

Father, Protect Them

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[0 : 0 0] You can open your Bible, if you have it with you, to John chapter 17. We're continuing where we left off last Sunday. We're in the midst of Jesus' prayer.

It's the night of Jesus' betrayal. After spending quite a lot of time teaching and comforting and warning his disciples, Jesus began to just pray out loud in front of them.

Last Sunday, we listened to the first words of Jesus in this prayer. He expressed his longing to be restored to the glory that he had with God the Father before the world began.

He told the Father that he had completed the work that the Father had given him to do up until this point. Jesus has more to say in this prayer to the Father. This morning, we're going to hear more about the work that Jesus has finished.

We'll hear what else is on Jesus' heart. And we'll hear this sort of building up to one big request that Jesus has. And we'll see more of this unique relationship that Jesus has with God the Father.

[1 : 1 0] So we're at John chapter 17, verse 6.

And as I was studying this earlier this week, I felt like I was trying to come up with a metaphor for this. But I felt like I was kind of like Indiana Jones. And I'd stumbled into this treasure room.

And man, there's so much in here that's wonderful. And then the more I got into it and was looking at the different themes and the things that come up in here, I thought, man, this isn't just a single room.

This is like the foyer into all kinds of other treasure rooms. I'll give you an example. This is not the main theme or the main point of Jesus' prayer.

But three times in these seven verses that we're looking at this morning, Jesus refers to the disciples as those whom you gave me. We see this in verse 6 twice.

[2 : 1 0] And then in verse 9 once more. I pray for them, for those you have given me. And I mentioned this idea last week, but here again, there's quite a lot of emphasis on this reality.

This thing that was probably unperceived by Jesus' disciples. About how each one of them has been given to the Father. Given by the Father to Jesus.

And as we see here in verse 6, there's even a sense in which they belonged to God before they were given to Jesus. This is one of those smaller treasure rooms. If you belong to Christ Jesus, there's more to your story than just one day I heard and believed and became a follower of Jesus.

That's what happened from your perspective. But from God's perspective, you were His. You were chosen. You were loved. Before you were even born.

He was sovereignly at work on you. And in you. And around you. You were preparing for that day on which He would give you to His Son. It's precious.

- [3 : 23] It's wonderful. It's just one of the many things that we find in Jesus' prayer here. And so even though we're not going to touch on all these things, I want to encourage you to take time to meditate and reflect deeply on these words of Jesus on your own.
- So let's read these seven verses here. Jesus praying to the Father said, I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.
- They were yours. You gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.
- For I gave them the words you gave me. And they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you. And they believed that you sent me.
- I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world. But for those you have given me. For they are yours. All I have is yours.
- [4 : 22] And all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 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. While I was with them, I protected them.
- And kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost. Except the one doomed to destruction. So that scripture would be fulfilled.
- There are three sections or movements that we might see in this part of Jesus' prayer. The first one is in verses 6 to 8. Jesus talks to the Father about the work that he has finished.
- [5 : 24] And the result of that work. Then in verses 9 to 11. Jesus prepares to make his request of the Father. And he begins to express some of the reasons for this request.
- What's on his heart. And then in verses 11 and 12. Jesus makes the request. And expresses more about what he longs to see the Father do.
- So let's begin with this first movement in verses 6 to 8. These words of Jesus seem to flow right out of Jesus' previous statement.
- Back up in verse 4. Jesus prayed, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And this section, verse 6 of chapter 17, is marked by Jesus telling the Father what he has done.
- The main verbs here are all first person and past tense. I have revealed. First person and past tense. Down in verse 8.
- [6 : 29] I gave them the words you gave me. It's all about the work that Jesus has been doing. And that is now past. It's now done. It's now complete.
- And what is that work? In verse 6, Jesus says, I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. This has been the work of Jesus.
- To reveal God, the Father, to his disciples. To show them who God is. What he's really like. This is one of the primary purposes and missions of Jesus.
- To make the Father known to us. If we look all the way back to John's introduction to the gospel. Chapter 1, verse 18.
- What did John say at the beginning of this account? He said, No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God, and is in closest relationship with the Father.
- [7 : 31] He has made him known. That's what Jesus came to do. It's not as though we knew nothing about God before Jesus came.

I find the author of Hebrews very helpful here. This is what he says in his writing. The letter to the Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 1 to 3. He writes, In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets.

The Son, he says, is the radiance of God's glory.

And the exact representation of his being. So, Jesus brings a much fuller, a much greater revelation of the Father to us.

He represents the Father exactly beyond what the prophets of old could do. They were spokesmen for God in the past, but Jesus is the exact representation of God's being here among us in human flesh and blood.

[8 : 40] So, Jesus says, I have done what you gave me to do. I have revealed your name to them. I have revealed you to them. Well, there's a second work that Jesus has just finished doing, and it's related.

