

For the Disciples

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[0 : 00] Now if you have a Bible, turn with me to John chapter 17. If you have one of the Bibles that we give out at the door, that's on page 903.

We'll be looking tonight at verses 6 to 11 as we continue in our series called The King's Speech.

This is the word of the Lord. 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.

Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you, 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.

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours and yours are mine and I am glorified in them and I am no longer in the world but they are in the world and I am coming to you.

[1 : 16] Holy Father keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one. As far as this is God's holy word, thanks be to Him.

Amen. Let's go. Let's go home. This passage is so big, it's so glorious.

John 17 is just one of those passages that you don't even want to preach from lest you ruin it. We talked last week about the word in the Old Testament for glory, kaboad.

It means weightiness and this is a kaboad passage. It's weighty, it's thick, it's deep. Martin Lloyd-Jones, one of the great English preachers in the early 20th century said this about it.

It's a great comprehensive prayer in which we saw outlined and displayed the whole realm of Christian doctrine.

[2 : 23] The whole realm of Christian doctrines in John 17, it's so true that one of our early Christian councils, the Council of Calcedon, at this council they laid out a definition of what we think about Jesus that we've held on to for centuries in the year 451 and it was John 17 that they used to write their great creed that you've probably seen before.

The question here is who is Jesus praying for? Last week Tom took us through verses one to five and in verses one to five Jesus is praying for himself.

He says, Father, glorify me. Glorify me in your presence. Really what he's praying there is he's praying a prayer of resurrection.

Father, glorify me. Lift me up into your presence. Glorify me in your presence. He's about to go to the cross. It's a prayer of resurrection. Now in our section, verses 6 to 11, he switches and starts praying for the disciples.

You'll see in verse nine that he says, I'm praying for those, those I've spoken to, not praying for the world but those you've given me. But it's not just for them because later in this passage in verse 20, he says, I'm not only praying for the disciples but for all who will believe.

[3 : 46] So that means he's praying for you in this passage. If you do believe, if you will believe, he's praying for you. Now what's the context?

The context is that this is hours before his death. It's moments before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Don't miss this.

Tom mentioned this last week. He's praying out loud. At the end of John 16, right before this, he says, when Jesus had spoken, he looked up and he prayed.

And you realize he's sitting there with the disciples. And so after he said what he said in John 16, he looks up and he prays. And he prays out loud. That's how it's recorded here.

They heard it. He's praying out loud. And one of the things you'll notice if you look at it carefully is that he's not just praying petitions to God. He's not just closing his eyes and saying, Father, do this, do this, do this, do this.

[4 : 44] But he actually is laying out reasons the whole time. So he's making an argument. He's saying, this is what I've done. This is what they've done. Now you do this, Father.

You see why he's doing that? Because it's a prayer, but it's not just a prayer. It's a sermon. He's praying out loud. He doesn't pray silently.

He's praying. He closes his eyes and he looks up and he prays for the disciples and at the disciples. It's a prayer and a sermon. He's telling them what he wants for them to the Father at the very same time.

So the question then is, what is he praying for us? What's he praying for us? So that's the first thing. What's he praying for us? And we'll have two things, but I'm going to not tell you the second thing yet because this is a secret right now.

What's he praying for? What's he praying for? There are three clues, I think, that point us to something that he's praying. The one thing that he's praying for you. And it's not immediately apparent on the surface of the text.

[5 : 49] Not immediately apparent. That's one thing. So there's three clues. The first clue is this, the word world. The word world. He uses it three times. In verse nine he says, I'm not praying for the world, but for them.

For those that he's pulled out of the world. So he's making a distinction between the disciples and the world. Those are two different things. So then in verse 10 he says, I'm no longer in the world. I'm leaving the world, but they are going to be in the world. So now you have two distinctions. You have that the disciples are not the world, but that when Jesus leaves the disciples will still be in the world and he will not.

So this is one of the places that we get the very somewhat cliché but famous phrase we are as Christians are in the world but not of the world. That's where we get it from.

This idea right here. Now what does this mean? What does he mean by the world? This is a tough passage to read. What does he mean by this?

[6 : 51] No matter if you're a Christian or you're not a Christian, if you're coming tonight, you're struggling with the claims of Christianity. You've been an atheist. Wherever on the spectrum of belief you might be, you get what he's saying when he uses the term world.

