

May 31, 2015

“Jesus Prays For Us”

John 17:11b-19

[We all know of the Lord’s Prayer recorded in Matthew 6 & Luke 11. A couple of weeks ago we looked at another prayer of Jesus that John records. Two weeks ago we looked at verses 1-11 of that prayer. Today I want to look at verses 11b – 19]

Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

I heard a story about a preacher visiting a small town in Kentucky, who became concerned when he began the first night of a revival meeting and noticed all of the men were wearing guns. Although rattled, he did the best he could with his sermon. When he had finished preaching, his anxiety heightened as several of the men approached the pulpit with their guns drawn. In panic, he turned to the chairmen of the deacons, sitting next to him. The deacon calmed his fears when he said, “Don’t worry, preacher, they ain’t coming after you. They’re looking for the cuss who invited you to preach.

This can be a scary world. I don’t know where you turn for protection from the dangers of this world – whether to your faith, or to your martial arts skills, or to your gift of a silver tongue, or even to a weapon. But in today’s scripture we read of Jesus praying for our protection. Jesus prays for us. Just that information alone should be very comforting and encouraging. Jesus prays for us. If anyone is going to have their prayers answered Jesus would have to be one of them, wouldn’t you think? If anyone is praying according to the Father’s will it has to be Jesus. So if you are among the disciples or followers of Jesus it’s really great news that He is praying for us.

In today’s Scripture Jesus prays for our protection; in the Greek it would mean that Jesus was praying: guard My followers or keep watch over my disciples. But what specifically is Jesus asking our Heavenly Father to protect:

First Jesus prays for Our Holy Father’s protection for our unity and joy.

(v11b) Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.

Jesus addresses our God, not simply as "Father" but as "Holy Father." This is the only place in the Gospel of John that Jesus addresses Him this way. By adding *Holy* Jesus emphasized the significance of being protected by the power of His name. Being able to approach God as "Father" is an acknowledgment of his love, but *Holy* reminds us that the One to whom we pray is the Almighty God.

Therefore, Jesus asked that the Holy Father would keep his disciples *in the power of His name* for... Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a strong fortress;
the godly run to him and are safe.

The prayer expresses confidence in God's ability to "protect" His children, while at the same time allowing us to hear how we are to be protected. For the context indicates that Jesus was speaking of a relationship between the believers and Himself. In other words, Jesus wasn't saying "Holy Father, use the power connected with your name to protect my followers"; rather, He was praying, "Holy Father, keep these disciples/my followers intimately connected with Yourself." Ultimately, that is our protection.

And because all of us are united to Him we therefore are united with one another. When we love God, we obey God and when we obey God He gives us His Spirit and when we are in Him and He is in us we will be fruitful in our mission: spreading the message of salvation in Christ. We are united by the love of Christ and by the Holy Spirit, we are united by having the same Spirit and by having the same mission.

Jesus prayed that the believers be unified with a unity patterned after that of the Father and the Son. He prayed that we would have a unified desire and purpose to serve and glorify God. When we are united with God and with one another we are powerful, when we are not united we are weak. That is true in the church, or in marriage, or in any relationship. Choose to stay under God's protection by being united.

(v12) During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

Here Jesus is referring to Judas Iscariot, who chose to betray Jesus, sadly rejecting the protection offered. He not only cut his unity with Christ but also with the other disciples.

The place of Judas among the disciples and his choice to betray Jesus highlight the balance between the sovereignty of God and the freedom God allows people to exercise. Jesus did not intentionally withhold His protection of Judas to be tempted by Satan so that the betrayal could happen. And it is not that the temptation of Satan was stronger than Jesus' ability to protect Judas. It's that Judas made his decision to betray Jesus, and by doing so he removed himself from Christ's protection.

The extent of God's protection over us every single day is beyond our comprehension,

but we have a free will and can reject God if we choose. He love us, and so created us with enough freedom to live or not live in a relationship with Him. May we always choose to be faithful to Christ. Why? Why does Christ pray for our faithfulness to obey and stay connected to Him? Not only for our unity but also for our joy.

(v13) "Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy.

