

“The Lord’s Prayer for His Disciples” John 17 Shane Hatfield 4/18/21

If you’ve got a Bible, you can open it up to John 17. We’ve been studying Jesus’ Glorious Farewell. This is the last night that He spent with His disciples here on earth before His crucifixion and He gave them lots of instructions before His departure. The overwhelming concern of His departure was He did not want them to worry or be sorrowful or fear. He wanted to strengthen them before He left. So, He gave them all these instructions and then He gives us this prayer, and this prayer, as we said last week, is not primarily a “how-to” about praying. It is primarily a look into the very heart of God, where we get to see His love for us and His mission for the world. Last week, we looked at how Jesus prayed for Himself: He prayed that He would glorify God and that God would glorify Him and that He would bring us into that glorious relationship. This week, we are going to look at Jesus’ prayer for the disciples. So, I’ve called this “The Lord’s Prayer for the Disciples.” If you’re a young listener, let me give you two questions to try to answer tonight. Who does Jesus pray for and what does He pray for them? There are two answers to that second question! Who does He pray for and what does He pray for them? Try to answer those as you listen.

Alright, let’s hear from God’s word. This is John 17:6-19. Hear the word of the Lord.

“6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 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. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

The book of Hebrews says that the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing through the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Let’s open ourselves up to God’s word and let it pierce us this evening.

As we’ve been going through this sermon series, I’ve been looking for farewell letters, and I haven’t found very many of them, there aren’t many great ones out there, if you know of one, then send it to me! But I remembered a resignation letter that I once heard about. In 1990, Robertson McQuilkin was the president of a Christian college, and in his career, he had everything going for him. He was having speaking engagements, he was the president of his college, he was incredibly successful, and at the height of his success he resigned because his

wife was struggling with Alzheimer's and she needed his care. In his resignation letter, he talks about why he's resigning from this position, as he's saying farewell to his college, and this is what he says: "Recently, it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time when she is with me, and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just discontent. She is filled with fear, even terror, that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home, so it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time. The decision was made, in a way, forty-two years ago when I promised to care for Muriel in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part. So as I told the students and faculty as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it, but so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years. If I cared for her for the next forty years, I would not be out of her debt. Duty can be grim and stoic but there is more. I love Muriel. She is a delight to me. Her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't have to care for her. I get to. It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person." I love the mutual devotion in that letter. This wife was devoted to her husband and he was devoted to her. They were devoted to each other and they saw each other as a good gift, and they saw the way that they could sacrifice, love and serve each other. There was mutual devotion for mutual benefit.

Well, in this passage that we read tonight, in verse 19, Jesus says, "And for their sake," that's the disciples, "I consecrate myself." That word, 'consecrate,' means to devote in service to God. Jesus is saying, I'm devoting myself to the service of God *for them*. Why? That they also may be sanctified in the truth. And that word, 'sanctification' can mean devotion! That the disciples might be devoted in the truth. So, Jesus is saying, I am devoting myself to them, I am devoting myself to God, so that they might be devoted to God. I am devoting myself to You, Lord, so that these people, my disciples, might be devoted to You. There's this mutual devotion that takes place between Father and Son, and between the Son and the disciples. And so, tonight, as we look at Jesus' prayer, what I want you to see is that Jesus has totally and completely devoted Himself to you, so that you will totally and completely devote yourself to Him and find life in Him. And He is asking the Father, in that process, to protect you, to protect us, and to transform us. So, we're going to look at three things tonight, we're going to see three things. We're going to see that Jesus devoted Himself to the church, Jesus asked the Father to protect the church, and Jesus asked the Father to sanctify the church. My wording is going to be a little bit different than the outline, that's not Daniel's fault, that's mine.

So, the first thing we see is that Jesus devoted Himself to the church. If you look at verse 6, Jesus says, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world." Now, last week we looked at John 17:2 where it says that God gave Jesus authority over all flesh. That means all of the humans that were ever created, Jesus was in authority over all of them. He is the King and Lord of all of them. But what this is saying now, is that out of all that flesh in all creation, God has given Jesus a people. He has given some of them, in His name, to Jesus as a gift. And here in this particular text, He is talking about the disciples, He is talking about the eleven disciples that He has called to serve Him, that He lived with, and now they are spending this final evening with Him before His death. The one loss being Judas who betrayed Jesus. These disciples are a gift to Jesus from the Father and Jesus revealed the Father to them, and He says there are four things that they have believed about Jesus from the Father. They know that the Father gave the Son everything. They know that Jesus is Lord over everything. They know that Jesus came from the Father. They know that Jesus' words are the very words of the Father. They know that the Father sent Him, and He is going back to Him. These are the four

Christological truths about Jesus that these disciples know. They knew them and they believed them, right?