Verse 8, Jesus says, I gave them the words you gave me. I gave them the words you gave me. This has also been one of the primary purposes or missions of Jesus, to give words, to speak to his disciples.

And notice the source of these words. Jesus has been speaking to his disciples the very words that God has given him to say. We've talked about this before, but it's worth saying again.

Jesus doesn't teach his own material. In everything he says, he functions like a prophet, relaying the very words that God has to say to people.

We saw this back in John 7, verse 16, when Jesus answered, My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. We heard it again in John 8, verse 28.

[9 : 53] Jesus said, There, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught me.

And we heard it again in John 14, earlier this same evening, verse 24. He said, Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own.

They belong to the Father who sent me. So Jesus now in this prayer is kind of reporting to the Father. I've finished the work that you gave me to do.

I've given them your words, the words that you gave me to say to them. So we see two types of work that Jesus has finished doing. The work of revealing the Father to his disciples, and the work of giving them the Father's words.

And then we notice throughout this first section that Jesus kind of reports to the Father about how the disciples have responded to all this.

[10 : 59] I'll just read this whole section again and emphasize that. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word.

Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

So in this conversation between Jesus and the Father, it's like he's reflecting on the results of the work that he has been doing, and the results are very good.

We hear five statements about how the disciples have responded favorably favorably to this revealing and teaching work of Jesus. The first, they have obeyed your word, or literally, they have kept your word.

Verse six, this is good. This is what the Father and the Son have been longing for. Jesus was sent by the Father into the world to teach and speak on the Father's behalf, as we just said, and the report is good.

[12 : 12] These men have been holding fast to the things that they have been hearing from Jesus. And let's remember, it hasn't been easy to hold fast to the words of Jesus.

It's been getting harder and harder and harder as the story has gone on. The opposition to Jesus has been mounting, and yet here they are this night, on the night of his betrayal, and they're still holding fast to his words.

The second statement comes in verse seven. Jesus says, now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. Now this statement sounds a little strange at first.

Quite literally, it's, now they know that all things, as many as you have given to me, are from you. And Jesus will clarify some of what he means in this next verse.

For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. So some of the everything, some of the all things that have been given to Jesus that they are recognizing is from God, are the words that God has given to them, to Jesus, to give to them.

[13 : 29] So Jesus is saying, now they know that the words that you have given me come from you. They recognize that. But as I was thinking about this, I don't think Jesus says all things or everything without reason.

As we've seen, the Father has given more than just words to Jesus. He's given him various kinds of authority. Authority to judge, authority to forgive sins, miracle working power, supernatural wisdom, knowledge of the future, and more.

It's a package deal, I think, as Jesus says it here in verse 7. Now these disciples of mine, they know that all these things that they've been seeing come from you.

Again, this is good. This is success. This is mission accomplished. They're seeing Jesus and the things he says and does and they're coming to the right conclusion from it.

They're tracing all these things back up to the source as they should. They recognize that everything Jesus does and says is from God, the Father.

[14 : 44] The third statement, Jesus says, they accepted the words you gave me. This in verse 8. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.

The fourth statement comes also in verse 8. They knew with certainty that I came from you. And the fifth statement also in verse 8.

And they believed that you sent me. all of these things are a big deal. The claims of Jesus are lofty.

The promises of Jesus are out of this world. But the disciples have accepted them. They've believed. They know with certainty that Jesus has been sent from God in heaven.

I can't help but think that Jesus is full of joy as he reflects on this and tells this to the Father. This is what they've been working together toward.

[15 : 52] Just like in the days of creation where God saw all that he had made and it was good. I can't help but see the smile of Jesus as he reflects on the past three years of difficult work and says to his Father it's done and it's good.

The result is good. They believe you sent me. They know it with certainty that I came from you. They have accepted the words you gave me to give them and they have kept those words and are holding fast to them.

It's good. It's very good. But as we come to this second section it's not over yet.

What's happened is good. The work is done but there is on the heart of Jesus a weight. A burden. A loving concern for these followers of his because a very difficult time is coming.

And so we come to verse nine. Jesus says I pray for them. I pray for them.

[17 : 10] I'm not praying for the world but for those you have given me. Quite literally I for them am asking.

Not for the world am I asking but for those you have given to me. Jesus has on his heart a request something to ask for.

And he doesn't immediately make his request. First he clarifies just who he is asking this for. It's not for the world he says. It's not for every single person on earth that Jesus asks this is about to ask this.

It's specifically he says for those you have given me. here in the present context that's the disciples of Jesus. That's these eleven men with him. But perhaps also in his mind are the other followers that he has that are not here with him.

The Marys and the Marthas the Lazaruses. Jesus grounds his request that he's about to make with some reasons.

