

Sunday, October 30, 2022

This is the eighteenth in a series of sermons on John 13-17 (“The Farewell Discourse”).

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| 1. Jesus Loves His own (13:1) [7/5/2020] | 12. The Hatred of the World (15:18- 16:4a) [1/9/2022] |
| 2. Foot Washing (13:2-17) [8/30/2020] | 13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15) [2/27/2022] |
| 3. Identifying the Traitor (13:18-30) [10/18/2020] | 14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned into Joy (16:16-24)
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| 4. Christ’s Glory and How We Are To Live In His
Temporary Absence (13:31-38) [12/6/2020] | 15. Direct Access to the Father (16:25-32) [6/12/2022] |
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| 6. The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7) [3/21/2021] | <i>The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)</i> |
| 7. Seeing God (14:8-14) [5/9/2021] | 17. Jesus Prays for Himself (17:1-5) [9/11/2022] |
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| 9. Loving God (14:28-31) [8/15/2021] | 19. Jesus Prays for His Future People (17:20-26) |
| 10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11) [10/3/2021] | |
| 11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17) [11/21/2021] | |

We are in John chapter 17, and Jesus is praying to His Father. In a very short time, He will be “betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Matthew 26:45), and He knows that is going to happen in a very short time, but His mind now is on His loved ones. You may not spend a lot of time pondering how much Jesus loves you, but you can see it in this prayer. Last time we went over John 17:1-5, where Jesus prays to be glorified in giving “eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” so that He may in turn glorify the Father, and to return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. In today’s passage, He turns His attention to praying for His loved ones who were present with Him at that time. We know that because in verse 20 He says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” This part of the prayer is directed towards His apostles, but it is not exclusively for them – it is for us as well.

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are

not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:6-19)

It seems that verses 6-10 are describing the people for whom He is praying, and then He makes two petitions for them: “keep them” (vv. 11-16) and “sanctify them” (vv. 17-19).

Who He Is Praying For

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” (John 17:6-10)

When I read this, I ask myself, why is Jesus spending so much time describing these ones He’s praying for? And my conclusion is that we do the exact same thing when we are praying for one of our brothers or sisters, don’t we? We might include in our prayers how faithful they’ve been, how diligent they’ve been, what sacrifices they’ve made, what an example they’ve been, how much they love the Lord, that they belong to the Lord, that God has had mercy on them, that they are counted among the elect, etc. We don’t do that because we think we’re providing new information to God that He wasn’t previously aware of. We do it because we love the person, and it’s how we are expressing that love to the Father; we do it because we are establishing why it is that we’re praying for this person. I believe that is what Jesus is doing here, and it is a thing that is pleasing to the Father.

So, Jesus describes these ones for whom He is praying, and He describes them from two angles – from the divine side, and from the human side. I’m going to try to list out the main points and briefly comment on each one.

From the divine side, these are:

- **Those whom the Father has given to the Son and who belong to the Father and to the Son.** Identifying us as those whom the Father has given to Him seems to be one of Jesus’s favorite ways of thinking about His elect. He uses that terminology seven times in this prayer. We belong to the Father and the Son in a special way. Every human

belongs to God in the sense that God is the Creator. But we belong to Him by way of election to eternal life. Our names were written down before the world began. We are precious in His sight. We were chosen by the Father and given to the Son, and the Son died for us so that we might have life – He didn't do that for every human. So, we belong to the Father and the Son in a very special way. We belong to them in the covenant of redemption.

