

John 17:6-19

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Date: 15 March 2026

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[0:00] You all could pray with me. Lord, as we heard in your scripture, as you prayed for your disciples and for us, Lord, will! you speak to us now. Lord, let us hear your prayer. Lord, will your spirit move among us, and will you be with our time in your word this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

You all can have a seat. Good morning. It is really such an honor to be with you this morning. So many people, actually, from this congregation have been walking with me closely for the last four years, and it's just such an honor to actually be here, to be with you all this morning.

And from the sounds of things, it sounds like y'all have been journeying through the Gospel of John for quite a while now. And we're almost at the end of Jesus' long discussion with his disciples in the upper room. And there'll be one more sermon next week to finish out the end of John 17. And from there, the book quickly shifts to where the garden, to the garden where Judas betrays Jesus, and he's handed over to the authorities, arrested, and executed on a cross. But before all this happens, Jesus culminates the dense and beautiful conversation with his disciples with perhaps the most profound prayer the world has ever known. And the prayer is worth lingering over far longer than we're going to give it time for this morning. It's worth many long walks.

Because in it, we're going to see a few things together. Well, a few things this morning, principally three things. The first is that we belong to God. And secondly, that Jesus includes us but does not depend on us.

And thirdly, that we're called. Called to be sent. That we first belong to God. The second, that Jesus does not depend on us. And third, that we're called to be sent. Let's explore a bit together. And to do so, I want to first step into the scene a little bit. Jesus had been walking, literally walking with his disciples closely for three years. And for three years, they've ate together, done miracles together, been persecuted together, laughed, cried, and talked together.

[2:16] And now we reach a point in John when Jesus will be leaving them soon. He'll still be with them later in the Holy Spirit, but it will be different. Everything will be different. And there's a hard road ahead of them before we get there that includes the cross.

And so Jesus prays for them. It's almost like the prayer of a parent over their children before they go away on a long trip, and they have to leave their kids in the care of someone else.

And also, it's good to know that in verse 20, which is after our passage today, we find that this prayer, though it is spoken with the affection that Jesus has for his disciples, also mirrors the love that Jesus has for us. For all who believe in Jesus through the disciples' words about him. That we somehow are included in Jesus's prayer, which is just mind-boggling stuff.

And the prayer stays so profound throughout. And it begins by first letting us know that we belong to God. So starting in verse 6, if you have your pew Bible with you, we're on page, I think it's 903.

If you could follow along with me. But Jesus says that he has first revealed God's name to his disciples, his identity, to the people whom God has given out of the world, who are marked by being steadfast to what God has said. The Father has given the disciples to Jesus, and the disciples, and all of us included, are the fathers to give. We belong to him. And Jesus shows in this opening part that he is God among them, expressing the very words of the Father, and his disciples are marked by living into this truth. The truth that Jesus comes from the Father and is sent by him.

[4:13] The disciples are given by God, belong to God, and are marked by receiving the truth that Jesus is from God. In Jesus' depiction of his followers, we are to be this community that is marked by belonging to God and believing in Jesus. We belong in our belief.

And for Jesus, part of what this belonging means is that we do not belong to the world, which is a word that could take some defining. John in particular, if you've read it, loves this word. It shows up all over the place. And the word world is not used to designate some sort of specific location or the globe orbiting in space. But people living under the rule of sin, marked by rebellion against God instead of obedience to him, it's more of a location in a spiritual state than in a physical place.

And the Gospel of John is clear throughout that Jesus loves the people in this world. He died for the world. If you've heard the famous verse in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. We are the Father's and Jesus' beloved possession. As it says in verse 9 through 10. And the Father, through Jesus, has called us out of the world of sin and rebellion into the love and obedience of Christ for eternal life with him.

[5:48] Which is crazy enough as it is. But we also see that he calls us out of the world to glorify him. And we see this crazy detail in verse 10.

That apparently in Jesus' followers, Jesus is glorified. Just stop and think about this for a minute. The God of the universe who made, loves, and keeps all that he has made is glorified in us. Us and our brokenness, aching bodies, and scattered thoughts in too early in the morning before coffee heads. As Jesus has glorified the Father, which we saw last week in verse 1. We glorify Christ. Jesus glorifies the Father by doing his works and reclaiming the message of eternal life. And Jesus' disciples glorify Jesus in receiving this message. Believing in him and then being sent out from there.

And this is pure gift to us. It's a gift that should humble us and fill us with awe that somehow in the wisdom that is beyond our understanding, Jesus says that he is glorified in his people walking in obedience to him.

[7:01] When we believe his words and live them out, and that somehow he wants us in his mission, that we're an integral part. In our belonging to God, Jesus profoundly includes us every part of our lives.

We also see that he does not rely on us. Which leads us to our second point. That Jesus includes us but does not depend on us.

