John 17:6-19 “In the World But Not Of the World”

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: 27 October 2024

Preacher: Will Spink

[0:00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Y'all, the one whose eye is on the sparrow, the one who watches you and me, who prays for us, he's talking to his heavenly father about us.
And we've been listening in to his prayer in John chapter 17 as Jesus prays for shared glory with his father and for us to know life, eternal life in that glorious relationship with them.
So we get to listen in again this morning. Let's ask that his words will speak life to our hearts. Pray with me.
Jesus, we worship you for your eye being upon us. You tell us that we're of more value than many sparrows to you, that even the very hairs of our head are numbered.
[1:26] How is it possible that a God of so much love and grace and might and power could care for us like that?

We don't explain it. We praise you for it. We ask that we might find comfort in your care. Hope in your love, even as we listen to your word.
In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. In this next section of Jesus' prayer, before Jesus starts asking his father to do some specific things, he talks with him about some people.
We'll read this passage in three pieces this morning. In this first piece, starting at verse 6, notice who the people are that Jesus is praying for.
John 17 at verse 6, 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.
[2:38] 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.
The most immediate group that Jesus is praying for here is his disciples who are right there listening in, right? But while he does say a couple things exclusively about them, most of what he prays for applies to all of his followers, as he'll say specifically in verse 20, all those who will believe in me through their word.
That includes us. So with many others, I believe that we can and should understand Jesus' heart in these verses to apply to us who believe in him today.
Another factor that supports that is what I want to draw our attention to for just a moment. Jesus calls these that he's praying for the people the Father has given him.
[4:06] In fact, three times in those verses we just read. And we know from earlier in John that the Father has given to the Son all who believe in him.

Don't miss this. Jesus is talking to his Father about this gift that the Father has given him.
And what is that gift? We are that gift. Can you imagine the value of the gifts that kings and celebrities give to their children?
It is mind-boggling. I'm just going to give you one example. You may have read this summer about the gift that an Indian billionaire gave to his son. Not only did he pay over $2 billion for his son's wedding, but he also threw in a 10-bedroom mansion on a private beach in Dubai valued at over $80 million.
Incredible. Sorry, girls. So listen. The king of the universe talks with his son before the world exists.
[5:33] And he decides he's going to give him a gift. And they say, we're going to create this amazing world together. And I'm going to give you what? Not a billion dollars.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54

Not a mansion or a Mustang. But a people. Ultimately, to be his bride. See, it's a wedding gift, actually, isn't it?
How precious must these people be to God the Father and to Jesus the Son? Have you thought about yourself that way lately?
Have you realized that that's what he's saying about you? What a joy it is to be a gift from the Father to the Son.
You were God's. God the Father's. But before you were a twinkle in your parents' eyes, you were his. And he gave you to Jesus to save you and to shape you into his image the way God wonderfully designed you to be.
[6:38] So listen, you are so precious. There is no way that the Son is going to toss you aside.

There's no way Jesus is going to set you down somewhere and forget about you. No, he will surely keep those precious ones who have been given to him by his Father.
In fact, that's why he's praying for you here. That's how he feels about you. So having talked with his Father about these people, about this precious gift, he's just reveling in that with his Father.
Jesus then prays for us. In verses 11 to 19, we learn that he is praying because he knows that it is hard to be in this world and not of this world.
That's a description of Christians you may have heard before, even before Bill mentioned it earlier this morning. In the world but not of the world.
[7:47] It actually comes from this prayer. In the world, there in verse 11. And later, he'll pray that we not be taken out of the world, but that we actually be sent into the world.

On the other hand, that's in the world. On the other hand, not of the world. Verse 14. And again, the exact same phrase in verse 16.
In this context, as often in John, the world is a place and a people where life is thought about and lived out apart from God.
That's the world's mindset. Its values are opposed to God's. The world is man-centered, not God-centered. And Jesus knows that we are and we will be in the world.
Located in a culture not seeking to honor God. He also knows that we are not of the world. Jesus has told his followers that our lives are to be shaped by divine priorities, by eternal realities.
[9:08] In the midst of people whose lives are shaped by human priorities, by earthly values, like immediate results and satisfaction.