The way he uses the term world, he's not using it the way we use the term world in normal discourse. When we talk about the world, we say an asteroid is going to come and destroy the world.

What do we mean by the word world in that sentence? We mean the whole of material reality, the world, the planet earth, the ground, the trees, the buildings, the people, the dinosaurs, whatever. That's what we mean when we use the word world but that's not what Jesus means. He means something different from that. The way he's using it is he's talking about ethics. In other words, he's talking about an ethical reality.

The disciples, they're in the world but they're not of it meaning that they're no longer citizens of a certain type of order. An ethical order.

[7 : 55] Look, an ethical order that's as simple as this, that things are not as good as they could be. That's what he means by it. The world is referring to the fact that things are not what they're supposed to be.

It's reality under the curse. That's what the world is in the book of John. Reality under the curse. Christian or not, everybody knows that this is true because I'm not a big social media person. Probably many of you may have known that if you've, I don't know why you would, but look, try to find me on Facebook.

I'm not on it but I was perusing someone else's social media this week and I won't say who. They don't know. Anyway, I came across a post, somebody had linked to a Christian blog and it was one of those blogs on Romans 8 that was just talking about how good things come through suffering for the Christian.

All things work together for the good, right? This is not a well-known blog and you know who had commented on it? I mean, I was just like, what? Richard Dawkins. Richard Dawkins had left a post underneath it.

[9 : 13] You know what he said? He said, good things come out of bad things. What kind of a myth is this evil?

Now look, forget the point he's making. The point I'm making is this. Dawkins used the word evil. You see, he knows there are things that are evil.

Whether he, whatever he might be pointing to, he knows that there are things that are evil. He's calling somebody, he's calling Christianity evil. It's a value judgment. What does he say? He's saying the world is not the way it's supposed to be.

He has to climb aboard in our car in order to drive it into his tree. He has to make a value judgment about things being bad.

Everybody knows that this idea of the things aren't the way they should be. There was one philosopher in the 18th century named Leibniz that said that this is the best of all possible worlds.

[10:14] Nobody since then has agreed with him. Everybody knows this is true. That things are not the way they're supposed to be. That's what Jesus means by world. That's the first clue. The second clue is this.

The word name. If you look with me in verse 11, he says, keep them. Father, I'm praying this. Father, keep them in your name.

Now this little prepositional phrase in your name, it's one of those phrases that you're going to read over quickly. If you just read this passage again, you'll notice yourself doing it.

Keep them in your name and you'll move on and you'll focus on the verb keep maybe, but not in your name. This is significant. Just like the word world in the first century, the idea of a name means something very different than what we mean by it.

For us, name is nothing but what people call you in conversation. It's the thing that they use when you answer the phone. For the Jew and the Gentile, the ancient area, so the first century, a name is so much more than that.

[11:20] Just think about it this way. Every time God comes and meets with somebody in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, when Saul becomes Paul, when they have an interaction with a different reality, a supernatural reality, they get a name change.

A name is not just what you're called. A name is your identity. It's your vocation. It's a calling. That's why names are so significant for them.

When Jesus says, Father, keep them in your name, he's saying this, make them like you. Keep them in your name means make them like you.

In other words, name, God's name is God's attributes. It's who he is. It's his character. So one commentator says it like this.

The other way you could read the sentence, keep them in full adherence, Father, to your character. See? Keep them full adherence to your character. Now, let's think about the context together again.

[12:21] Jesus is at his deathbed prayer. He's at his deathbed. This is his deathbed prayer. He's about to go to the cross, and one of the things in late modern context that we live in is we don't see people die very often.

People's heads popped up when I said that. We don't see people die very often. It's hidden behind closed doors of the hospital in a way that it wasn't in the previous centuries.

We just don't see it. But for some of us, and many, probably all of us that have at least been at somebody's bedside before their death, if the person's conscious and they're conscious that they're dying, you know what kind of conversation happens?

You don't walk into the deathbed and the person that's, it's your mother, it's your father, you're their son, you're their daughter. They don't say, how's you?

That's my Scottish translation of how are you. How's you? Loving the partly cloudy today and loving that. Let's not what they say. They don't comment on the weather.

[13:29] What does a deathbed conversation look like? It's where somebody conveys to you, if you're their loved one, the thing that they want most for you. The utmost desire that they could possibly have for you.

The thing that they think is the most important thing in all the world is what makes somebody truly great. That's what they want to tell you.

