

John 17: 6-19 // Set Apart

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[0:00] But in the meantime, if you want to tap and swipe your way or open your Bibles to John chapter 17, verses 6-19.!

We're at this really amazing part of the gospel story right now. Where, as I've been mentioning in previous weeks, we're in what's known as the Passion Week. And that's the final few days before the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus.

And as we've moved week by week, we get closer and closer to that event. And now we're actually in the final few hours. And so everything Jesus is doing is measured and quite careful.

And he's now realizing he's about to go get arrested. Judas has already left to go get all of the officials together for that to happen. And Jesus' response is just, let's pray together.

I want to pray. And John 17 is broken into three pieces. I might actually finish John 17 next week. Because it starts off with Jesus praying for himself.

[1:22] And then he prays for his disciples, which is what we're going to look at today. Because there is quite a parallel for you and me. But then he prays for the believers and the disciples that are to come.

That is us. And so it's important to notice that Jesus spent a significant amount of time in prayer during his ministry. And here in his final hours, his focus was on you.

And that can be a very sobering thing. We can feel somewhat detached from this story if we're not careful. And that's why one of the things that the Lord says in this is that, Father, keep them.

Keep them. I'm going to get into that in a few moments. But what I wanted to really stress on is how special and important everybody is here today.

I've done this before. But in case you weren't here and don't remember it, I'm going to do it again. I want to read out the odds of you sitting here right now.

[2:22] This is the odds of you actually being born someone much smarter who cared about statistics far more. I hated that class. Okay, I'm just going to say it. It was not my favorite. But here it is.

The mathematical odds of a specific individual existing are calculated to be about 1 in 10 to the 2,685,000th power.

Okay? That are the odds of someone existing. A probability so small, it's effectively zero. Those are the odds of you sitting here right now.

So how has this number come up with? That sounds pretty fantastic to me. Parental meeting and staying together. Roughly 1 in 40 million chance.

Okay? That's your parents meeting and staying together. That's 1 in 40 million chance. All right? Estimated at about 1 in 400 quadrillion chance of conception.

[3:24] Just keep thinking along these lines. Okay? Unbroken ancestral line. So war, famine didn't kill off the family line. You're still here.

Okay? And why I wanted to start with that is because I think it's important for us to understand. You are not random. You are set apart. You have been created and born for such a time as this.

The question is, Lord, for what? What would you have us do? How can our hands and feet be yours? Because it is not random that you're here.

You are no accident that you've been born. Because all of those odds, right? That's pretty astronomical. And I bet you most of us don't walk around in our day-to-day thinking about that. Because the world would tell us the opposite. You don't matter. You're not enough. You're not this. You're not that. You're not the other thing. Whereas God, I believe, is saying very clearly, no, no, no, no, no.

[4:22] I chose you to exist right now. Your personality, your character, your makeup, your sonship, your daughtership.

You are his. And God wants to put that across. So that's, I believe, the basis of this prayer. So I want to dive into the middle because it should be, and I hope it is, really encouraging that Jesus thinks this about you and me.

Verses 6 to 8. I have revealed you to those whom you have given me out of this world. So Jesus is talking to the Father, just to be clear.

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. Sometimes when I read this passage, and I don't know if you've ever experienced this before, I feel like I'm interrupting a holy moment.

[5:29] When I'm reading the prayer of Jesus, there's a part of me that's like, what would it have been like to be there? To see the Messiah, and he's praying. I mean, have you ever been around someone when they pray, you just want to kind of just stop?

Something important's happening right now. And this is the moment that these guys are watching. This is what we get to read. And whenever I read this, I have that chill go down my spine in a good way. That something important and beautiful is happening right now.

Jesus is praying. He's praying. He was praying for the men in the group, right there. And he thought of those three years of ministry, how he manifested God's name.

That just simply means to make apparent, to make evident, to make real. He embodied the nature and character of God. He is God. Fully man.

Fully God. And so when we read about Jesus, when we read about him in the word, if you ever have this moment where you think, God, I'd like to be closer to you, read the words of Jesus and let them just soak in.

[6:35] Okay? Because that's a way of us being closer. He didn't just simply teach them God's character. He showed them God's character. And again, I was saying this earlier in class, it's like Jesus is the perfect example of masculinity.

He's the perfect example of love, of brotherly love. He's the perfect example of leadership. We could go on and on and on and on. If you want to know how to be more like God, read about how Jesus lived.

