

# Jesus prays for his disciples

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 March 2020

Preacher: Rob Patterson

[ 0 : 00 ] Jesus, chapter 17, Jesus prays before he's arrested and crucified.

And the first five verses, he prays for himself. And these verses we're going to read from 16 to 19. He prays for his disciples. 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.

[ 1 : 20 ] And I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

[ 2 : 32 ] And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth. Thanks, team.

It seems fitting to sing a song about prayer, or that is a prayer, as we're about to study a prayer that Jesus prayed over his disciples.

So if you are new to the church today, then we're actually preaching through the last section of John, but we're in John chapter 17 at the moment.

Jesus, what they call high priestly prayer, where he prays for himself, his disciples, and the disciples to come, the believers to come. And today we're looking at the second part.

That's verses 6 to 19. So if you have a Bible, open it up to John chapter 17. If you don't have a Bible, but you have a Bible app, then grab that and open that. I'll be putting up the Bible verses on the screen.

[ 3 : 34 ] Well, I won't be, but we will be. We'll have them up on the screen. And they are from the ESV, English Standard Version, just in case it doesn't match exactly with the one that you have. Alrighty.

As that passage was read out, I'm not sure if you noticed, but there was a word that turned up quite a few times. And that word was world. Have you guys heard of word clouds?

Because what I did was I took this passage and I stuck it in a word cloud up. And so if we go on to the next thing, there you go. This shows you how the larger the word, the more frequently the word appears. And so if you look at that, it's pretty obvious which word comes out most, isn't it?

The word world. Jesus is praying for his disciples in relation to this world. He identifies in this, as we go through it, you'll see, he identifies in this prayer two realms that people can belong to.

We can belong to the world, the world of people that we live amongst, or we can belong to God. A lot of the language is actually related to this perspective.

[ 4 : 42 ] So you'll see things like those the Father has given Jesus, those Jesus has kept and guarded. Those who are mine, Jesus says, those who know, those who believe. These are the ones that Jesus is praying for here.

And there's a particular word group that actually holds these concepts together in terms of those who are mine in relation to the world.

And that word group is the sanctification word group. The sanctify word group. It's a very small word. So we go back onto that, the word cloud, sorry.

It's a very small word right down in the bottom corner. Now if you're in years three to six, you're in here before you go out to your children's program, you'll actually have one of these.

If you're in year three to six and you don't have one, then there's probably one spare on the back up there. And some special people got an extra one too. But the idea of that is, for you guys in year three to six while you're here, what I want you to do is find that word sanctify and then see if you can find every word that relates to it.

[ 5 : 48 ] And that's every word that gives you the sense that something is taken out of or treated in a special way as distinct from the world around us. Okay, have you got that?

If you haven't, your parents can explain it to you as you sat next to them. See if you can find all those words that actually relate to sanctify. And I'll give you a little hint. Consecrate and sanctify are the same word in Greek.

Okay, they're the same word. Now, the fact that you've got the word even in ESV, which is fairly literal translation, the fact that you've got the word translated two different ways in the one passage, is it tells you that this word, this sanctify word group, is kind of a big word group.

It's big. It's a big concept in the context of the whole Bible. I mean, we translate this word, different words to mean specific things. So, for example, runs. You know, the Cricket World Cup's on.

So, runs on the board is what matters. Someone who runs as a form of exercise, they're crazy, but it's actually something, you know what I mean when I say that they, you know, when someone runs for exercise.

[ 6 : 53 ] And someone who has the runs, you know that that's very different. Although it may involve running. It actually, different points. It is actually very different. Well, this sanctify word group is not like that in the sense that it's one word that means a bunch of different things.

It's one word at different times. This is one word that means a whole bunch of things all at the same time. And so, I guess I could say in this, you know, recognizing there are so many people pregnant in our church at the moment, that this word is pregnant with meaning.

So, what is that meaning, you ask? And I'm glad you do because I'm going to answer that. But sanctify means to set apart, to prepare for holy service, to purify, to be like God, to be for God, to belong to God.

That means all of those things roll into one. Holiness is another translation of this word. It has, so it has in it the sense of who I am and how I live and who I live for all rolled into one.

It speaks to my identity, my purpose, and my destiny all at the same time. And this word is what shapes Jesus' prayer.