Well, those disciples, after Jesus' death and resurrection became the apostles! They became the people that bore witness to the person and work of Jesus. They bore witness through the preaching and teaching, and they bore witness through the written record that we have in Scripture. This witness that we have in the New Testament is their witness. All the writers in the New Testament were either disciples that followed Jesus in His early life or written by someone who knew one of those disciples. Like Mark, most likely, was a student of Peter's, who followed Peter around and recorded Peter's stories into the book of Mark that we have. So, you have the disciples, who became the apostles, the apostles became these witnesses, and then we have Scripture. The church is all the people who believe in Jesus through their record. The Holy Spirit used the preaching and the recording of these men to rescue sinners like us and bring them into God's family. We'll look at this text more in depth next week, but 17:20 says, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word." That's us. So, this prayer that Jesus is about to pray is for the disciples who would become apostles, but it's also for us and it's also for everyone in the church, for all who call on the Lord Jesus to save them. Those are the people that Jesus is praying for. Those are the people that Jesus has devoted Himself to. They know these truths. They believe these truths, and they are in Christ.

Now, let me make one teaching point before we move on to the application of this. There are truths in Scripture that are essential to Christianity, and Jesus outlines some of them here. Scripture, the authority and inspiration of Scripture, is essential. The person and work of Jesus, His full humanity and His full divinity, is essential. Faith and repentance in Jesus for salvation is essential, okay? You cannot take those out of Christianity and still have Christianity. There was a book a few years ago, it was really popular in the early 2000s, I think they were trying to be helpful, they said that the Christian theology is like a brick wall and our faith should be strong enough that we should be able to pull one of those bricks out of the wall without it all coming crumbling down. Well, the example that he used in the book was the virgin birth! What's the problem with pulling the virgin birth out of the theology of the Christian church? You pull out the cornerstone! What happens if you pull out the cornerstone of the building? The cornerstone is the foundational piece that all of the other building is built on. If you pull out the cornerstone, what happens? The whole thing crumbles. If you pull out these essential truths about Jesus, then the whole Christian faith crumbles. You can't just start pulling out truths willy nilly. This is why we need church history. This is why we need the apostles and the disciples and church history, because through the first 500 years of church history they nailed down these essential truths about the divinity of Jesus. One theologian said this about Jesus' virgin birth, and I thought this was beautiful, he says, "Humanity needed to be made holy through the humanity of God incarnate. The only way we could be made holy is if God, Himself, became a man to make us holy." So, you can't just pull these truths out of Scripture. It's foundational to who we are and what we believe. and it is foundational to Jesus' devotion to the church.

Jesus devoted Himself to the church the way a young parent devotes themselves to a baby. We have a lot of new mothers in here, and a new mother and a new father, they pour themselves into this baby. They care for it, they love it, they nurture it, they treasure it! And then, there comes a day when they have to let somebody else watch that baby and they leave a long list of things for the babysitter to do, and often that babysitter is their parents, and it's kind of ironic because they leave a list a mile long for the parents to do to take care of that baby, and it's almost like they forget that the parents raised them! The parents know how to watch the baby! What we

have here is Jesus saying, 'Father, this is my baby! Protect it. Take care of it. Guard it. Love it. I have devoted myself to this baby and now it is yours.' And the first thing He says is, 'Protect it.' Jesus says, I have done everything else, I pray that you would protect it. So, He prays, 'Father, protect the church.' John 17:11 He says, "11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name." He's saying, they are in the world and I'm not here! I need you to protect them, Father, protect them while they're in the world. As we talked about earlier in John, the world hates the church. The world opposes the church because it opposes Christ. And Jesus sees this baby that He loves, and now He's leaving and saying, please, please Father, protect it.

There was a conversation that I had with a youth student one time that reminded me that the world is a mean place, not just for Christians, but for everybody. I was talking to this middle schooler and he was talking about how he didn't like his school and he didn't want to go back, and I said, "Man, were they mean to you? Were they mean to you at school?" And he said, "They're mean to everybody!" He said, "In middle school, everybody is mean to everybody." And as you talk with people who work in the world, you see that there's backstabbing and there's condemning and there's gossip, and you look on social media and there's just vitriol everywhere! Then you have all the turmoil in the world, and we've had multiple shootings all over the place, and you just look at the world, and you're just like, right now the world looks like one big middle school and everybody is just mean to everybody! And Jesus is looking at the Father saying, 'Protect it. Protect it. I've done everything necessary for it. Protect it. Care for it. Protect it from the world and protect it from the evil one.'