Love like Jesus loves. Right? And this is something for us to remember. Jesus showed them who God was. He lived out the goodness, righteousness, love, and grace of God the Father.

And you and I as believers, we have a similar call. Because we are set apart to do this. And I'll rally back to what I said earlier. You were born for this. You were born for this special moment right now in history.

You were placed here. It is no accident that we sit here in this church today. It is no accident that God had you born for this time. So with that being set apart, let's keep that in mind.

[7:51] Paul wrote, it's 2 Corinthians 3, verses 1-6, that you are a living letter.

Somebody fact check for me. I'm pretty sure that's the actual quote. But you are a living letter. Your lives should read like a love letter from the Lord.

Okay? That when someone looks at us, they see more of him and less of us. And they look, wow. Wow. There's something going on there.

And if you're like me, some people will look at you that have known you a while and known you 10 years before. And say, okay, good. There's been some change. And they can read that on you and how you act and your new way of being, right?

And in our way, as we are able, this is how God is like. Look at the way I live. Look at the way I speak. This is what Jesus has done with his disciples.

[8:49] This is what he does through us, through his word. Despite all of their faults. Because they were a little competitive. They didn't always get along. He could say that they kept God's word.

And that they knew him. And they knew the Father. Verses 9 to 10. I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.

Now, let me just stop for a second. This does not mean that Jesus doesn't love the world. Okay? John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. Okay?

That he, whoever believes in him, shall have eternal life. So I'm not saying that Jesus isn't loving the world. I don't think that's what he's saying here. It's that he's focusing on his guys right now. Okay? I'm praying for these guys. But for those you have given me. For they are yours. All I have is yours. And all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

[9:48] He knew that the way he'd reached the lost and dying world. Was through his work. Through those men. And ultimately, as it filters on down through history.

Through your hands and feet. Jesus knew that how this dead and dying world would be reached. Would be through you and me. I hope that's sobering.

Because this is your call. You were born for this time. You were set apart for this purpose. To love like Jesus loved. To those around you right now.

As the 11 disciples. Because Judas, remember, he had already left. Okay? So as the 11 disciples that were left there now. They belong to him. We also belong to him. Verses 11 to 12.

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.

[10:50] So that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them. I protected them. And kept them safe. By the name that you gave me. None has been lost. Except the one doomed to destruction.

So that the scripture would be fulfilled. So there are two requests that we can read here. In this portion of scripture. One. That we would be kept by God.

Kept by him. He prayed with his departure in mind. And in a way, he was already gone. He knew how this next 24 hours would roll out. He knew how this next 44 days would roll out.

He knew when he was ascending into heaven. At that time. He knew how this would all roll out. So in his mind. He's just going through. And he knows. This is the last bit. I need to tell them how important they are.

The important mission they have. I need to tell the people. Like you and me. Who are sitting here now. On down the line. That the Lord will keep them as well. And this was what Jesus was passing on.

[11:50] To be kept by God. The three years of discipleship were over. School was out. And Jesus knew that they needed prayer. Because the next few hours for the disciples.

Would be deeply traumatizing. Think about that for a moment. They're not entirely sure what's going to happen yet. They're just kind of going along for the ride still. He's kind of talking about the end of the world. The food was good.

Now he's praying for us. This is kind of cool. Right? They have no idea. That Peter himself is about to die him three times. They have no idea. That he is about to be unfairly tried. And then executed. In one of the most horrific ways imaginable. And then they would be scattered. They had no idea. In a few hours time all of us would come out. But Jesus knew. And he was still able to say. Father they kept your word. He knew them. All their frailties. He knows us. And all of our frailties. He knows us. And all of our difficulties.

[12:46] And all of our weaknesses. And all of our failures. He also knows all the victories he's done. He also knows all of the ways. That we've been able to bless his name. He also knows the way. That we've been able to love one another.

He knows this too. And so this would be a deeply traumatizing event. For the disciples. That was just around the corner. Betrayal. Arrest.

Suffering. Crucifixion. Entombment. Burial. All would come down like a bag of hammers. On the disciples shoulders. They would feel it. They would sense it.

They would know it. And some of them would probably think. This was the end. Verse 11 says. I will remain in the world no longer. But they are still in the world.

And I'm coming to you. Holy Father. Protect them by the power of your name. The name that you gave me. So that they may be one. As we are one. They needed the prayer of Jesus.

[13:42] And the power of God. To keep them. We are no different. Jesus is interceding for us now. He is praying for us now in heaven. And the power of the Holy Spirit.