[ 8 : 14 ] God's mission has always been to gather a people for himself. His treasured possession. And this word describes what Jesus is doing.

It's exactly what he's doing. He's calling people out of the world and he's setting them apart from the world. Purifying them or making them holy. Preparing them for holy service.

And I'm not sure if you find this. But as a Christian, I think it can be really hard for us to work out how we actually be this set apart people while still being in the world.

Do you find that? I know that, for example, it's a couple of years ago now, isn't it, when the plebiscite for same-sex marriage came through. I know that when that was coming through and there were conversations around how we should vote, that there were a number of people in this congregation who were unsure about how they should vote.

Or even adamant that it wasn't right to vote or express a religious opinion in the political sphere. There are so many different ways that we struggle to actually know what it means to be a Christian and to own our Christian faith.

[ 9 : 32 ] And at the same time, live in and engage with the world around us. It seems like a minefield. And if you didn't have that issue with that particular vote, just think about how many times you're involved in a conversation over the coffee table at work or whatever.

And it drifts into an area where you start to think, oh man, I really know that I should witness at this point. But this issue is just so complicated. I don't even know how to bring my faith to bear on this. Or I'm actually too afraid to say what my faith actually speaks to at this point. It's just too hard. It's too scary. I know that it'll cost me if I do.

Those points of tension, points of tension that were arising for the disciples, they were about to be left in the world. And Jesus did not want them to think that they were for one moment alone in it. So, Jesus prays for those who's called out of the world. These disciples that he prays for are representative of all of us who are being called out.

[10:40] They're the starting point, but we're the continuation of God's work. And in a word, Jesus' prayer is that the Father would sanctify.

Would sanctify them. So, let's break this prayer down now and actually look at it in terms of how it unfolds. Because what Jesus does is he does three things.

He says, I am praying for and identifies the specific people he's praying for. And then he says, I'm praying because, which is the reason why he's praying this prayer. And then finally, he gets around to saying what he's asking for, what he's asking the Father for on behalf of.

So, that's I am praying that. So, if you look on the back of your bulletins, that's the basic outline that I'll be following. And right from the beginning of this section, we see the sanctifying work of Jesus. Jesus is specific about who he's praying for.

And he speaks about them from two perspectives. And these two perspectives, I think, are really hard for us to hold in our heads at the same time. You see, he speaks from the perspective of, firstly, the people you gave me out of the world.

[11:47] And then he goes on to say, the people who kept your word. Notice the difference in perspective there. Let's start with the people who you gave me out of the world. And that's straight up in verse 6.

We read these words. This is a significant thing that Jesus is talking about here.

You see, the Israelites got the personal name of God through Moses. And if you remember, that's the burning bush story, if you have any familiarity with the Bible. That's where God actually gave Moses his personal name.

They got a glimpse of God through Moses. And we talked about that last week. When Moses was actually, even got a glimpse of God's glory, his skin glowed for days afterwards and he had to wear a veil. They got a glimpse of God.

But they couldn't see God and live. The Jews understood the vast distance between them and God. And they knew it was so great that they wouldn't even speak his name out loud.

[13:02] We believe that the best pronunciation of God's personal name is Yahweh. Some people say Jehovah. But the reason we don't know for certain is because they never said it out loud, the Jews.

So it's one of those things that we just don't know. And this was out of reverence for God, his recognition of this vast distance. But the people that Jesus is praying for have been taken to a whole new level in terms of relationship.

In Jesus, they have seen God. They know him. They've seen him face to face, finally. And John introduces this biography of Jesus with the words, if you go back to John chapter 1 verses 1 to 4, he says these words.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. People sometimes say that all religions are the same.

[14:11] But the God of the Bible didn't leave us in any doubt about who he is. He didn't leave it to us to try and find him or to discover him as if we could. This God has made himself known to his people in Jesus.

The people Jesus is praying for are those who recognize that Jesus, as God, has come to his people. So we get this perspective from Godward, looking at the people that God has set apart from even before the foundations of the world.

And then we get this second perspective, which is the people who kept your word, we read in the following verses. John also describes his people as those who have kept your word.

And they have. Now, I'm not saying the disciples were perfect. They may be not in the fullest sense. They certainly weren't perfect. If you look at, just take Peter as an example, he kind of stands out as one of those disciples who kept putting his foot in it.