And to see this next bit, we have to dive deeper into what Jesus actually asked for in this prayer. In verse 11, Jesus asks, Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one.

Keep them in your name. Protect them. Watch over them. The picture that Jesus gives is that just as Jesus has watched over his disciples for the last three years in person, walking an absurd number of miles around Judea and Galilee with them, he now asks the Father to do the same. In Jesus' physical absence. To keep the disciples as close as traveling companions. And everything depends on this request.

[8:18] Everything depends on God. Not us. God is the one that keeps us close, protects us, watches over us, and God is always in the driver's seat. And God keeping us close leads to at least two effects for Jesus.

One is that the disciples are to be united and one as the Father and the Son are one. Which we see in verse 11. And the second, that they may be protected from the evil one.

Which we see in verse 15. That they may be one as the Father and the Son are one and that they may be protected from evil. And this is wild.

What Jesus is praying for is that the disciples might be so united that they would love each other the way that the Father and the Son love each other. from before time began and world without end. Which is a love that is only possible in God. When we draw near to God and God draws near to us it is a love that says you and I as brothers and sisters in Christ and as followers of Jesus we both belong to God and believe in his Son Jesus.

[9:32] And in God's power we're to love each other with the love that God has for Jesus and the Trinity. has always had for him. This is the prayer that Jesus prays over his disciples.

Over us. And it radically transforms how we should view our brothers and sisters in Christ. To view them with the love that the Father has for his Son. And to do this with any sort of success requires a

work of God in us.

To shape our hearts and all of us aiming towards Christ together each day. And the prayer would be powerful enough as is but it keeps going.

For Jesus also prays that the Father would keep them by protecting them from the evil one. That though we are given by God out of the world we still live in it.

And experience the world's hatred and pain. As verses 14 through 15 show. But in the protection of the Father we are not overcome.

[10:40] Bruised and beaten we are not destroyed because the Father holds us keeps us in his hand. We are to live in the world knowing that our present moment and future eternal life are held in the hands of the Father.

And this is not some wishful thinking prosperity gospel for it is spoken by Jesus right before he heads to the cross.

For even Jesus is held in the Father's hand in the world's darkest moment that leads to our greatest joy. So all of this leads to our last and third point.

That we're called for something. We're called to be sent. And this verse comes from Jesus' second prayer request in the final three verses starting in verse 17.

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

[11:49] And this word sanctify can also mean make holy or set apart. And Jesus prays that the Father would set apart the disciples to be sent out into the world as ambassadors for Christ displaying his love and showing others about the new life found in him.

Because the fact is we are called for something. In the church we often use calling language to talk about our vocation or maybe what job we feel like God is leading us into or a major decision that we feel like God is leading us to make.

And these are all good things to discern with God. To walk with him with. But there is a calling that all of us share. And that is at whatever stage of life and whatever day-to-day activity to display the message of Christ into the world that often rejects him.

We receive this message from Christ believe in it and are sent out into the world with it. And God is the one that empowers us for this.

It's not a call to seize the reins of the kingdom and to build it here in our own strength but to walk in trust and obedience. The trust that we are never alone and that God goes before us and obedience to persevere in the world by loving God and loving our neighbor even when everything screams at us to turn aside.

[13:22] And the last crazy detail of this whole passage is that we walk the path of Jesus and share in his call. And our English translations are a bit misleading here because in verse 17 when it says sanctify and in verse 19 when it says consecrate it's just the same word in Greek.

It's a word that means to make holy and set apart. For Jesus essentially prays that we would be set apart just as he has been and will be. Jesus has been set apart to be sent into the world.

to save it and his disciples are sent apart into the world with Jesus' words and the truth of his identity. And Jesus will be set apart again made as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the whole world and he does this for his disciples for their sake and for us too.

and it means that whatever relationships hardships or situations that we have been led to and called to demonstrate costly sacrificial love in that Jesus has already paid a costlier price for us.

And it's a road that will take God's divine help hence the prayer. But it's also a road that we don't walk alone in nor are we the first ones to go down it.

[14:52] For Christ has gone down it long before we have gotten there. And he is before us and behind us to the left and to the right each step of the way. So what have we seen together?

We've seen that we belong to God that Jesus includes us but does not depend on us and that we are called to be sent. And it's worth our time to really let these crazy truths sink in.

To be dumbfounded actually by what the Bible tells us that Jesus speaks about us. And one way to do that is to read over this prayer yourself out loud and picture Jesus speaking it again.

To let the words rest in our hearts and help inform our own prayers because it is a prayer. prayer.
And to consider the invitation that is laying ahead of us each day.
An invitation to know that we belong to God and that God calls us in the partnership with him. And
to be awestruck by that and to sit in his love wherever he calls us.
[16:07] Amen. Thank you.