And so, we read things like Romans chapter 12 that says, do not be conformed to this world. How is it that we're going to be different? What changes us?
What will set us apart? Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Be different because your mind is renewed.
Not so much where you live or how you look or where you work. Those aren't so much the things that are different. But your philosophy of life, your lifestyle, your values are different.
This in the world but not of the world tension is one that we feel in so many ways. Just stop and think about where you experience it.
[10:09] I was eating with one of our men recently who said that he feels almost like he's living a double life. One on Sunday with everyone around him talking about the value of Jesus.

And another one the rest of the week with everyone around him talking about the value of money and success and the bottom line. And he struggles to navigate the two to bring the life of Jesus into his daily life.
You feel that tension? Some of you do. Others of us feel it when we struggle against the sin in our hearts and the broken world around us.
Every day it's there and we think why hasn't Jesus taken us home and made us perfect already? I mean he conquered sin and death at the cross and the grave.
So when he goes to heaven why don't his followers just go ahead and go with him? If he came to bring us into this perfect relationship with himself and the father and that's what it's all about.
[11:14] Jesus I'm ready. Why not now? Right? Who's for that? And yet we're here. I remember feeling this tension around relationships when I went to college.

I knew that Jesus sent me into the world and to have friends who weren't all like me and didn't yet know him. Didn't share some of my values and morals.
I was to be like him. A friend of tax collectors and sinners. Right? I was supposed to shine his light there in those relationships. But also when was too much?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54

I mean where almost all my friends would live differently and where they would begin to influence my values. Some of us feel that tension relationally.
Or where do I send my kids to school? Or when does loving my neighbor mean cheering for them and when does it mean challenging them? What popular entertainment do I enjoy so I can talk with others about it?
[12:22] Or which ones do I avoid and I seem weird and left out? Hard questions. None of which I will answer this morning.

Ha, ha, ha. I just can ask them. You think about it. I'm wanting us to feel where that tension shows up. It's not easy, is it?
It's hard living as God's people in a world not centered on him. Regardless of how you feel it, it's hard and Jesus gets it.
He's been here, hasn't he? Notice, by the way, here he's not particularly telling us how to live. He does that some other places for sure.
He will challenge our isolation from the world or our living like the world. He'll challenge us on both those. But here what I want you to see is he's acknowledging the reality of this tension, the difficulty of our situation.
[13:29] And he's praying for us. Don't you love that? Don't you love Jesus' heart there? I hope that encourages you wherever you are.

I hope listening in to him pray will even help you learn somehow to pray for yourself when you're feeling and living in this tension. I hope you'll remember that your heavenly father holds the keys to your life even more than you do.
And that's a good thing. A really good thing. Jesus understands the tension, the danger, the difficulty we face.
And he prays two things. Two things he asks God to do. The first is for us to be protected. Listen to him.
Verse 11. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. 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.
[14:36] 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. Holy Father, keep them. Jesus prays.
Keep them. Hold them. Protect them. Protect them. Not from broken legs. Not from scary situations. Not from hurt feelings.
But from falling away. Keep them in your name. Unified. Next week we'll talk about unity. Jesus is praying that we would be protected for the Father.
[15:43] Just as he guarded his disciples and didn't lose any of them except Judas' unique situation prophesied long ago. But there's a challenge that is coming for his disciples and for us.

And that is that Jesus, the one who has been doing all of the keeping, is leaving them. Father, they're in such a dangerous situation.
Please keep them in your name. Keep them faithful to you. Full of your joy. Not needing to look anywhere else. Secure in our relationship.
Eternally safe, Father. Keep them. Jesus says, you've put them in my hands, this gift. But I'm going away. So now I'm putting them back in yours.
This part of Jesus' prayer made me think of a visit that our family took several years ago to Rock City in Chattanooga.
[16:47] If you've been, it's a beautiful place. It's a dangerous place if you're a child unaware of cliffs and what's on the other side of them. Nobody gets hurt in this story.

When we went, I held our little girl really tightly by the hand. Sometimes held her, picked her up, carried her in my arms. But at one point, I did need to step away to the restroom.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54

When I stepped away to the restroom, did I say to her, now you go hold on to mommy's hand while I'm gone? Or did I say, hey, Christy, will you hold on to her while I'm gone?
Which one of those did I say? Well, the latter, of course. The situation was too dangerous and our child too precious to trust the child's grip.
We held on to her. Jesus is saying the situation is too dangerous and God's children too precious to leave them to their own faithfulness.
[18:01] Jesus entrusts his precious gifts to the strong grip of their heavenly father, of whom he has already told us no one can snatch them out of his hand.

