

The Gospel of John – Final Prayers Sermon Notes

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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17: 13-23.

John chapter seventeen gives us a glimpse into the heart of Jesus, unlike any other chapter in the four Gospels. If the Gospel of John is written by the beloved disciple, then this chapter is the beloved chapter. It is the longest prayer we have from Jesus. The Gospel of Luke often mentions Jesus at prayer (Luke 3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 28-29, 11:1, 22:41-45, 23:46). Listening to the prayers of someone else provides a look into the deeper recesses of their heart and certainly this is true of the prayers of Jesus in chapter seventeen.

John 17 invites us to listen in on a conversation. It is a divine conversation of the highest order, in which Jesus speaks of the completion of his tasks on earth and prays earnestly for his followers both present and future. Therefore, it offers a glimpse of who Jesus is in relation to the Father and it gives us a portrait of those things that are close to Jesus' heart in the last days of his life among his disciples on earth. These prayers unveil his incredible love for his followers and his eagerness to return to the Father.

Also, we should see ourselves as the subjects of his prayer. Jesus is our Lord and Shepherd as he was the shepherd of this small circle of men. Therefore, when he prays, he invites us to listen, to hear the quality of love and honour shared between himself and God. Jesus could have prayed about anything but he only prayed for three things.

⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. John 17: 9.

¹¹ 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. John 17: 11.

¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. John 17:15.

Firstly, Jesus prayed for protection. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, the chance is that you have prayed for them. Well, here Jesus is praying for his children. While Jesus will eventually leave this world after terrible suffering and return to the Father, he knows his followers will stay behind. The mission of those left behind is to challenge the world that they live in. **⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4.**

Jesus knows that this assignment for his disciples is dangerous. His word, the divine revelation in the Scriptures will become essential in their testimony and survival in the world. **²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26.**

Jesus also prays for their protection from Satan. There is an evil one on the loose, who the Bible says is prowling around like a lion waiting to devour its prey. This is the spiritual reality for all of us. Satan is known by many names - the Devil, Lucifer, the Tempter, the Deceiver, the Adversary, and the Prince of Darkness. The Bible tells us that Satan was a fallen angel who chose to enter into rebellion against God, leading at least one-third of the angels with him.

Jesus believed in Satan. He didn't think he was a myth. He didn't think he was a figment of someone's imagination. Jesus believed him to be a real, live spiritual being. He took Satan very, very seriously, and wanted His followers to take him seriously as well. Which is why He prayed that we would be protected from him. And specifically, that we would be protected from him as we pursue a life in Christ.

What Satan will try and do is take your life in Christ, and destroy it. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have a big spiritual target over your life. If someone gets a little spiritual momentum; if someone takes a step toward Christ; if someone hears the message of Christ and it rattles their cage and awakens their inner world, his number one goal is to do everything possible to take that spark of spiritual life and snuff it out. However, Jesus knows that his disciples will have to live in a world where evil operates. **¹¹I 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. John 17: 11. The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10.**

The name of Jesus is protection for us all, the name above all names. Satan hates hearing his name, it causes him pain and grief and so we shall proclaim the name of Jesus over our lives, over our church, over our nation, and over the world. The world that God loves and gave his son for will not be denied. There is power in the name of Jesus. We sing about this but do you really believe it?

Jesus also prayed for us to be set apart. **¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. John 17:17-19.** Now I don't know what comes to your mind when you hear a word like sanctify, probably something super-spiritual. Or if applied to a person, some kind of super-saint.

Here's what the words actually mean: "set apart," "separate," "wholly different," "completely other." If you were to take something out of the freezer for dinner, you would be consecrating it. Because you're setting it aside from all of the other foods to be something different and to fulfil a unique purpose. That's what Jesus prayed for. This is a life so aligned with God that it reflects God's passions completely. Such a person can be considered "sanctified" and attached to God's purposes and mission.