There's two ways, there's two ways that you can tell what a culture thinks about what it means to be truly great. A great person to become somebody truly great.

One of the ways is to see what people say at their deathbed. The other way is to look at a culture's heroes. So we're currently under a hero craze at the moment, if you haven't noticed.

Marvel, DC, Superman, Batman. There's another Spider-Man trilogy coming out. Goodness. We're under a superhero craze, but actually superhero craze has been the norm for all of history.

[14:29] So it's not anything new. Cultures have always written their stories, their legends around heroes. You think of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey in the Greek tradition.

You think of King Arthur, the great sixth century king that they wrote stories about all throughout the Middle Ages. But there's a huge difference today in our heroes and heroes of old.

To be a knight of King Arthur's round table, you were the most ferocious of warriors on the battlefield. So courageous, most ferocious of warriors.

And when you came into the courtroom, you were the meekest and humble of men. You knew how to act around the ladies of the court and you knew how to act on the battlefield.

You knew exactly what to do in every situation you were put in. The highest paragon of what virtue was in every single situation, you knew how to do it. That's what it was to be a knight. That's what little boys aspired to in the Middle Ages.

[15:33] Now to be a hero today, you have to shoot laser beams out of your eyes or you have to shoot Spidey webs out of your hands. You have to not know exactly who you are.

You have to struggle in relationships. You have to be in a constantly complicated emotional state. It's a completely different conception of what a hero is. And you can look at a society's hero stories until exactly what a society thinks about what it is to be the best possible person, to be the greatest possible person.

Modern heroes, modern heroes, you see, you must become Godlike to be a modern hero. You have to get a supernatural power. And that's precisely because you live in a society without God.

In the Middle Ages, you didn't become Godlike. You became courageous. You became meek and humble because it was a society that knew exactly the fact that they were not God.

Heroes are people that know they're not God. Today, heroes are people who don't believe in a God and so they get supernatural powers. You see the difference? To Jesus, look, with Jesus, right now in this passage, with Jesus, we have the benefit of seeing the hero of the greatest story in all of history giving us his deathbed prayer.

[16:51] You see, if you want to know what somebody thinks the most about what you are to become, what it means to be truly great, you go sit beside them at their deathbed or you look to their hero stories.

And Jesus is the hero of all of history at his deathbed. What does he want from you? What is it that he wants you to become? What is the single thing?

The one thing. He could have prayed for so many things. There's one thing he's praying for here. He's prayed that you would not be of the world ethically.

He's prayed that you would be kept in the character of the Father ethically. And the one single word that encapsulates everything he's trying to say, did you catch it?

It's how he describes his Father. It's the only place that appears in all of Scripture. This one title put together, whose name?

[17:51] Holy Father. Holy Father. There's not a single other place in the entire Bible that puts the word Holy and Father next to each other, except that one.

It's a term that joins the awesome, majestic transcendence of God in his utter perfections, holiness, with the familial intimacy of a God who comes and meets with sinners.

To be, here's Jesus' prayer. His deathbed prayer. What he wants most for these disciples? For you, that you would be holy.

That you would be holy. This is what he wants. It's not cool. It's not cool to be holy. There aren't any holy superheroes anymore.

There aren't. It's not cool. He's praying that the disciples would be holy, that you would be holy. So secondly, and finally, of two, one of two, now we're on two. What is holiness?

[18:56] What is holiness? What is holiness? If this is what he wants for you, what is it? Charles Taylor is a very famous Catholic philosopher in Canada, and he writes this.

He says that true gentlemen, our illustration theme tonight is the Middle Ages, by the way, just by chance. True gentlemen always know exactly what to do in every situation they're in without ever being told the rules.

True gentlemen know exactly what to do in every situation without ever being told the rules. Are there any gentlemen here? That's a besides point. Look, that's like holiness.

That's like holiness. Holiness, holiness is not just acting correctly or knowing how to act righteously in situations.

Look, it's not simply obeying the law as closely as possible because a person can act right all the time and still be a Pharisee.

[20 : 08] You know this. You can act in a way that accords with the law. You can act in a way that you know you're supposed to act in church, but you hate it while you do it.

Holiness is not only knowing the righteous way and doing the righteous way, but loving it, desiring it, having it be your affection above all else.

One theologian puts it like this, to be holy is to think God's thoughts after him. It's to think like God. It's to be in his name.