[18 : 21] He reminds the father that these disciples of his belong to him the father. They're not just Jesus disciples even though they have been given to him.

At the same time they also belong to the father as well. They're his people too. I pray for them for they are yours says Jesus.

Now I imagine that if we were among the eleven disciples with Jesus listening to all this we might be wondering about this. First Jesus talks about how we've been given to Jesus by the father and so we belong to Christ now.

Just as he said earlier they were yours you gave them to me. But now Jesus says that we are still God the fathers yours. So whose are we? Well Jesus next statement will clarify this.

We who believe belong to both the father and the son. Jesus makes the statement all I have is yours father.

[19 : 33] And all you have is mine. What a statement. all I have is yours says Jesus. Yes you gave them to me but everything I have is yours says Jesus.

There is I think in these words an absolute surrender an absolute devotion. Jesus keeps nothing to himself and for himself alone.

Everything I have is yours it belongs to you father. father. He's got a whole hearted devotion to God that same kind of devotion that every one of us every human being should have all of me all I have belongs to you God.

Oh that we would all have that same heart always. But then Jesus says something else the flip side something that's quite surprising all I have is yours whoa but then all you have is mine.

Again Jesus claims things that nobody else claims. It's one thing to belong completely to God it's another thing to say that all God has belongs to you.

[20 : 57] This would be the height of blasphemy if Jesus was merely a man but Jesus is more. He is the divine son of God sent from heaven who makes this claim.

He says to God the father I share completely in what you have everything that you have as if it were my own. Do you hear this?

Let me tell you. What's that? Sure do. Let me tell you if Jesus was just a man making false claims and if God knew that in this moment Jesus was speaking blasphemy God could strike Jesus dead on the spot and make it absolutely clear to his followers that Jesus had crossed the line with this statement.

In fact God did that. He struck a man dead for accepting worship as though he were God on a particular occasion. That was Herod in Acts chapter 12. But no God knows his own son and there is this mysterious and wonderful relationship between father and son such that yes even this is true all I have is yours and all you have is mine says Jesus.

We keep going forward verse 11 Jesus says I will remain in the world no longer but they are still in the world and I am coming to you Jesus is getting closer to making his request and again he seems to explain the reason for this request a little bit more he's aware that these disciples of his these ones who have been given to him entrusted to him by the father they're going to continue to remain in this world with all its troubles all its difficulties and Jesus will no longer be with them because he's leaving I'm leaving the world and coming to you father says Jesus but it's like this reality weighs on his heart his people are not coming with him they're going to have to live and endure all that's ahead without him right there by their side like he has been for these past three years and so

[23 : 31] Jesus finally makes his big request of the father he asks for something very specific 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 here it is at last this is Jesus concern for these men with him this night keep them safe let no harm come to them we often call this prayer Jesus high priestly prayer and this is partly why this is probably one of several requests but one of the first ones that he prays for his followers that's what priests do they speak to God on behalf of people and that's what Jesus is doing here he's asking for something on behalf of his people and what is it protection why protection well

Jesus gives us a number of reasons right here in his prayer first protect them because they are still in the world verse 11 this is something that Jesus has been thinking about in fact it's been the topic of conversation this very night Jesus has been warning them about how the world will treat them they will hate you chapter 15 verse 18 and 19 they will persecute you chapter 15 verse 20 they will kick you out of the synagogues chapter 16 verse 2 they will hunt you down and try to take your life also same verse you will be scattered chapter 16 verse 32 you will have trouble 16 verse 33 Jesus knows that it will not be easy for them to continue on in this world and so

Jesus calls on God he asks God the father protect them keep them safe in his second we see here in verse 12 just how personal this is for Jesus Jesus says while I was with them I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me this is personal for Jesus he's walked three years with these men He's endured the challenges and the jeers and the insults with these men.

He's been there through all of it to encourage them, to remind them as the trouble comes, don't lose heart. He's been there to remind them what's true.

Remind them to have faith in God and in Him. I think this is so interesting. If you've seen any of The Chosen, that new TV series that portrays something of the life of Jesus, there's at least a few episodes in it where they kind of portray Jesus' disciples as having a bit of a bodyguard mentality.

[26 : 56] Peter especially, but the others as well. They're going to try to keep Jesus safe as He does His ministry. They're going to try to keep the crowds at bay so that Jesus can move around unhindered.

Were the disciples really like that? We don't know. We will see Peter draw his sword in the next chapter and fight to prevent Jesus' arrest in the garden.

But according to Jesus, they haven't been protecting Him. He's been protecting them. He's been watching over them, keeping them safe as the tensions have been rising, as the opposition has been growing.

Do you see the heart of Christ here? He is an ever-vigilant shepherd of His sheep. He cares about them so deeply.