- **Those to whom Jesus has manifested the Father's name and given the Father's words.** The Father's "name" is nothing less than all the attributes of the Father. For Jesus to manifest His name to us means that He has shown us all that the Father is. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. Not just the parts of the Father that appeal to our flesh – but all the Father. There are a lot of people who claim to believe in Jesus and God the Father, but who reject many of His most fundamental attributes – like His justice, holiness, hatred, vengeance, wrath, etc. It doesn't matter if you believe in part of God (i.e., the "god" that you have created after your own image and liking) – you must believe in and love the whole God, as He is manifested in the Bible. Further, Jesus has given us the Father's words, which is nothing less than the entire Bible. Everything that Jesus preached came straight from the Father – all the doctrines, all the teaching about His person, all the teaching about His work – all of it. This isn't a smorgasbord, where you get to pick and choose what parts of the word of God you're going to believe – you either believe all of it, or you need to keep your mouth shut about being a Christian. And He hasn't just given the words to us in a sterile, clinical way – He's given us a fleshy heart to receive them and love them. Remember, it's Christ's prerogative to reveal the Father to whom He will (see Matthew 11:27).
- **Those in whom the Son is glorified.** This may be the most amazing thing of all. Jesus Christ is glorified in us! How can this be? Well, our very existence glorifies Him. The fact that He succeeded in what He came to do glorifies Him – that is, He came to save a people; He came to bring many sons to glory. And here we are, the people He has saved. We glorify Him when we "mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord" (Isaiah 63:7); "speak of [His] righteousness and of [His] praise all the day long" (Psalm 35:28); "speak of [His] testimonies" and "[His] word" (Psalm 119:46, 172); "speak of the glorious honour of [His] majesty, and of [His] wondrous works" (Psalm 145:5); "declare[] all the judgments of [His] mouth" (Psalm 119:13); "testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:42); "testify[...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21); "testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24); etc. We glorify Him in how we live our lives. The way that we live our lives in the world will often have a bigger impact than the words that we speak. If we honor God in our lives by receiving and obeying Him, that speaks volumes; if we bring a reproach upon Him through our sins, that also speaks volumes.

From the human side, these are:

- **Those who have received, known and believed the revelation of the Father given by the Son.** The Father revealed Himself through the Son. This includes the words that He preached, and the manifestations of Jesus Himself – He came from the Father, and the Father sent Him. Jesus wasn't just a good teacher – He is God the Son, sent from God the Father. Everything that Jesus taught and did came from the Father. To “receive,” “know” and “believe” in Him and in the things that He taught are synonymous. That is, to receive Jesus is to believe in Him. To receive Him is to know Him (not just an intellectual knowledge, but a love of Him). It doesn't mean that we have to have a 100%, perfect understanding of God and all of His doctrines to be saved, but we do have to understand and believe that the Father sent the Son to save us. The apostles clearly didn't have a perfect understanding throughout this discourse – but they had an authentic faith, and they understood and believed the essentials. They loved Jesus! Note that Jesus doesn't utter one syllable about their shortcomings in this prayer.
- **Those who have kept the word.** It's not enough to believe – we also must obey. In fact, a person who claims to have faith and does not obey is a liar. James tells us that “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17). There's no such thing as authentic faith in Jesus Christ that isn't accompanied by works. There is no sinless perfection in this life, but our lives must be characterized by being servants of righteousness rather than servants of sin (Romans 6-7). One quote I picked up along the way is: *“they had received and obeyed God's message delivered through Jesus, being loyal but not perfect.”*

It is important to point out that these two sides (the divine and human sides) always go together, and the human side is always initiated by and dependent upon the divine side. So, for instance, the Father gave these men to the Son, and these men received, believed and kept the word that they were given. Both of those things are true, and the Bible teaches both things from Genesis to Revelation. Sometimes it stresses one, and sometimes it stresses the other. Here, Jesus stresses both. The fact is, nobody is going to be doing any receiving, believing or keeping, unless they are one of those whom the Father has given to the Son. On the flip side of that, everyone whom the Father has given to the Son will ultimately, without exception, receive, believe and keep the word. See 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6.

It is also important to point out that Jesus is making it very clear who He is NOT praying for. “I pray NOT for the world.” That is, the evil, unregenerate world. The world consists of people who have NOT received, believed and kept the Word; people who have NOT had the Father's name and word manifested to them; people who do NOT glorify Jesus as described above;

people who do NOT belong to the Father and the Son, and who were NOT given to Jesus by the Father. Jesus is getting ready to make some petitions to bless His people, and He doesn't make those petitions for the world - the world doesn't get those blessings. This is a doctrine that is almost universally despised, that God would discriminate and make a distinction between people. Most so-called Christians today will tell you that "Jesus died for everyone." This is a strange prayer, indeed, if that is true. Of course, it is NOT true, and Jesus will intercede for everyone for whom He died (not one more, not one less).