The disciples would discover especially after His resurrection that Jesus had defeated death, He defeated satan, and gives eternal life to all who believe and stay connected. He also promised the Gift of the Holy Spirit to be with us forever as our Comforter, Advocate – a Friend who is always present to come along side and help. The key to immeasurable joy is living in intimate contact with Christ, the source of all joy. When we do, we will experience God's protection and see the victory God brings, even when defeat seems certain.

Jesus prays for the Holy Father's protection (to keep guard / watch over us) for our unity and joy.

Second Jesus prays for Our Holy Father's protection from the world and satan.

(v14) I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

Jesus would leave the world to rejoin the Father; the disciples would stay in the world to carry out God's plan by spreading the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Such a mission would arouse great hostility from the evil one, satan, the ruler of this world, so the disciples needed special protection from the evil one.

Notice Jesus says the world hates us because we do not belong to the world. We are not members of satan's kingdom, we are members of the Kingdom of God. The world follows satan's agenda. If we are followers of Jesus our values should be different than the world's, our behaviors should be different then the world's; our character should be different than the world's. Such differences could cause hatred because we do not belong to the world. Such differences could cause persecution (although persecution in the U.S. can't compare to what our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world suffer). There are two ways God can protect us from the difficulties we could face in the world.

(v15) I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

One way God could protect us is to take us out of the world. But how can we be witnesses *to* the world if we are not witness for Christ *in* the world. So rather than being removed from the world Jesus prays that we would be protected *through* the difficult

circumstances and kept safe from falling into the temptations of the devil – the evil one. Jesus taught us to pray, “deliver us from evil and from the evil one.” Jesus says in ...

(v16) They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

Since we belong to the Kingdom of God’s Son and He did not follow the ways of a world headed by Satan, neither will we. Which leads us to the third thing Jesus prays for us

Third Jesus prays for Our Holy Father’s protection of the mission by making us holy

(v17) Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

A recently released study by a Christian research organization shows that most churchgoers do not read or study the Bible on a daily basis. Of those who attend church at least once a month only 19 percent of respondents report reading or studying the Bible outside of church "every day." That means that over 80% are not reading or studying the Bible every day. I wouldn’t ask for a show of hands.

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, told The Christian Post that he felt attributes from the modern American culture influenced the responses.

"Regular Bible engagement is both personal and requires discipline. Neither are popular in Western culture today. Too many churchgoers want the benefits of salvation without investing in personally knowing Christ and the abundant life He offers."

"Bible engagement encompasses more than just Bible reading. It measures the extent to which individuals interact with the truth of Scripture and allow it to permeate their thinking and influence their actions."

"There is a widespread desire among churchgoers to please Jesus, but much less interested in daily wrestling with what pleases Jesus.

- Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research

It is vital for us to be in God’s Word on a regular basis. Scripture points out sin, motivates us to confess, renews our relationship with Christ, and guides us back to the right path. Jesus calls God’s Word “truth” and says we are made holy by that truth. To be made holy means to be set apart by God for God’s use. And Jesus says that happens through knowing and obeying God’s Word.

18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

It is up to us to carry on Christ’s mission – to make God known to others. This is why Jesus doesn’t pray we are taken out of the world. Instead Jesus sends us into the world to have relationships with non followers of Christ that we might invite them to become followers. We are made holy or set apart for this work as we stay connected to God.

19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

Jesus gave Himself to the will of the Father, the final act of dedication was His sacrifice on the cross. His purpose was to make us holy. Jesus died to set us apart for God and His purposes.

Jesus prayed that a loving and Mighty God would protect us as we remain connected in a close personal relationship with Him through the truth of His Word; protecting us from sin, the world and the devil. That we might be holy vessels He can use to bring the message of God's love and salvation in Jesus to all people. This unites us and brings us immeasurable joy.

So here is what you need to do: Remain in Christ. Cultivate your relationship with Him by the truth of His Word. Stay united in fellowship with other believers of Christ. Resist the devil and don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. Let God use you; Let Him love through you, inviting others to follow Christ.

[See insert in bulletin – for spending time with God this week]