

# Keep Them from the Evil One

*The "Other" Lord's Prayer*

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**Bible Text:** John 17:11-15  
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*Heavenly Father, as we turn to the Scriptures and to this magnificent prayer of the Lord Jesus, we pray for the blessing of the Holy Spirit that we might read, mark, learn and inwardly digest and all for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Please be seated.

Now turn with me to John 17 and we pick it up this morning at verse 11 through 16. John 17 at verse 11.

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.

So far God's holy and inerrant word.

Now as we continue examining this extraordinary prayer that Jesus prayed on the eve of his crucifixion, he tells his heavenly Father that he is about to leave them, he's about to go into his Father's nearer presence. He tells us in verse 13, "I am coming to you." He's going there in the power of a resurrected body into the very presence of his heavenly Father. He is no longer going to be in this world. He is where he is right now in heaven across a veil that separates this world from that beautiful place. The hour has come and his disciples had never known a moment without his presence, they have never known a moment in their entire Christian existence when Jesus wasn't there and this is a momentous moment, this is deeply deeply significant and we read in the Upper Room

discourse in chapters 14 and 15 and 16 of John, how Jesus prepares his disciples for life without his physical presence and talks a great deal about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the representative, personal representative agent of the Lord Jesus who will speak and minister on Jesus' behalf.

Now we won't address the call in verse 11 for unity when he says "that they may be one, even as we are one," because he takes that up again in verses 22 and 23 and we'll wait until we get to verses 22 and 23 to pick up the prayer for Christian unity. But I want us to see four things here that Jesus addresses and the first thing is the way that he addresses his Father in heaven, and here he says in verse 11, "Holy Father." Holy Father, and it's an expression that's only found here in John's gospel and it reminds us, first of all, that Jesus, the Incarnate Jesus, the Mediator, referred to God as Abba, as Father, using the same term that he taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Now the Lord's Prayer is not a prayer that Jesus could fully pray; he couldn't pray the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," for example, but it is a beautiful thing that the way and the manner in which he addresses God is to refer to him as Father.

You remember in the resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene and when she laid hold, you remember, of his feet and he said to her, "Do not lay hold of me because I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." And older interpreters drew a distinction between the way in which Jesus referred to "my Father and your Father" as though he meant something entirely different, that he related to his heavenly Father in a different way from the way that the disciples would relate to the heavenly Father, but modern commentators do the exact opposite and I think correctly so. Jesus is saying as the Incarnate one, as the enfleshed Jesus in his human nature, that he addresses God by this term Abba Father.

We have this intimate relationship with God. We know him as our heavenly Father. We are his sons. We are his children. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And as these disciples were listening to Jesus praying, they too would take up this term, "Father," but not just Father but "Holy Father." Holy Father. And even to the Incarnate Jesus there is something about God that he relates to in terms of the holiness of God. If there is an attribute that is perhaps more distinctive than any other attribute of God, it is perhaps the attribute of holiness and we can't but think of the vision in the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6 when he repeats that three-fold, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth is full of your glory." The word "holy" in Greek and in Hebrew both have the connotation of something that is weighty and something that is heavy, in other words, something that is deeply deeply significant. One commentator in our culture towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the late 1990s, David Wells, who published a series of four books analyzing our culture, and he referred to the Christian church having lost sight of the weightiness of God. The weightiness of God, and he talked about the weightlessness of God, that God had become something or someone trivial, and even to the Lord Jesus, even to the sinless Lord Jesus, there's something about his heavenly Father that is altogether different and separate and that's what the word "holy" means. It means to be separated. It means to be distinct. Holy Father.

And then he says, "keep them in your name." Keep them in your name. And then again in verse 12, "I kept them in your name." And then he goes on to say, "I have guarded them." And what seems to be uppermost here in the prayer of the Lord Jesus is for the protection of God's people. "I am no longer in this world. I am coming to you." He is going to leave this world and the disciples will not have the blessing of seeing him every day and listening to his voice every day, and he wants them to be protected that they might persevere because forces will come and try to divide them but keep them, protect them, watch over them, shelter them, guard them. There is trouble ahead for the disciples. Everyone except for John will end up a martyr. Yes, every single one of them will be martyred. It is through many tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God and so keep them, Jesus says, protect them, guard them, watch over them, help them.

Peter tells us in his first epistle in the first chapter, he talks about "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith, ready to be revealed in the last time." Paul says in his final epistle, "I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me." And that's Jesus' prayer here as he addresses his heavenly Father, "Holy Father, keep them and protect them." You may be passing through a period of trial and difficulty just now, things have happened that you didn't see coming, and here is the prayer of the Lord Jesus to protect you, to guard you, to overshadow you, to help you day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute.