John 15 says, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." The evil one is the devil! It is a real spiritual being who is orchestrating, coordinating, collaborating with the evil forces of this world to wage war against Christ and against His church. And I love what D. A. Carson says. He says we become so consumed with the things of this world that we forget to pray like Jesus did against the devil. This is what he says: "The spiritual dimensions of this prayer of Jesus are consistent and overwhelming. By contrast, we spend much more time today praying about our health, our projects, our decisions, our finances, our family, and even our gains than we do praying about the danger of the evil one." Jesus is praying to the Father, don't let the evil one overtake them. One of the interesting things that He says throughout this prayer is 'I have and I ask, I have and I ask. What Jesus is doing is He is basing our protection on His performance and through the cross we see that Jesus defeated the world and the devil. And He's saying, 'Father, because I have defeated the world and the devil, protect them.' Don't give the baby away! Protect it. Just like when Peter, before Jesus is crucified, 'Jesus says, Peter the devil has asked to sift you like sand, but I have prayed for you!' Jesus has prayed for us that we will not be sifted, no matter what we experience in this world. He's not going to give us away. He is a good Father.

One time, I was a bad father. I gave one of my children away. I was at a wedding with Shari and Tucker about two weeks after Tucker was born and a lady came up to me and she said, 'Oh, that's such a cute little baby! Can I hold your baby?' And me, being an ignorant new dad, said, 'Sure! Here you go!' And this lady took Tucker off and she walked off and she started showing him around, and I went back and I found Shari, and she said, 'Where's our baby?' And I said, 'This lady has him!' 'What lady?' 'I don't know!' 'You gave our baby to a stranger?' 'Yeah! She's at the wedding! Surely, she's a good person. She's showing him around!' She said, 'Go get our baby!' I said, 'Okay,' so I went and got the baby. She's never let me forget that. I'm a bad father! I gave the baby away. God's not a bad Father. He's a good Father. He's not going

to give you away. He's not going to give the church away because Jesus has defeated the world and the devil, and the Father loves us and is going to care for us.

I know right now it's tiring, it's exhausting, the world, the pandemic, our social crises, not to mention all of our personal concerns, it's just exhausting. There was a Times article a few weeks ago titled, 'Everyone has hit the wall,' and it was all about burn-out and fatigue because of the pandemic, and it basically said we're just struggling to get work done and life done anymore. We just can't do it. And I don't know about you, but I feel that every day is a new struggle to get myself to do the things that I used to do, and I think we need to remember that no matter what happens, Jesus is devoted to us. He has done everything necessary to rescue us, and the Father is going to protect us. No matter what happens, the Father is going to protect the church because He loves it and Jesus loves it.

The second thing He's going to do, is Jesus is going to sanctify the church. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify the church. Look at verse 17, Jesus says "17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." So, what does that word sanctify mean? The word sanctify means to make something holy. What does it mean to be holy? To be holy means you are set apart. You are different. You have been cleansed. You have been washed. You've been transformed. Now, you are set apart and special. There are two different ways the Bible talks about sanctification. There is a definitive sanctification, a one-time setting apart of something. The Old Testament talks about Mount Sinai, a mountain, being sanctified. It says that there are chairs in the temple that are sanctified. This is not a good or a bad chair, a chair can't be good or bad, but a chair can be set apart for a special circumstance. There's also what we call a progressive sanctification, and that's the process of making something more and more holy. That's the process of something becoming more and more Godly.

So, what Jesus did is He sanctified the church in both ways. The Bible says that Christians are washed, justified, and sanctified in Christ. That is a one-time cleansing, setting apart, and devoting to the service of God that was done through the person and work of Jesus. Paul says that in 2 Corinthians 6:11. So, there's that definitive sanctification that's taken place. But there's also progressive sanctification that's taking place where the church is becoming more and more like Jesus. It's cleansed and washed through the Word. You might think of Ephesians 5 where it likens Jesus to the groom and the church to the bride and it says that Jesus cleanses her with the washing of water in the Word. You might think of Romans 6 where it calls us to put away sinfulness and pursue righteousness. So, Jesus has one-time set apart the church for devotion to God, but He's also calling us in this continual process of becoming more and more like Jesus.