Can help us to be kept. And focus on Christ. They needed to be kept. So that they continue on as disciples of Christ. This wasn't obvious.

Because there were no disciples. That followed a dead rabbi. And so if they had the mindset. Well he is just going to die. Well what are we going to do now? We are just going to scatter. That

probably would have been the normal way of doing things.

They would have found a different teacher. And all the things. But Jesus is like. No, no, no, no. You guys need to stick together. Father. Help them. Keep them together. Because Jesus knew. And knows that he would rise again.

That the Holy Spirit would fall upon them. That their work was just beginning as disciples. And so in that way. Our teacher. He is not dead. He is risen.

[14 : 40] Keep us in that Lord. Because with Jesus. The discipleship never ended. And they needed to remain his disciples. Despite what it looked like in the world. Despite the evidence of the tomb.

Despite all of this. They needed to be kept. And continuing on with Jesus. Isn't left to us alone. God gives us his keeping power.

Through the Holy Spirit. He gives us the ability. To go on and keep moving forward. We all need this. Because I've remained a Christian. Most of my life. Since my mid-teens.

Not because of anything I've learned. Or anything I've done. But because of the power of God. Alone. His keeping power. And there are still difficulties.

There are still moments of doubt. There are still questions that we bring up. Is this real? Father. Can I really trust you? I am learning to trust you. A pastor friend of mine said that.

[15 : 37] Not that long ago actually. And it kind of stuck with me. He's been a pastor for a long time. He's been a Christian a long time. And we were talking. And he said. You know. I'm learning to trust God.

And I was like. Hold on a second. Sorry. Could you repeat that for me? He said. I'm learning to trust God. And he explained it. That it's a process. Of continually surrendering things to God. It's not a one and done.

Because we still want control. And he confessed that. My ego gets in the way. Control gets in the way. My fear. My anxiety gets in the way. I feel like I can do things better than God sometimes. So I need to surrender all of that to him. And learn to trust him all over again. I was like. Oh. Man. That's gold. His name's Andy Fuller.

So I'm just not going to take credit for it right there. I'm just going to tell you. Right out. It was just such a good moment. To learn from someone else that way. Lord.

[16 : 31] Would you keep us? We need this power in our lives. We need to be kept from division. We need to be kept from error. Because there's so much creeping into the church worldwide nowadays.

Has been forever. But certainly we see it a lot. With the advent of the internet. We just see it more and more and more. People would pull us away from your truth. We need to be kept from error. We also need to be kept from sin and hypocrisy. We need to be kept in God's safety. In loving arms. He will do this work through his name.

Not a church. Not our own effort. But it's by the name of God. His character. And his authority. In our lives. Verse 11 again.

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.

[17 : 24] As we are one. Like I said. The disciples. Unity. You couldn't actually just assume that. It couldn't be. They didn't always get along.

There was difficulty there. Sometimes they were competitive. One of my favorite stories is actually sort of innocent. And we are going to get into it. Not that long from now. Where you know. John is writing about Peter and another disciple.

Ran to the tomb. But the other disciple was faster. Right. A little bit of competitiveness there. Now I think John was a little bit younger. Right. Okay. He had a little bit of the fire in him. Okay. But the way that it's worded.

You can't help but think. That this is just pure brotherly competition. Right. And Peter of course just got in there. And he pushed him on the side. And got into the tomb. You know. And just the whole thing described.

It's an amazing thing. But this is what the disciples were like. And I've thought about it often. If you look at that group of men. They had no reason to get along.

[18 : 21] At all. They were so different. We are all so different here. Coming from different backgrounds and places. That's a beauty. That's a strength. And in Jesus it is made beautiful.

And in the disciples. You have people like Simon the Zealot. Now he would have gone to even murder. To rid his country and people from Roman occupation. And then you have Matthew the tax collector. Who worked for them. And was considered a betrayer of his people. How did those two guys not fight? But they didn't. Because the unity that Jesus brought them. Okay. The unity that Jesus brought them. We need his keeping power. So if unity is ever a problem. Let's continue to focus on Jesus. We need his keeping power. God's people need one another. The New Testament doesn't often. [19:22] And you'll be hard pressed to find. A Christian operating by themselves. You find them in fellowship. You find them in a place of belonging. You find them together. And even though we are a different people.

All together. We are one in Christ. We have that unity. Like it or not. And especially if you have an eternal. And heavenly mind.