And they certainly didn't understand the place of Jesus' death on the cross. We know from the past several sermons that they're really struggling with that. But they accepted that Jesus was from God in verse 7.

[15:26] They received Jesus' words as from God in the first part of verse 8. And they have believed that Jesus was sent from God in the second part of verse 8.

These disciples didn't have the full gospel at this point. But they had come to the appropriate gospel response. They were all in. That's what belief is.

All in. I'll give you an illustration of this that might be helpful. When two people marry, they make promises to each other. They're absolute promises.

I promise to be, to do, to stay. No exceptions. Have you noticed that when you listen to those promises? Perhaps, certainly for me before I was married, I would read those promises or I'd hear them at weddings that I went to and think, My goodness.

Will I ever get to the point where I can say those things? Where I can be all in with someone else? Don't get me wrong. You don't keep those promises perfectly.

[16:32] But who in their right minds would marry someone who would only commit half-heartedly? I promise to, most of the time.

I promise to, dot, dot, dot, dot, when I feel like it. I promise to, well, I'll look after you in sickness, but man flu is not a real thing, so buck up and get out of bed and get on with life.

You know, we just don't have that, do we? We promise wholeheartedly all in. We fail at points. But we own that. And we repent of it.

And we move on all in. To resist this is to hold something back of yourself. You know, to say, I'll stay committed while it suits me, but I'm reserving the right to decline.

But if you ask me for a part of my life that I don't want to share, then I'm sorry. Here we find the way that Jesus describes his disciples is that they had turned their backs on the world.

[17:36] They chose Jesus. It's why they were so devastated when he died. They were all in. The way that we too should be. When we say that we're believers, we should be all in.

So these two perspectives that Jesus describes these people from, he says, and he says in verse 9, just to clarify that he's doing this, he says in verse 9, I'm praying for them.

I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. These are the people that Jesus is praying for. Not for the world.

Just for the ones that the Father has given him out of the world. And I've got to acknowledge at this point that Jesus places two truths together that seem contradictory. Because he says this, the ones that you've given me, on the one hand, and then he says on the other hand, the ones who have believed.

And there's no embarrassment or apology about this. It's absolutely clear that in terms of the way Jesus prays, that there's one that's actually superintending over the other as well. That God's choosing comes so much to the forefront in comparison to our believing.

[18:52] No embarrassment or apology, that's just how it is. And if we're really honest, there's times when we really don't like this. It kind of impinges on our sense of personal sovereignty, doesn't it?

The reason that it does that is because we see life from our own perspective. We live life moment by moment in real time, making decisions on the basis of conscious and unfortunately too much subconscious thought.

We see life from our own perspective, but Jesus is giving us a glimpse from God's perspective. From our perspective, we hear the gospel and we respond.

We can choose to believe on the one hand or not on the other. God's perspective reveals that we who believe were already chosen, were already set apart.

You following me here? Let me give you an illustration that might help a little bit. It doesn't actually explain it. I think this is too big a concept. I would say that to actually understand how God is sovereign over this is above my pay grade in terms of ability to understand.

[20:03] But here's an illustration that kind of puts those two things together. When I hear the gospel, it's like I come to a door and a sign on the door says this, all who believe in me enter here. I

choose to believe.

And so I walk open and walk through that door. But once I've gone through that door and I look back at that door, the sign on the door says on the other side of the door, all whom I have chosen, I will bring through here.

Friends, I think this is a truth, like a combination of truths that we perhaps don't understand in any sense until we've walked through the door.

And we perhaps won't understand even in its fullest sense until we meet our God face to face. We don't know how it works.

It's above our pay grade, but ultimately we get to rest in the truth of it. Because if you have walked through the door, then you are someone whom the Father chose before time and who the Son died to rescue and who God delights to call his precious child.

[ 21 : 16 ] Look at how many times God owns us in this passage. Mine, yours, ours. The ones you set apart I've come to claim. The ones I am glorified in. The ones I would love to have my joy.

This is who Jesus is praying for. The disciples Jesus called out of the world and through them all who would follow. So I am praying for, Jesus says.

These people, these set-apart people who believe, who are all in in their belief in you. In me. And then he goes on to say, I am praying because.

Why does he need to pray? What's going on here? Well, Jesus prays for his own because he has reached this transition point in his ministry. The transition point where he is actually leaving them.