Well, how do we do that? He says, "Sanctify them in your word." God works by and with the word of God to sanctify us, because again, as we said, this word is a record of the person and work of Jesus, so when we come to the word, we interact with Jesus and the Holy Spirit uses it to set us apart for God, and to make us look more and more like Jesus. And so, as the Church, we are a community of people that are built around Jesus, but because we find Jesus in His word, we're also built around His word, and this word gives us a vision for what holiness looks like, both as individuals and as a group. So, we can look at this word and go, 'How are we doing? How are we doing in our sanctification?' That's a scary thing, isn't it? How are you growing in your faith? How are you looking more like Jesus? But we can ask that question without fear because we know we have definitively been sanctified in Jesus. So, we don't have to be afraid of the question, 'How are we doing in our progressive sanctification?' right? And the church, we as the body, are here to help each other in that process.

Now, imagine if you sat down in the chair next to someone and they said, “How are you doing? How are you doing in your faith?” And you said, “Oh yeah, I’m doing fine. I’m doing good.” And they said, “No, no, no, how are *you doing*? How is your prayer life? How is your relationship with your spouse? How is your relationship with your roommate? How is your relationship with your parents? Is there any area of your life where you are pursuing cross-cultural relationships? Is there any area of your life where you are sacrificially giving? Is there any area of your life where you are refusing to submit to the word of God?” Now, that might be a little off-putting if that happened at 4:55 in the worship service, right? But, in some ways, that is what God is calling us to do as the body, to help sanctify each other, to help us to become more and more devoted to Jesus, because Jesus has been devoted to us. We grow in holiness through His word. Jesus is devoted to our holiness and the Father is devoted to our holiness, and as God sanctifies us, then we shine light into the darkness of this world. Peter describes it this way, he says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a royal nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” As we grow in holiness, we proclaim God’s excellencies, His marvelous light into darkness. The world needs our holiness more than it needs our judgement. Jesus is in charge of the world. God put it all under His authority. He can handle that. And the best witness we can have to the world is to grow in holiness through His word. As a campus minister, we grew in RUF when our students loved each other and talked to each other about their sin. Not in a condemning way or in a judging way, but in a loving way. And we will grow as a body as we do that, and the Father will sanctify us through His truth and through His grace, and as He does that, the world will see something beautiful. It will see the truth of the gospel.

There was a campus minister a few years ago, his name was Jameson Stockhouse. Jameson was a campus minister in California, and he left and he went to plant a church and not long after he left to plant a church, he got cancer. He got very bad cancer. I think it was stomach cancer. He was in the hospital and they did everything they could to treat him and it became apparent that his cancer was not going to go away and he was going to pass, so they put him in hospice care in the hospital. And when he was in hospice care, he wanted his family to be there and his friends to come in, but when his pastor friends would come in, they would say, “Jameson, what do you want? What can we do for you?” And he would say, “Just read the Bible to me.” And so, his pastor friends, they would come in there, and they would sit, and they would just read the Bible to him as he is dying, and when doctors and nurses would come in, he would say to them, “This is true. Everything in this book is true. Listen to it.” This is a man on his deathbed, that has been so transformed by the devotion of Jesus that all he wants is to hear the words about Jesus, and for other people to hear the truth about Jesus. The truth had sanctified him, and it had changed him, and all he wanted, he said, “Believe it. Listen to it.” He wanted them to experience it.

The truth transforms us and it makes us more like Jesus and Jesus has accomplished everything necessary to give us life, spiritual life in Him, to protect the church and to sanctify the Church. Do you think the Father will answer that request? Yes, He will. He has been and He will continue to do so. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, devoted Himself to us so that we would become devoted to Him and then the Father is devoted to caring for us, and He’s sanctifying us. No matter what is going on in your life, the Father loves you, He wants to give you life, He is going to protect you, and He is going to sanctify you. Jesus assures you of that. The original meaning of sanctification in holiness means to be cut off. On the cross, Jesus was cut off from the Father so that we might be cut off for the Father, so that we might be devoted to

Him. That's the truth that we believe. We believe in Him, we know Him, we find life in Him, and we devote ourselves fully and completely to Jesus because He has fully and completely devoted Himself to us.

Now let's pray, and as we pray, we're going to ask God to show us any area of our life where we have not fully devoted ourselves to Him, and we're going to ask the Father to show us where we're afraid and where we're scared and where we need protection, and we're going to ask Him where we need to be sanctified, so that He would assure us that He loves us, and He's got us. Let's pray together.