No one. And nothing. Including Satan himself. Don't take them out of the world, Jesus prays, but keep them from the evil one.
Protect them, Father, from the one who would seek to harm their souls. Who would tempt them to doubt your goodness. Who would cause them to shipwreck their faith.
I hope it is no formality to you when we pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Satan and his minions are real and they hate God and therefore they hate his children. He desires to devour you.
[19:09] He works to make you distrust the most trustworthy person in the world. If you are in the world, child of God, follower of Jesus, you're in spiritual warfare.

You have an adversary who's intent on your harm. That's part of why it's hard to pray sometimes. That's part of why it's hard to obey God's word sometimes.
That's part of why it's hard to be assured of your salvation sometimes. But we fight in prayer, asking for God's help.
Taking up the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Knowing that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. Why? Because the Son asked the Father to send the Spirit to live in us and keep us.
And Jesus keeps praying. You know that? He's praying for you now. He is always living to intercede for us, Hebrews chapter 7 says.
[20:21] Don't despair. If Jesus has plucked you off of the cliff's edge to save your soul, if he wrapped his arms around you, he will keep you.

Even when he's not here physically, he has prayed for you and he's placed your hand in his father's. Don't trust anyone else except him to keep you.
But you can trust him. His eye is on the sparrow. So you know he watches you. He must.
Jesus' solution to our protection is not, however, what we might like to think. Just bring me home, Jesus.
It's not taking us out of the world. We are in the world. But we are not of the world. So Jesus prays not only that we be protected, but also that we be projected.
[21:20] Now I almost hesitated to use that, and I want to just acknowledge that clearly that is a word I chose to help us remember these two things, right? I want us to remember the two things Jesus prays for us so that we can pray them for ourselves and for others, protected and projected.

Picture a projectile that is being sent from far away to land in the world. That's what I have in mind. But let's see what Jesus means by this. Probably more helpful than my word. Listen at verse 16.
They are not of the world, just as I am 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.
They are not of the world. Just like Jesus, whose home was in heaven, our citizenship is somewhere else. We belong there.
[22:30] So it's right that we don't always fit in here. Jesus prays that we would be set apart from the world. That's what the word sanctify means.

Set apart. Holy, set apart to be gods, like the word saints in English. How Paul, for example, addresses all God's people, the saints in Christ, in Colossae in one letter.
Those who live in the world in Colossae, or Huntsville, or wherever it is, but are set apart in Christ, united to him, we are God's possession, not the world's.
God's people, not the world's people. God's children, not the world's children. So how does God do that? How does he sanctify us?
In the truth. Your word is truth. What better way to ensure we're protected from the devil, who is the father of lies, than to immerse ourselves in the truth.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54

[23:40] Truth is under attack in our day. Is there truth, people ask? Man, in any way, if it gets you ahead, who cares if it's true what you say?

Where's truth? Well, your word is truth. We don't have to wonder where to find it. And there is plenty here for us to embrace.
Plenty, I think you'll agree, that sets us apart from the world around us when we do embrace a life according to God's truth. I'll just give you a few examples.
In a world that says you succeed by projecting strength, God's word says, boast gladly in your weaknesses because of his all-sufficient grace. When I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12. When everyone else demeans their opponents and attacks their competition, God's word says, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.
[24:42] Matthew 5. In a culture of make your own way to God however you'd like, God's word says salvation is to be found in no one else for there's no other name than the name of Jesus by which we must be saved.

Acts 4. In a world where you're taught to look out for number one, to fight for what's yours, God's word says, do nothing out of selfish ambition, but consider others better than yourselves.
Philippians 2. If your life is shaped this way, you're gonna be weird. Different, right? These are not normal things. In an anxious world, God's word says, don't worry.
Remember the sparrow? You can actually seek first my kingdom. Matthew 6. When everyone else is trying to get ahead and find the good life, God's word says, deny yourself.
Take up your cross. Follow Jesus. Because to save your life, you actually have to lose it. Matthew 16. Crazy talk, right? In a world of self-promotion, God's word says, that can make sense because it's not to us, not to us, but to your name be the glory.
[25:51] Psalm 115. When people tell you the evil in your life is too much to trust God in the midst of, you should just give up. God's word says, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8. When the world looks for life and wealth, power, success, pleasure, sex, comfort, God's word says, eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.
That was just last week here in John 17. We could go on and on with lots of examples, but Jesus prays that the truth of his word will so shape us, will set us apart, make us very different in some ways, not just for the sake of being different.
You don't get points for that. God's people are set apart for a purpose. They are his for his mission, right?
We are sent people, aren't we? Sent into the world, notice, not away from it, not into a Christian subculture, but into a God-hating world.
[27:06] That's where we're sent. Just as Jesus, notice verse 18, just in the same way Jesus was sent into the world to represent God to people, to bless them in word and in deed, to show them the God they could know and love and trust.