And we see this in verse 10 to 11a. 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.

[ 22 : 16 ] And I am coming to you. Now, as we talked about last week, Jesus is glorified at the cross. But it means that he has to leave them.

His death is a part of that. But that's only a temporary separation. We know that, you know, spoiler alert, he died and he rose again. And he spent some time with them after that.

Jesus is actually talking here about his longer term return to heaven, where he still is interceding on our behalf. This departure is a big deal for them.

The disciples have not been able to understand this yet. And again, you'll have seen from the past several chapters that we've read, as Jesus is talking with them, it's like they're, yeah, like Jesus is talking to a brick wall.

It's just not sinking in. They don't understand. John's recorded them, Jesus telling them a number of times. Even the crowds challenged Jesus on this point. In John chapter 12, verse 34, that triumphal entry, Jesus talks about being lifted up, to talk about the way that he's going to die, we read in John chapter 12.

[ 23 : 27 ] And in 12 verse 34, the crowd actually responds to him, thinking, you're talking about dying. They say, we have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever.

How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? They couldn't understand Jesus' plan because it was outside of their expectations, their understanding of who the Messiah would be, what glory looked like, as we looked at last week.

If he goes away, then their hopes would be shattered. And Jesus knows this. He knows that their hopes will be shattered.

But he also knows beyond that, that those hopes will be rebuilt correctly by their Father through the Holy Spirit. So he prays for them.

He knows he's going away. There's another aspect to Jesus' concern as he leaves. You see, Jesus also knows what he has done for them while he has been with them.

[ 24 : 37 ] He has kept them. He has guarded them. Now these words, again, you can see them on surface value, and you think, okay, that's great. But actually these words in Jewish usage, so in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, these words were used very specifically for describing covenant faithfulness.

So faithfulness of the people in keeping the commandments, that keeping word. Or faithfulness of God was described as him guarding his people. So what we're seeing here is when Jesus uses these words, he's saying, I am Yahweh, faithfully protecting my people, helping them to keep the covenant.

Even the one who was lost, we read in these verses, was only lost because the scripture said he would be. Jesus prays because now he is leaving.

And he wants his disciples to know that they will be taken care of after he has gone. And the final, oh, there's a couple more reasons, sorry.

Yeah, the next thing that Jesus says, actually, the reason he prays is because he actually, for him, his perspective is that he is returning to the Father, and that's an incredible sense of joy for him.

[ 26 : 08 ] To be one with the Father again is a huge thing for Jesus. He is so looking forward to it. And so Jesus prays that they might actually experience the same thing.

In verse 13, he says, Now I am coming to you and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. His prayer is that they will be kept in him.

As painful as the separation will be, the joy of knowing what it is to abide in Jesus is far greater. And they will need the Father to intervene in their lives so that they can endure.

He wants them to have the joy of knowing what it means to abide in the Father. To abide in him.

And finally, Jesus prays because he knows the life they will live.

The disciples of Jesus are set apart from the world like he is and we saw what they did to Jesus. In verse 14, Jesus says, I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.

[ 27 : 21 ] The very truth that brings joy to us brings opposition from the world. It's not too harsh to say that the world will hate us.

The more I abide in Jesus, the less I will fit into this world because of him. The more I sit under and bring myself under God's word, the less I will be liked because of him.

Some knowledge of God is tolerated. We know that. And I would suggest that so much of the Bible, I think this is one of the ways Tim Keller looks at the Bible.

He talks about Doctrine A and Doctrine B. In every passage in the Bible there is something good that appeals to everybody. But there's a flip side to it that challenges and really grates against the way we choose to live in our society, in our world.

Some knowledge of God is tolerated. But it's God on their terms and from the world's perspective. It's not the whole God, is it?

[ 28 : 26 ] The God that we know. So these are the reasons why Jesus prays. And this, and let's go on and have a look at what Jesus actually prays. See, Jesus prays that God will keep them within this hostile world.

In verse 15, I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I'm not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.

We live in a world that is hostile to who we are. It hates us because of who we are in Christ.

And this hatred comes at us in two forms. The point of tension is the truth and the enemy is the father of lies. Now it's possible that we'll be attacked physically and if you read the news reports, certainly in Nigeria, the places like that, you'll hear of Christians being attacked and killed.