Sanctification is always for mission since it is God's activity in the world bringing truth and salvation. As we have seen in John's Gospel the world is not a place on a map but a spiritual domain an atmosphere of darkness and unbelief. This is where the main battle lies.

Jesus was very specific – we are to be set aside, sanctified, with the truth. And then Jesus says in his prayer, "And God's Word is that truth!" Our mission in life, the mark we'll make in this life, and the difference we'll make with our life, will come about only as a result of being truth-sanctified. Which means being immersed, shaped, moulded, instructed, led, and informed by God's Word.

Now here's why that matters. It's only in the pages of the Bible that we have God's truth. It's only in the pages of the Bible that we have God's moral direction. It's only in the pages of the Bible that we have God's directions. It's only in the pages of the Bible that we find God's passions, God's heart, God's concerns. We need to let that invade our passions, our hearts, and our concerns so that together His mission for our lives can be formed and lead the way.

You take that away, and you're just making up your own rules, your own plans, your own life. You're just winging it, you're just deciding for yourself, and you're not set apart in any way – at least by God. Whatever you decide goes. You decide what's fact and what's real, what's true and what's false, which isn't being sanctified by God's word at all.

It's God's voice that matters not your own. To rely on your own voice is to rely on no voice at all. At least not God's. So, are you on the track Jesus prayed you would be on? Are you being sanctified that way? Are you being set apart by the truth of God's word for the mission He longs for you to fulfil? Are you answering Jesus' prayer for your life?

²⁰ "I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, ²¹ that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. ²² The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me. John 17: 20-23.

Jesus prayed for one more thing. He prayed for our unity. That we, as a community of Christ followers, would be one. I think most of us long for community. People we can do life with. People we can trust and believe in; who are loyal, supportive, and encouraging. There's nothing more attractive than a truly loving family, a truly loving marriage, and a truly loving community of people. In fact, we'll do almost anything to leave a dysfunctional community and accept almost anything at the promise of a functional community.

This is why people who join gangs, and people who enter cults, give the same reason over and over again: I wanted a family, I thought they loved me. This is why Jesus prayed that we would be the new community, the one that wasn’t broken, the one that was safe, the one that really was loving.

When the Bible talks about unity, it doesn’t mean uniformity, which is everyone looking and thinking alike. By unity, the Bible means first and foremost a oneness of heart - a relational unity. Being kind to one another, gracious to one another, forgiving of one another – not assuming the worst, not shooting the wounded, or being quick to be suspicious.

Biblical unity is about working through conflicts, avoiding slander and gossip, and being generous in spirit. Jesus said it would be this unity, and this unity alone, which would arrest the world’s attention and confirm that He was from the Father. Unity and love, as Francis Schaeffer once pointed out, is the “mark” of the Christian. Not just a feeling of love, or an acknowledgment of love, but a demonstration of love. Let me read to you the only command that Jesus gave us.

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13: 34-35.

However, there is a tension between unity and mission. Pastor Sergei writes about what happened when the church was isolated for seventy years in Russia. Christians and unbelievers felt very uncomfortable with each other. Those who had stayed faithful in the church were uncomfortable with those newcomers walking through the doors. Sanctification, being set apart can sometimes be at odds with a church that is called to mission to the world. Christian leadership must discern carefully where those boundaries are to be found.

So, there are the three prayers of Jesus for you. He prayed for your protection. He prayed for your truth-consecrated mission. He prayed for our unity. Now you know what matters most to Jesus when it comes to you and your life. I want to finish by following the lead of Gary Burge in his commentary on John. He suggests that if we convert our reading from third-person sentences into second-person, we can get the full force of Jesus’ passion for us.

But I say these things while I am still in the world, so that you may have the full measure of my joy within you. I have given you my father’s word and the world has hated you for you are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that God would take you out of the world but that he would protect you from the evil one. You are not of the world, even as I am not of it. But I want you to be made Holy by the truth; God’s word is truth. As my father sent me into the world, I am sending you into the world. I am sanctifying myself for you that you too may be holy. John 17: 13-19.