And as we read God's truth, we realize we too are his ambassadors projected from far away to land here, to implore the world, to be reconciled to God.
We're sent, the Bible tells us, to bear his image, to declare his praise, to make disciples of all nations, to be witnesses for Jesus, to live such beautiful lives that people see us and they actually glorify God himself, not us.
It says we're sent here to give a reason for the hope we have, to pray for the city where God has placed us, to work to see his kingdom come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
We have a purpose here, don't we? Listen, every single one of us who is living in this world but who is not of this world because our citizenship is in heaven lives sent today with a real purpose.
[28:31] Brothers and sisters, this is really good news. You are in your office. You are in your classroom. You are in your neighborhood. You are in your dance class, your sports teams.

You live in your retirement community because the Savior who loves you and prays for you sent you there, placed you there on purpose, goes with you there for the glory of his name.
That's why you're there. For the good of your relationship with him, he'll meet you there so you know him more. For the blessing of the people around you there who need to know him so much and can taste him through you.
I gotta tell you, he didn't send you there because he thought it would be easy or comfortable. He knew it wouldn't. But he does pray for you there because he knew it would be hard.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54

But for your good and for his glory, Jesus prays for you. The Father hears his prayers. The Spirit goes with you wherever he sends you today, this week.
[29:47] As we come to this table, notice the last verse of this section of the prayer. Verse 19. And for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.

It's the same word when Jesus says, I consecrate myself. It's I sanctify myself. Consecrate probably helps us to understand what's going on because Jesus is setting himself apart, right, for God's mission by becoming the sacrifice, the consecrated sacrifice for us.
See, for their sake. He's praying again about the cross. He doesn't merely pray that God would set us apart for himself and his mission in the world.
Jesus goes first. He doesn't send us anywhere. He hasn't already gone. Even the hard places of being in the world but not of the world.
So that through his death, we will be truly sanctified, fully and finally set apart for God and for the same mission to bring God to the world and the world to God.
[31:09] Wow, can you believe Jesus did that for you? You remember what a precious gift you are to Jesus? That Jesus prays for you and Jesus dies for you so that you can be absolutely confident today and this week and forever that you will be protected in the Father's hand.

That you will be projected into the Father's world for the Father's glory. That's what he was telling his disciples this same night.
He sat with them and he took bread and he broke it and he gave it to them as I am ministering in his name give this bread to you. He said, take and eat.
This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same manner after supper he took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for forgiveness of sins.
Drink from it all of you for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. You say, Jesus is dying so that I can know true life.
[32:29] That's what he wants us to cling to. It's what he wants us to proclaim to those around us. If you hear the voice of your Savior as you listen in on this prayer, if you see here his body and blood given for you, if you've been baptized into Christ by faith in him, come and eat at this table not of Southwood, not of the Presbyterians, but of the Lord Jesus.

It's his table and he invites you to come. If you don't yet trust Jesus, if he's not the one in whom your hope is placed or if you haven't yet made that profession of faith public before his family, then don't come this morning and take these elements but come and observe.
See what's going on. Ask us to pray with you if you would like but above all things, consider Jesus. Consider the joy that he offers you of having a Savior who prays for you, who lives for you, who dies for you.
Let's pray and we'll celebrate together. Jesus, your care for us is amazing. We marvel at it and we thank you that you've given us these moments to taste and see how good you are, to remember your love for us, your death in our place, your life that gives us life and hope and purpose.
And so as we come to celebrate, use very common elements for really uncommon holy purposes. Would you set them apart as you have set us apart for your purpose in this world?
[34:24] Would they strengthen our faith today? Might we know you and trust you and live for you as we live with you each day? We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Lord, thank you. I'll never know you about it.what a ■■■ Tesla does to edust Hollywood■■■■■■ 40 40 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 21 21 20

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-10-11 18:30:54