Keep Them

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:11-16)

In this petition, Jesus is turning over His loved ones, as it were, to the Father for keeping. He had kept them while He was in the world with them (a good example being in the very next chapter, where He says to those who are there to arrest Him, "if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" – v. 8), and now He's giving them to the Father for safe keeping. You'll see that Jesus refers to Him as "Holy Father" here. This is the only time in the Bible where this title is used. "To keep" means "to attend to carefully" or "to guard" or "to take care of" or "to watch" or "to secure." We need keeping! You might forget that. You might think that you're taking care of yourself. Even the apostles sometimes forgot that – so much so that they actually thought that it was their job to take care of the Lord Jesus and not the other way around. Doesn't Peter, in the very next chapter, think He's going to step in and save Jesus with a sword? I understand his zeal, but we must remember that it's the Lord taking care of us, and if He were to withhold that keeping hand for just a moment, that would be the end of us.

Now, this keeping is done in (or, through) the name of God. What does this mean? Remember that the "name of God" isn't simply the name "God" – rather, it refers to His very essence. It refers to the attributes that define Him. To be kept in His name means to be kept by His power and grace for His sake and for the honor of His name. It includes being kept in the truth about Him and kept in the fear and the knowledge of His name. The antithesis of

being kept in His name is being lost. It would be a dishonor and reproach to Him if He were to lose any of those who belong to Him – if He were to lose a single one, it would be a failure on His part; it would make Him either a liar or impotent, and we know that He is neither of those. Jesus said that He had kept those that the Father gave to Him and didn't lose a single one.

But what about Judas? Jesus mentions Judas here, calling him the “son of perdition” (that is, the son of destruction – he was marked for destruction, ordained to ruin). But didn't Jesus lose Judas? Doesn't Jesus list him as the one exception here? Isn't he one that the Father gave to the Son before the world began, but was nevertheless lost? No! Judas is not an exception to God keeping His own. Judas never was a son of God – he was always a son of perdition – he was always a devil (John 6:70). It was prophesied that this son of perdition would betray Christ, and the prophecies must be fulfilled. Jesus is not saying, “I kept all that the Father gave me, except this one guy – I just wasn't able to make that one work out – he kind of took me by surprise.” Rather, He's saying, “I kept all that the Father gave me, but this other guy, he's another story; he's the son of perdition, just like the prophecy said he would be.” His point is that even Judas betraying Christ is all part of God's plan – he's so far from thwarting the plan that he's a necessary part of the plan. And of course, Judas will be along shortly to prove Jesus right and complete the fulfillment of the prophecy.

In this passage, there are two respects in which He appeals to the Father to keep us. The first is keeping us so we may be one, even as Jesus and the Father are one. This topic is dealt with in much more detail down in verses 21-23, so Lord willing, I'd like to talk about this more in depth in the next sermon. For now, I'd just like to make a few points:

- To be “one” in this context means to be unified in purpose, doctrine, will, spirit, affection, understanding, love, truth, mind, consent, etc.
- Many so-called “churches” will sacrifice fundamental, nonnegotiable truths of God on the altar of a false “unity.” You'll see it in outright lies and capitulations (“if the people want to hear that Jesus died for everyone, I'll tell them that Jesus died for everyone”). More subtly, you'll see it by what is NOT taught. A preacher, for example, may know full good and well that the doctrine of election is true, but you'll never hear a word about it in his church because it is a divisive issue and he doesn't want to turn people away. He may be 100% right on everything that he does say, but he very strategically leaves certain things out. This type of “unity” is no unity at all – it is nothing less than high treason against God.
- If Jesus is praying for the Father to keep us so we may be one, this would indicate that we are in constant danger of having our unity disrupted, and nothing short of the power of God is able to maintain it. Unity within the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is something that is a favorite target of Satan, and there are innumerable ways that it can

be put in danger – e.g., striving, contention, pride. Sometimes it's necessary so false doctrine can be identified and rooted out ("There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" – 1 Corinthians 11:19), but most often, it's caused by the sin of pride and a contentious spirit (see the divisions that were rampant in the Corinthian church – 1 Cor. 1:11ff. It starts with disunity, and ends with dysfunction). The only way we can recover from such a thing is by God keeping us.