It's to see the world and act into the world the way that God sees the world and acts into the world. You can't talk about what holiness is without talking about J.C.

Ryle. Many of you will probably know J.C. Ryle, the great Anglican priest that wrote a famous book on holiness. Go get it. It's fantastic. He says this, holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God accordingly as we find him described in scriptures.

[21 : 19] It's the habit of agreeing in God's judgment, of hating what he hates, of loving what he loves, of measuring everything in this world by the standard of his word. The word that's used later in this chapter is that holiness is being consecrated.

What does that mean? It means being set apart. You see what he's saying? Holiness is thinking, living, and willing, wanting in such a way in accordance with an entirely different reality than this one.

Not being of the world means being holy. Living holy means thinking and acting in accordance with an entirely different world, being a citizen of an entirely different kingdom than this one.

It's living, thinking, acting, willing in this world as if you are not in this world, as if you are in the next world, the new heavens and the new earth. That's what holiness is. It's to think God's thoughts after him.

Leviticus 11-44, be holy as I am holy is repeated in 1 Peter 1-16, be holy as I am holy. That's what Jesus is praying for you, that you would be.

[22 : 30] Now, go and be holy. Go be like Jesus. Think like him, act like him, desire the things he desires.

Let's pray. No, I'm kidding. It's a joke. Did you hear me? Think and act and desire like Jesus.

Go be holy. Go be. Look, it's the high priestly prayer. You see, it's the high priestly prayer.

You're not holy. This is why he's praying it. This is the problem of holiness.

Tim Keller puts it like this, God commits himself to people and at the same time, he cannot tolerate your sin. On the one hand, God is holy and just and he cannot tolerate or live with or bless evil.

[23 : 29] On the other hand, God is loving and faithful and he can't tolerate the loss of the people he has committed himself to. This is a tremendous, seemingly, irresolvable tension in the whole Bible.

Will God finally give up on his people? But then what of his faithfulness? Or will he finally give in to his people? Or then what of his holiness?

What does it mean to say that this is the high priestly prayer, as we have called it throughout all the centuries? Why do we call it that? Because the holy one himself is preparing here to be both priest and lamb.

To be both the priest that sacrifices and the lamb who gets sacrificed. He's preparing himself as your high priest. He is about to step into the temple of God's wrath and become sin for sinners so that sinners who could never be holy, left to themselves, finally can be.

Keller goes on, it's only on the cross that we can understand how God is able to resolve the tension that he is both holy and merciful. On the cross, your sin was imputed to him, given to him, so that his righteousness could be given to you.

[24 : 52] On the cross, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. On the cross, God poured out his wrath on his people in the person of his son.

He satisfied both justice because sin was punished and his faithfulness since he is now able to accept and forgive us.

Only through the cross can God be both the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. It's the only way to relieve the tension of the Bible between God's holiness and his mercy. You can only be made holy by holiness that is not yours. You can only be kept in his name because he has first called you by name.

John 20 comes after John 17, simple math, that's just straight up addition. In John 20, after he prays his prayer, there's a resurrection, and after the resurrection, the first instance of the resurrection power of this holiness and mercy, simultaneously existing, is applied.

[26 : 10] Mary Magdalene is standing outside of the tomb and he, the Christ, is standing there resurrected and all his glory in front of her, completely holy, manifesting his glory and she can't see it because of his holiness.

The woman that followed him around for three years, he removed seven demons from her, couldn't see true holiness. She wasn't holy herself.

You know what happens? What happens is John chapter 10 happens. My sheep hear my voice and I call them by name and when they hear their name, they come to me.

What does he do? He says, Mary, Mary, he just whispers it. Scales fall off from her eyes. She can see, you see what's happening?

The holiness she could not see has spoken her name. Not only can she see holiness incarnate, but she can actually for the first time in her life become holy.

[27 : 19] Become holy. In order to become holy, you have to see holiness and holiness has to call you by name and that only happens in the faith of the gospel. Only happens in the faith of the gospel.

Now, two implications briefly and we'll be done in just a few minutes. Two implications. Let me say first, there's a lot, let me wait on that.

Let me say this first. First, the beauty of election. That's the first implication. Now, some of you would have been mad with me if I wouldn't have mentioned this because you were theological headhunters and you would have come to the back and said something to me about how I didn't mention the grand doctrine in this passage of election because it's all over the place.

Verse six and verse 11, did you catch it? I've manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. You gave, Father, you gave me these people.

