jesus tried to reach out to Judas, but Judas kept turning his back on Jesus. Oh, how often Jesus prayed for him in those long nights of prayer. Judas resisted Jesus and the prediction about him came true.

I need Jesus praying for my protection and so do you. The rejection that took place in the life of Judas did not happen suddenly, overnight. It came on slowly. Perhaps it started with thinking too much about money. Then he started making excuses for the greedy thoughts inside of his heart. He became more and more resistant to the loving words of Jesus until finally he betrayed him with thirty pieces of silver. How chilling are the words of James chapter one that tell us, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown gives birth to death." A mother once gave very good advice to her daughter when she said, "Always watch the beginnings."

Oh, dear Christian listen to Jesus as he prays for you: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name." Jesus has ascended up to heaven. He is sitting on the right hand of the heavenly Father. He is praying for you and for me. Don't underestimate how much power Jesus has. Romans 8 says, "Who is he that condemns? Jesus Christ who died-more than that, who was raised life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." We value highly the prayers we are able to bring to God for people we know and love, but we value even more the prayers that Jesus is praying for us, especially the prayers for our

protection.

## **Jesus prays to sanctify us**

Jesus also prays that we might be sanctified or set apart from the world by the Word that he brings into our lives. In verse 17 he prays to his Father, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." To sanctify means to set something aside for special use, something special for God. To illustrate let me hold up a silver knife from a set of silver utensils given to us after Susan's mom passed away. We use these utensils on special occasions such as Thanksgiving or Christmas. You would not think of using a knife like this to dig weeds out of the yard. Because Jesus has redeemed you by his precious blood, you are now saints of God. You are special to the Lord, set aside to serve him in special ways before he calls you home to heaven. 1 Peter 2 says this of us: "But you also are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." God's Word keeps sanctifying you and telling you how special you are to the Lord. It sets you apart from the world.

You can appreciate how much God's Word changes you and sets you apart when you listen to what Jesus prays in verses 14 and 15. "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not off the world anymore than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." Jesus gave the words of his Heavenly Father to his beloved disciples. The words changed them and made them different from the world around them. Peter once said to Jesus, "Lord to who shall we turn, you have the words of eternal life." Jesus said of his disciples who follow him, "My sheep listen to my voice and I know them and they follow me." You are so radically different from the world around you because you have listened to the voice of the Shepherd and you depend on him to save you instead of yourself.

By the world Jesus, of course is not talking about the created world he has given us with trees and mountains and sunsets and oceans. He is talking about the sinful world or we might even say "sin-filled" world. The world is made of up sheep who believe they can be independent of God and his love for them. They believe they can walk down the paths of sin without suffering any consequences. They are fully convinced they can depend on themselves to make it through this life and also be ready for the life to come. These views are radically different from people who follow Jesus and depend on him as sheep depend on their Shepherd. As the sheep eat from the rich mountain grasses of God's Word and as they rest beside the quiet cool waters, they are radically changed to become closer and closer to the Shepherd and more and more removed from this world. Jesus said we are in the world but not of the world.

To see even more how radically different we are from the world because of Jesus look more closely now at verse 13. "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." Notice Jesus says, "**My** joy." He wants his disciples to have his joy in them. Can't you see the joy on Jesus' face as he completes his work saving us and as he cries out from the cross, "It is finished"? Can't you see the joy on the face of Jesus as he finishes his work and then cries out "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"? Can't you see the joy on the face of Jesus as he appears to his disciples on the night of his resurrection and says to them "Peace be to you" and then shows them the nail prints in his hands? It says the disciples

were overjoyed to see the Lord. Jesus is praying that you see this full measure of joy that he has in saving you. That will sustain you in this world and that will set you apart from the world in which you are living.

Jesus tells his Father, "For them I sanctified myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." Jesus set himself apart from the world. He lived the perfect life we could never live. He offered the perfect sacrifice for every sin we have committed this morning, yesterday and in any part of our lives. He truly sanctifies us and sets us apart with a joy that this world cannot give. He lets you live where you are living so people can ask you to tell them about the joy and peace that has come into your life. Jesus prays for us. He never stops praying for us. What a blessing that is as we start another week of life on this earth before the Lord calls us home to heaven. Amen.