He's making arrangements for them in this prayer to be cared for by His Father because they will remain in the world while He goes to the Father.

[28 : 02] This is personal for Jesus. I protected them. I kept them safe while I was with them. But now, Father, I ask You to take up that work.

Watch over them. Keep them safe. Protect them. Because I'm leaving. I'm coming to You. There's a third reason that Jesus prays for their protection.

And we see it in verses 11 and 12. Jesus prays, Holy Father, protect them so that they may be one as we are one.

Now, this sounds strange to me, probably to you as well. Protect them so that they may be one. It's like Jesus is concerned about their unity, about them staying together, continuing to have this deep fellowship with each other.

And I can't say for sure what Jesus means by this. I can only guess. But could it be that Jesus knows what the tactic of the devil is in this hours that are coming?

[29 : 16] That He knows what the devil is going to try to do, that He's going to try to divide them and conquer them, to isolate them, to scatter them, to rip this fellowship that they have with each other apart.

And so perhaps Jesus prays that God would protect them so that they would be one, undivided, deeply one, together, united, just like Jesus is together and united with His Father.

The devil is on the prowl. Jesus alludes here, to Judas, in the next verse. He's kept all of His disciples, protecting them and keeping them safe.

None of them has been lost except one, says Jesus. Back in John chapter 13, verse 27, this was just hours ago, John told us this, as soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into Him.

And then of course, Judas went off to put the betrayal in motion. So the devil is on the prowl. He's infiltrated Jesus' circle of 12. And perhaps this prayer of Jesus suggests that Satan means to divide and conquer them.

[30 : 44] And so Jesus asks the Father, protect them so that they may be one, so that they may come through this united together.

This last part about Judas also suggests to us that there's another dimension to the protection that Jesus has in mind here.

It's about more than just physical protection. Jesus says, basically, up till now, I've been successful. I haven't lost any of them except Judas.

This is about more than just physical protection. This is about the spiritual battle that's going on as well. And Judas has been lost, which means not that he's come to physical harm, but that he's come to spiritual harm, spiritual ruin.

And so I hear in these words of Jesus not just a plea that the disciples will have physical safety, but a plea that God would keep their souls, their faith, that they would not turn away from God or from Jesus when the going gets tough like Judas did, or that they would not be drawn away by the allure of this world and its offerings when they begin to sparkle like they did for Judas.

[32 : 09] It's protect them, keep them safe for eternity, for they are yours. Now I know there's parts here that I haven't even touched on.

Some of you might have some questions. What does it mean to keep them safe by the name that you gave me? What scripture was fulfilled by Judas being lost and why is he the son of destruction?

How has glory come to Jesus through these disciples? Again, there's lots of doors to lots of different treasure rooms off the main room here, so I encourage you to take time on your own to search these things out, to meditate on these things.

But with these last few minutes, let's think about how these words apply to us. Clearly these words are for the disciples, the eleven men with Jesus at night and possibly, by extension, the Marys and Marthas and Lazaruses.

We aren't mentioned in this prayer until verse 20, and we'll get there. But I think we all know that there are timeless principles and truths about Jesus and about all of his followers revealed in this section that we work through today.

[33 : 25] Jesus has come into our world to reveal God to us. He's come to give us the very words of God himself.

The disciples believed that God sent Jesus. Do you? The disciples knew with certainty that Jesus came from the Father.

Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? The disciples accepted the words that Jesus spoke to them from the Father. Do you? The disciples kept God's word.

They held fast to God's words. Are you? In the same way, we know that Jesus is not only the good shepherd of these eleven sheep with him, but that his care and concern is for the whole flock.

Jesus said so for all who the Father will give to him. Do you know that Jesus understands and feels the weight and burden of what it's like to be in this world?

[34 : 43] Do you know that Jesus asks the Father not just for the apostles, but for you also, that God would protect you, bring you through, keep you safe to the end until he returns.

Jesus' desire is that none be lost, not a single one. He desires you to make it. And God will answer Jesus' prayer for them back then and for you and me today.

so take heart as Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble, but Jesus has prayed for you and by his grace if you believe in him like the disciples did, God will see to it that you make it through safe and secure to the end to be with him and the Father one forever.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord Jesus, we address our prayer to you.

We thank you that you went to your knees for us. Thank you that we're not alone in this world. Thank you that you know exactly what it's like to live here.

[36 : 12] And thank you that your promises are sure. Thank you that one day you will bust through the clouds in the sky and you will gather all your people, all who belong to you and the sorrows and the sighs and the troubles and the temptations and the sin, all of it of this world will vanish, will disappear.

You'll make everything right and you will usher us into glory with you forever. Oh, I pray that we would hold fast, each one of us to your words.

We ask this for your glory and your name. Amen.