God. Okay. Because we will see one another there too. You're stuck with me. And I'm stuck with you. Okay. You're stuck with one another. And it should be one of those things.

We can smile and laugh at. Because isn't that glorious. Right. That in heaven. We will be together. This is just the preface of the book.

It's just the start. The whole story is yet to begin. But you were born for such a time as this. For us all to connect. In this place. In this town. To do his work.

[20:16] And in heaven. We're going to see that come to fulfillment. Isn't that a beautiful thought? We're in this family together. And there's a pattern in this unity.

God the Father. Christ the Son. Show us this pattern. And unity is not uniformity. There's a difference there. If we were all told.

To dress the same. To look the same. To have the same haircuts. Right. That is uniformity. But if you're told. You are welcome here. However you come.

However you show up. Wherever your heart is at. In this moment. Let's all be conformed by Christ. You are loved. No matter who you are. When you walk in the door. You are loved by God.

You know one of the things that I do. Every Sunday morning. I actually walk through the church.

And I pray for the church. And I pray all over the pews. And I pray up the chairs. I pray all around. Okay.

[21:14] And one of the things that I end. The way that I end off the prayer. Is Father may no one leave this building. Without feeling your love today. That is one of the last things I pray.

When I pray for this church. On Sunday morning. Before anybody gets here. Okay. So I am saying that out loud now. Because I hope you know. How loved you are. Because it is a miracle.

Just by what I read earlier. With the odds. It is a miracle. That you are sitting here. You are a miracle. And for such a time as this. Be the hands and feet of Jesus.

We have unity of heart. Spirit. Purpose. Destiny. But it does not mean that I have to be like you. And it does not mean you have to be like me. Verses 12 to 16.

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. I am coming to you now.

[22:13] But I say these things. While I am still in the world. So that they may have full measure. Of my joy within them. I have given them your word. And the world has hated them. For they are not of the world anymore.

Than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world. But that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world. Even as I am not of it.

So he wasn't just leaving behind a good team. These weren't employees. Okay. These were his disciples. Jesus cared deeply for their joy.

He cares deeply for our joy. And we can find joy in him. And if you haven't ever heard it before. There is a monstrous difference.

Between happiness and joy. Happiness is up and down all the time. And that's normal. It's normal to feel moments of unhappiness. There's nothing wrong with that. It is perfectly human.

[23:12] Somebody cuts you off in traffic. I don't expect you to say. Bless you. You know. I'm so happy this happened right now. You don't have to be like that. You can be frustrated. You can be sad. That's okay. Happiness is up and down.

But joy is not dependent upon circumstance. Joy is something we find in Christ. And how we are kept in that joy. Is by being closer with him. We're kept in that joy.

And this reveals something about the Lord. That there was joy in Jesus' life. Now I know immediately. The skeptic in me. When I start thinking about this.

Thinks. Okay. Well what about Isaiah 53 verse 3. He was despised and rejected by mankind. A man of suffering and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hid their faces.

He was despised and held him in low esteem. This is a prophecy about Jesus. Okay. Well that doesn't sound like a joyful man. Right. Here's the thing though.

[24 : 11] Jesus did not live without difficulty or trouble. He's about to get crucified. That's not exactly a. Hey let's do that on a Sunday afternoon for a bonding thing. No.

This was cruel. Punishment. Jesus faced adversity. He faced the problems. A lot of the problems are similar problems to you and I face.

Rejection. Right. Pain. Harsh words. You know that one of the things that Jesus had to contend with. You could read about this through Josephus and some of the other authors that have written about Jesus that weren't biblical.

And one of the things that he had to contend with was people mocking him for his parentage. At least we know who our father is buddy. Because of course if you don't have an eternal mindset. You're thinking the immaculate conception that happened with Mary. Didn't happen at all. Well that was constantly thrown at Jesus. And yet he had joy because he knew exactly who he was.

[25 : 12] He wasn't insecure. He wasn't up and down. He had that settled peace. That can only come from the God the Father. The disciples didn't look at Jesus and say he's miserable all the time.

I don't want that joy. No. There was something magnetic about the joy of Jesus. There's something magnetic about that joy that you and I can have now. Because the life experience of Jesus had a joy that was greater than anyone else's.

It was rooted in an unbroken fellowship with God. He was in a constant relationship with God. It didn't turn off and on on Sundays. And you and I it's the same way.

We have a constant ongoing relationship with God. He chose you to be here in this moment. He has you here. The miracle of you being born is no accident as I've said it before.