Yours they were and you've given them to me. It's all over the place. It's in verse 11 as well. Here's the doctrine of election and perseverance. It's simply this, that God chooses his church and that he keeps it.

[28 : 31] He chooses it and he keeps it. He protects it. Now, immediately our modern, let me just address this for a moment. Immediately our modern sensibilities are, the alarms are screaming because the immediate question we have to ask is, what about my freedom?

What about my free will? I want to show you the beauty of election. It depends on what you mean by freedom.

There's a little book by a guy named Charles Hummel in our Varsity Press book in, I think it was the 80s or early 90s, where he wrote about this and he asked this question, where is the only place that a fish can be free?

Where's the only place a fish can be truly free? You know the answer? It's in the water. The only place a fish can be free is in the water, right?

Being lost isn't being free and being dead isn't being free but being found, being looked for, being raised to new life, being born again by something completely outside of you.

[29 : 40] It's not the loss of freedom. It's like a fish flopping on the sand being put back into water. It's finally finding your true home for the first time so that you can truly live.

The modern culture defines freedom as living without restrictions. Freedom is living without any restrictions, no restrictions being placed upon you. No one can tell me what to be, no one can tell me what to do.

It's a lack of response to any authority but look, all the ancients knew something different.

Christianity says something different. That's not freedom. There's no happiness outside of the authority and boundaries that we were created for.

There's no happiness outside of those. God chooses people, He calls people and He keeps people and it's the only hope for people who are dead.

God's activity, let me show you the beauty of election in one minute. George Matheson wrote the hymn that we sung at the very beginning of the service.

[30 : 43] Oh, love that will not let me go. He's a great church of Scotland minister, 19th century. George Matheson was engaged to be married to a lovely young lady.

He got a diagnosis that he was going blind and it wasn't a few days before his wedding that he went totally blind and that the very next day his wife left, his fiance left him because she said she would not be married to a blind man or a minister.

Bad news for me. His sister cared for him for 20 years and she got married when he was 40 and so he was losing her.

She was moving to the States, I think in fact. He was utterly alone in the world and he wrote that hymn on the night of her wedding.

Did you hear the words? The title, Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go. You see the beauty of the beauty that God holds you, that he won't let you go no matter if you go blind and all the people in your life leave you.

[31 : 59] That's the beauty of the doctrine. Now finally, two minutes. Finally, let me just say something about the pursuit of holiness in this world.

We're going to say more about this because the next two weeks, the passage keeps talking about holiness. But let me just say this, believing in Jesus, believing in Jesus, having faith in Jesus is not the whole of salvation.

It's not the whole of salvation. It's the means. The gospel is the means to salvation. And what that means is that Jesus, what Jesus is praying for you here is he's praying for you for what true salvation is and that's ultimately becoming holy.

Everything that ultimately only God can do for you but that he's telling you this is the only way you're going to be happy is to pursue this. And what does this look like?

What does this look like? It's obeying the Ten Commandments but it's not just obeying the Ten Commandments. Holiness knows how to be angry and righteous at the same time.

[33 : 09] Holiness knows how to be courageous and ferocious and zealous and humble and meek and lowly in this world.

Lewis wrote of God through the character Lucy in the Chronicles of Narnia, he is not safe but he is good.

He was turned over the tables of the temple with a whip in his hand. Don't forget a whip, a weapon. And then in the next chapter he said, let the little children come to me.

He was so zealous for the truth that he called the Pharisees vipers and then he turned an eight dinner with their tax collector.

He watched Peter commit treason three times and then he asked him to have breakfast with him on the beach. Jesus is your savior and he's your example.

[34 : 18] And he's the place to go find what it means to be holy. And it means that we don't break the backs of the poor with the law and that we're zealous for the truth at the very same time.

He is the ferocious lion of Judah and the lamb who lays down with the wolves. So love one another, John 16, as I have loved you by giving myself up for you.

So says Christ so that you may be holy as I am holy. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the high priestly prayer.

We ask that you would come and make us holy tonight, not by the power of our innate ability to do the good, to do the righteous, but that you would prick our hearts and change us so that we might for the first time be able to do what is really good, truly righteous and become new people, new selves and become happy.

And so we ask that you would make us into these people right now as we sing that we would pray. Give us a desire for what you command as Augustine prayed. We ask in Jesus' name.

[35 : 31] Amen.