- The idea "that they may be one" necessarily implies that there is a group of people. No loners. No satellites. No fanboys standing on the sidelines. We need each other.

The second way that Jesus asks the Father to keep us is in keeping us from "the evil" (or, "the evil one," as it may also be translated). We need to be kept, beloved. We're liable to be consumed by the corruption that is in the world. We're liable to be taken by the devil and his wiles. We're liable to place ourselves under the dominion and tyranny of sin. The Lord has given us His word, and the world hates us because of that word, because we're not of the world, even as Jesus isn't of the world. The Father has taken us "out of the world." We are still in the world, but we are not of the world, and the only reason for that is that the Father has chosen us out of the world and has given us to the Son. We don't desire to participate in the sins of the world. We don't adhere to the philosophies of the world. We aren't interested in the transient things that belong to the world. We don't desire to conform to the world. That sets us apart and makes us seem strange to the world.

But friends, beware: the world is a very seductive place – hence all the warnings about it in the Bible. We have sin indwelling us, and we often take the bait. It would be a terrible miscalculation on your part to underestimate the power and danger of the world and Satan, its prince – remember that Satan is interested in doing maximum damage to the church, and has many tools at his disposal (if one tool isn't working, he'll try another one; if intense persecution doesn't seem to be getting the job done, maybe wooing with the baubles of the world will). But we have God keeping us. You may have experienced a time (or perhaps many times) where you've started going down the wrong path. Maybe you've been involved in some worldly venture or perhaps actively pursuing a sin. Or maybe you've slowly, imperceptibly, drifted away, little by little, until you look up and you can barely see the shoreline. And then suddenly something happens to snap you back. That's God keeping you from the evil. You don't have the capacity to keep yourself – God has to do it.

You'll note that Jesus specifically says that He's NOT praying for us to be taken from the world, but to be kept while we're still here in the world (No monasteries! No hermits!). We're here now because, in the wisdom of God, it's better for us to be here, interacting with the worldlings, living according to the standards of God in their presence, preaching the Word to them, and being hated by them. This is God's plan! How would God use the foolishness of

preaching to save anyone, for example, if there was nobody here to preach? How would we be salt and light in the world, for example, if we weren't here? It would be so easy and peaceful to cloister off and hide, but this is not God's intention for us. Matthew Henry says we remain on earth for as long as God has determined so that we may be "*ripened for heaven.*"

Right in the middle of this passage, it says: "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." I have to believe that Jesus is saying this for the sake of those who are listening. He's praying these things in their presence for their benefit – and it's recorded for ours. I also have to believe that these things that Jesus is saying here are similar to the things that He's saying right this minute, right as I speak, as He intercedes for us in heaven. And I can tell you this – there are a lot of things that give me joy, but very few things give me joy like this. The very thought of Jesus Christ interceding for us, praying for the Father to keep us, produces great exultation in me. I think that we spend a lot of time thinking of the death of Christ (as we should), but we don't give nearly enough attention to this intercession of Christ. In fact, Paul tells us that there is something that is "much more" than His death, and that is "we shall be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10). Gill says that His life here references "*the interceding life of Christ in heaven, where He lives, and ever lives to make intercession for His people, and to see the salvation He has obtained by His death applied unto them, and they put into the possession of it.*"

Sanctify Them

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:17-19)