That is the first thing, the way in which he addresses his heavenly Father; secondly, there's the matter of Judas Iscariot. Not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, and the Scriptures here are references in Psalm 49 and another reference in Psalm 55. Judas Iscariot, one of the 12 disciples, in the inner circle who had been with Jesus for three years. He had listened to him, watched him, followed him. He'd seen the miracles that Jesus had performed when he fed the 5,000 with some loaves of bread and some fish. He'd had the privilege of following him day by day. But that position of privilege did not in itself guarantee his obedience. This is a man who had preached. This is a man who had opened God's word. This is a man who had witnessed and had pointed to the Lord Jesus. But that wouldn't save him. He had listened to the Sermon on the Mount. He'd seen Lazarus rise from the dead. He'd seen healings and miracles. But his heart was like stone, his powerful conscience which led him to such an intensity of guilt following his betrayal that he took his own life. It's a fearful warning, isn't it, that you can be that close physically to the Lord Jesus, that you can be in the circle of fellow believers, fellow professors of faith, and yet one's heart still be like stone. Not a true believer. A follower but not a true believer who would betray the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

It's a warning to us not to presume. It's a warning to us to persevere to the end. It's a warning. It's like a light that comes on in the car to tell you that something may be wrong. It's a call to make sure that your faith is rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus this morning. You can be a member of First Presbyterian Church and you can be a member in good standing, and you can be a member for many many years, and you can have heard

many many sermons, but make sure that you're not a Judas Iscariot. Staggering, isn't it? You couldn't make this story up that one of the 12 disciples, one of the closes disciples to the Lord Jesus turned out not to be a true believer. He had the outward marks of faith but not the inner spirit, not the quickened heart, not the renewed mind and will.

The third thing I want us to see here is the joy that Jesus wants us to share, and he speaks of it in the end of verse 13, "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." It's something that he has already referred to back in chapter 15. Now what is joy? It's not the same thing as fun. Fun is a mark of the affluent West, the quest for pleasure, drugs and sex and gadgets and entertainment and travel and so on, but sometimes those very things can be expressive of the lack of true joy because you're always seeking after it and never actually finding it. Paul was in prison and that was no joy, there was no fun, but yet he could say, "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice." It's more than just a feeling. It's a condition and it comes from an awareness of being loved. That's the first thing, I would say, when you know that you are loved. Not all of you but most of you here this morning know that your mother loved you and sacrificed for you, and there's a joy that comes. That's not true of everyone and pray for our brothers and sisters for whom that is not true. Someone values you. Someone cares for you. Someone prays for you. Someone wants the best for you. That you count. That you matter. That you have value. That's joy. That's a true, solid, lasting joy.

Joy comes when you know that you're right where you ought to be. That makes life worth living. No matter what, no matter what the circumstances may be, you are in exactly the place that God wants you to be. When you have a firm solid confidence in the providence of God, that he upholds you, that he guides you, that he directs you, that he shelters you, that he provides for you, that's joy. Joy is knowing that a sovereign providential guidance keeps you and guides you and directs you. That's true Christian joy.

Joy comes from knowing that your sins are forgiven and that you have peace with God. Joy comes from an understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in Christ alone. Joy comes from knowing that Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you. Joy comes from knowing that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin, that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. You're convinced, you have this conviction, this morning, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in all of God's creation can separate you from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Can you sing this morning, "Solid joys and lasting pleasures, none but Zion's children know"? I've got joy, deep-seated joy in my heart because I know Jesus Christ. He's praying for me. He's my great High Priest. He wants joy for us that my joy might be fulfilled in themselves, he says. That's his prayer. He wants you to know that solid joy and lasting pleasure this morning.

And then, fourthly, that his disciples might be protected from the evil one there at the end of verse 15. The evil one was present there in the Upper Room as he took hold and

entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot, in the events that would transpire that evening into the events of the morning of Friday and the crucifixion of the Lord. He's prowling about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He's cunning. He's an adversary. He is the evil one and Jesus prays that you might be kept from the evil one. The evil one knows your weaknesses and he will go after them, but you need to know this morning and you need to remind yourself that he is a beaten adversary; that he has lost the battle; that in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus there was a death blow to Satan and his powers. Oh, he still twitches, there are still the death pangs of Satan as he prowls about like a roaring lion, but Christ has defeated him. The reason the Son of God appeared, John will write, is to destroy the works of the devil. Resist him. Yes, resist him steadfast in the faith. Know with an absolute certainty this morning that our great High Priest ever lives to intercede on your behalf and to shield you from the machinations of the evil one.

You need to acknowledge Satan's reality and I think C. S. Lewis was correct when he said we can make too much of him and we can make too little of him. We need to take his opposition seriously. We need to reckon on his wiles or strategies, reckon on the fact that he is at war with us and we are at war with him, but we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We take up a shield, and a sword, and a breastplate, and fight the good fight of faith. He is not divine. His powers are great but they're not omnipotent. He cannot be present in more than one place at a time.

What you need to do this morning, what I need to do this morning is to walk closely with the Lord Jesus and let his arms embrace you and his love overshadow you, and note, as he says, they are in the world but they're not of the world. They've been given Christ's word and the world hates them, and he sends you into the world equipped with his word. We've got work to do. We've got a Savior to witness to. And he wants us to make sure that we are kept from the wiles and machinations of the evil one.

Well, this is a great prayer and it's a prayer that Jesus is praying for all of his disciples, for you and for me this morning and may we take it to heart.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you and bless you for this high priestly prayer, the profundity of it, the simplicity of it, the way in which Jesus seems to know exactly what we need, and we bless you for the effectiveness of his praying at the right hand of God. Now bless us, grant us that joy that surpasses everything, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*