And God wants relationship with you. He wants to walk with you. He wants to talk with you. He wants to be with you. He wants you to want this of him. That is the relationship that we can have with God the Father.

[26 : 16] It was the fruit of true faith and a confidence in God. Like I said, Jesus not for a moment questioned who he was. So bring on the insults.

Bring on all of those things. He didn't care. He knew the truth. He knew exactly who he is and why he came to this earth. He saw the great things God had done and it brought him joy.

When we read the Bible, there should be a part of us that's thinking like, that is so cool. Seeing or reading something about someone being healed or the blind being able to see, that should stir something in us.

This is incredible. Because you know what? Sometimes the blind that we need to be healed from is a spiritual blindness. Father, it just feels so dry and dusty.

I haven't been able to connect with you. And I'm starting to read your word. It's starting to pop out and I'm starting to see how much you love me. The scales fall from our eyes in a sort of an allegorical way.

[27 : 15] And we start to be able to see once again because of the love that God has for us. It was never diminished by sin. Jesus was without sin. It was never taken away through deception.

It was never diminished by allowing even a small foothold to the devil in his life. There was no place for the devil anywhere near Jesus. And anywhere Jesus went, there was a little bit of a freak out and a panic.

Because he has all authority. Jesus prayed that his joy would be fulfilled in the disciples. And in the last part of this chapter, it goes on to be fulfilled in you and me as well.

We want his joy filling our lives. The world, the flesh, and the devil. Those three enemies will always try and steal our joy. Always.

One of the first steps towards a life in the world is neglect. And I have this story. I was raised in an ocean culture, okay? So the ocean was not far from where I grew up.

[28:19] And one of my best friends growing up was a guy named Andy. And Andy and I would often go down to the beach when the big logs came in. Because the trees are huge. And when the big logs roll into the beach and they're not quite on the beach, you can hop on the log and you kind of push it off and you can paddle a little bit.

It takes a while. These things are heavy. And you can go out there and you can be like 50 feet off the beach and you can just talk. And we did. And I remember one day we talked and we talked and we talked.

And that, you know, we're at either ends of this log. We kind of just lay down looking at the sky and pretty soon you're napping. And we kind of got stirred and we woke up. We were, I think it would be conversion-wise, probably about three miles down the beach.

Like way, way off course. And we drifted because we were not paying attention at all. So if you want the world to creep in, neglect God.

Neglect what he's given you. You know, there's another thing where it's like, you know, and this was taught to me by someone from that oceanic culture as well. A ship is meant to be in the ocean.

[29:25] The ocean is not meant to be in the ship. It'll sink. And so as we are in this world, we are not meant to be filled with this world. But our boat's got to be in the water. Okay?

Verses 17 to 19. And this is request number two. Is to sanctify them. First one was to keep them. Next one's to sanctify them. Sanctify them by the truth.

Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. Sanctified simply means to be set apart.

To be set apart. That's what it means. When you were saved, God set you apart. As you grow in your faith, you're experiencing more and more of that being set apart.

The closer you get to God. You love sin less. You want to avoid it more. That is being set apart. You want to serve him.

[30:28] You want to bless others. That's a new way of being human for most of us. That is being set apart. And all of this comes through the word of God. And Jesus doesn't leave the disciples to sanctify themselves.

That's religion. He says, no, no. I'm going to sanctify them. I am setting them apart. Because they are mine. And here's the thing about wrapping it back to when I said how special and miraculous it is that you're sitting here right now.

You are set apart. You are set apart. For a greater purpose than we could possibly imagine. The Lord has something very individual and special for each of us here today.

You are set apart. You are set apart. Verse 18. And I'll close after this. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

And this speaks of service. We have work to do. Our hands and feet have things to hold and to walk out. And we're not growing in grace.

[31:37] And we're not growing in peace and unity just to be a really cool Christian club. That's not what we're doing. We're growing in grace so that we can go out and do his work.

Because you are a miracle for being here. We're sent. We're not thrown out into the world randomly. You were not born into this world randomly.

Somehow, some way, for reasons between you and God and you and God alone, you're meant to be here. You're special. You're important. You are set apart.

As God sent Jesus into the world, he has sent you and me into the world. You're not randomly thrown into whatever you have in front of you this week. You're sent.

So go out and be the hands and feet of Jesus. Be set apart. And be in his joy, knowing that he is keeping you. He is holding you, protecting you, guiding you, guarding you.

[32:42] And rest in that joy today. Let's pray. Let's pray.