[ 29 : 40 ] India as well. Christians being attacked and killed because they are Christian. It's tragic to hear of Christians dying for their faith.

But notice here that that's not Jesus' main concern. Most of the disciples Jesus is praying for here will die for their faith. But Jesus' main concern is that they would not step away from the truth that makes them distinct in the world.

And so this is where the world attacks us. It seeks to undermine, to ridicule, to shame us in our thinking about God's word.

And Satan, elsewhere described as the father of lies, Satan will spin lie after lie into a web of deceit that we can't see our way clear of. He'll try to turn us around so many times that we'll think we're going in the right direction.

He's capable of convincing us that we are following the truth even when we're not. Think of how women have been oppressed and are being oppressed by people who call themselves Christians.

[ 30 : 59 ] Husbands who abuse their wives in the name of the Lord. think of how many Christians justified slavery, the stolen generation.

I'm not saying every Christian did. There were many Christians. In fact, the movement against slavery was led by Christians. Many Christians actually ministered to the indigenous Australians at the same time that other Christians were advocating for this stolen generation policy.

think of how many churches supported the Nazis in World War II. I believe it was all the major denominations in Germany at the time. Think of the Christians who actively campaign against God's teaching.

I'm not sure if you're aware. I'm going to bring one up that's certainly coming onto the news recently. And this is a current debate over conversion therapy. Victorian government and the Queensland government are actually bringing in some legislation to do with banning conversion therapy. And I've got to say up front that what I've read of conversion therapy is appalling. It should be banned. But activists wish to go further.

[ 32 : 20 ] One has said people who have an issue with this legislation when they asked about, well, is it going to impinge on religious freedom? He says people who have an issue with this legislation are the people who come from a place that says being LGBTIQ is somehow disordered.

And that any approach that actually challenges someone for being, for expressing themselves in these ways should be banned whether in a formal clinical setting or not.

therapy needs to be banned. Another has openly said the law needs to go further. He said the majority of therapy that is happening today is happening in the context of one-on-one conversations.

This is taking it very much, I mean, the legislation is meant to be about the clinical setting, but this is where activists want to go. One-on-one conversations. And goes on to say, in all situations, all times, all settings, this type of therapy needs to be banned.

Those two quotes were from two different people. The first one was from the Right Reverend Jeremy Greaves, an archbishop in Queensland. Sorry, a bishop in Queensland, not an archbishop, Anglican bishop.

[ 33 : 42 ] The second one was from Alex Pitaway, a pastor of a church in Brisbane. I haven't even gone outside of our own faith to show you how hard it is to stick to the truth in this world.

It is so hard to own our own faith in the world. The world wants us to give up our set-apartness, our holiness.

It grates on them when they see the difference. We are seen as bigoted, judgmental, harsh, unloving, oppressive.

This world wants us to give up our set-apartness. So Jesus prays that the Father will do the opposite, that the Father will strengthen us in the truth, and that through this we would actually be the ones who invade the world with this truth instead of the world invading us with lies.

That we would know the joy that Jesus has of being one with God and that it would be unquenchable and attractive and challenging and ultimately sanctifying for a world that lives apart from God.

[ 35 : 14 ] God friends, Jesus prayed for himself, glorify me and he was glorified at the cross.

Jesus prays for his disciples, sanctify them and we are as we live by his truth, by his word in this world.

If I were to distill the three parts of Jesus prayer down to one word or one phrase, it would be this. The first part, glorify me.

This is from Jesus' perspective. Jesus is saying glorify me. Jesus is saying sanctify them and then the third part next week without wanting to be too much of a spoiler, the third part is unify us, Father, Son, Spirit and the church that Christ is building.

Set us apart. Purify us through the cross. Prepare us for service. Glorify yourself in us is the prayer that Jesus wants on our lips.

[ 36 : 21 ] So let me pray those things now. And we're actually going to share the Lord's Supper, which will remind us of the glory of the cross and hopefully will help us in terms of our frame of reference in holding on to truth in this world.

Let me pray those words. Let's pray together. Father God, I pray that you would set us apart, sanctify us, purify us through the cross, prepare us for works of service in your name, and glorify yourself in us as we live in the world faithfully and joyfully bearing your name.

In Jesus' name we pray this. Amen.