This concept of "sanctification" is used in two ways in the scripture. The first is the idea of being set aside (or, consecrated) for some work in the service of God. The second is the idea of pure living (living after the Spirit rather than living after the flesh – Romans 8; "be ye holy; for I am holy" – 1 Peter 1:16). Both apply to us – we can't be set aside to be proper stewards for Christ if we're living lives of proud sin and rebellion against Him. We are sent into the world by the Son, even as the Son was sent by the Father. We have a job to do, and the job is to be faithful ambassadors for Christ – in word and in deed. Don't make light of this – this is a weighty honor and responsibility, and it's only possible because the Father has sanctified us. I told you earlier that Jesus addresses Him here as "Holy Father." This is significant because the words translated "Holy" (adjective) and "sanctify" (verb) come from the same Greek word. It is the Holy Father who makes us holy, and only the Holy God can do so. (Note the whole Trinity is said to be holy. Here the Father is called holy. The Son is "that holy thing which shall be born" (Luke 1:35). And of course, the third person in the Trinity is the Holy Ghost.)

The means through which this sanctification happens is the word of God – the truth of God (you see how closely God’s written word is tied to Himself – earlier, Jesus tells us that He is the truth, and that the Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth,” and here He says that the word is truth). Read the Bible! Meditate on it! The more you do that, the more the pure truth of God will flow through your veins and impact all your thoughts and actions, and the more sanctified you will be. This is how you know what is pleasing to God. This is how you know what the truth is, and the truth is absolutely essential! The fall of mankind started with a lie, you’ll recall. Everybody in this room has a responsibility to know the Bible cover to cover. You may not see how the word works in you, but it does work in you – sometimes it produces immediate results, and sometimes it’s more like a seed being planted that takes time to come to fruition. It’s interesting that the word for which we are persecuted is the very same word that sanctifies us.

And the last point I’d like to make is that our sanctification is not of our own creation – it is all made possible by Christ and is all a gift from the Father. Christ sanctified Himself on our behalf. He set Himself aside as both High Priest and sacrifice on our behalf (Hebrews 10). And as a “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), He lived a perfect, sinless life on our behalf. He sanctified Himself for us – not so we can freely sin; not so we can sit back and be lazy; not so we can boast. But He sanctified Himself so we also might be sanctified – so we would be “unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). This sanctification is not something where we do good works in a vacuum. We should not be taking the “checklist” approach – “if I do these things, and I don’t do those things, then I’m a sanctified person.” Rather, sanctification is about loving and being in communion with God, and the works will follow. It is an amazing and mysterious thing where God works in us, and because He’s working in us, we are required to also do a work. Your inaction cannot be blamed on God. It requires work on our part...and nobody said it would be easy. It is a growing process. It involves you warring against the flesh.

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

So, we have a lot to be thankful and joyous about. Our Lord Jesus is praying here for the Father to keep and sanctify us, and without a doubt, He’s continuing that intercession now at the Father’s right hand, until His return.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

Richard Baxter: *“Division tends to ruin the church, and is condemned in the Scriptures greatly. It is usually the exercise of pride and passion, and the devil is pleased and gains the most by it. Those that would draw you into a contentious zeal will tell you that their cause is God’s, and that you desert God if you were not equally zealous. They claim moderation and peace as a mark of being lukewarm and carnal. This may be true if the cause is of God. But upon great experience, I must tell you that of the many zealous contenders who claim the cause of God, few know what they are talking about. Some cry out ‘the cause of God’ when it is a brat of a proud mind. Some are rashly zealous before careful consideration. Some are misguided or captivated by others, and some are hurried on by passion and discontent. Many of the ambitious and worldly-minded are blinded by their own carnal interests. They proudly glory in their own opinions and think they know more than ordinary men. But it is not God’s cause, but their own! What mischief is done for lack of knowledge. Souls should not be so lightly endangered! As far as I have seen, moderation is the most judicious course among good Christians. Those that furiously censured these as lukewarm have been men that have the least judgment and the most passion and pride. From my observation, ignorant and self-conceited wranglers who think they are champions for the truth are venting their passions and own fond opinions. These with formal enemies have caused the most suffering to the church down through the ages.”*