

Christ's Specific Intercession

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Okay, let's turn to John chapter 17 for a short time. John chapter 17, I'm reading 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. 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. I'd like us just to confine our thoughts tonight to verse 9. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. And as we continue to go through this remarkable prayer of Jesus, and as we see how wonderfully woven together different topics are, some of them taking us really deeply, as we've seen already, into the theological matters that belong to the Godhead and to our salvation. As we look at this one tonight, we can see who Jesus is praying for at this point in the prayer, and who he's not praying for. Hugh Martin, in his wonderful book on the atonement, argues from the intercession of Jesus to the matter of God's election of his people, because his argument, which is very biblical, of course, is that Christ's intercession is always successful or efficacious and achieves the things that Jesus prays for or intercedes for. And therefore, he cannot be praying for the whole world universally, because obviously not everyone in the world is going to be saved. So Martin's treatment of that is that he begins, when he begins with the intercession of Jesus, and notices here and elsewhere in the Bible that that intercession is specific and specific to those that are saved, those that have been given them by the Father, to use the words of this chapter. And he argues from that that there is such a thing as an elect people of God. You can argue the other way as well, of course, that the elect people of God in Scripture leads us to this matter of

Christ particular, but also limited intercession, in a way, to his people. So that's where you find the distinction in this verse here. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. There is a very sharp distinction, and actually the arrangement of the words in the verse brings out the sharpness of the distinction very strongly. Jesus is saying, I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. So we'll look firstly at the people for whom he is praying. As he says here, I'm not praying for the world, I'm praying for them. That is those he's been speaking of in the previous verses. Those who have come to know in truth that Jesus has come from God and have accepted him as God's appointed saviour. And when you read here that he's not praying for the world, we need to just spend a wee bit of time thinking of that word itself, the world, because the word is used in John in two ways. It's used in the first sense of it in the world as the physical or geographical entity that it is that we all know of as we belong to it in that sense. You could say it's the present order of things as well, the world as it now is, as you look out and see the whole concept of what the world consists of. And you'll see that in verse 11 here as well, where he speaks about, I am no longer in the world. Remember, he's talking here from the perspective of having accomplished the work that

God the Father gave him. So the intercession here is really, in a sense, taking us forward to the intercession that's now going on, where Jesus is continually interceding for his people in heaven.

And what he's saying here is, I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. And verse 13, find a similar reference there. And now I'm coming to you, and these things I speak in the world.

[4 : 55] I have given them your word, the world has hated them. And we'll see that's the second meaning of it. In verse 18, you find this first meaning, as you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. So there's that sense of the world and the usage of John, in the sense of it, the disciples are in the world. Jesus himself, as he speaks there, is in the world. But the second way in which John uses the world, the word of the word, world, is in the theological sense. And very strongly throughout John's gospel, you find the world standing for what is contrary to God. It's really the humanity that you see of as hostile to God, that are actively hostile to God. That's the theological sense of the world, rather than in distinction from the physical sense of it. And again, theological sense, again, you can see that in verse 14, where you find the prayer there in verse 14, to be, 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. So there's that theological sense, they are not of the world. Jesus himself is not of the world. The world there is the world in the sense of being hostile, contrary, actively against God. And you go to chapter 15, you can see that same sense of it used there. Chapter 15, and verses 18 and 19, where Jesus says, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, logical sense of it as well. And you'll find that too in 1 John chapter 2 and verses 15 to 17. You remember that emphasis that John lays there upon the world and the nature of the world, where he talks, tells us not to love the world, or the things that are in the world. Chapter 2, verses 15 to 17.

Children, it's the last hour, and so on. He goes on, do not love the world, or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, and this is when he comes to define the world theologically, morally, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and pride and possessions, is not from the Father, but is from the world. So the world in that sense is the theological concept. And here is Jesus saying, I'm not praying for that. I'm not praying for the world. I'm not praying for what is hostile to you. I'm not praying for that concept of that world that is in opposition to you and actively hostile to you.

And remember that the Lord's intercession, what I've just said there might be surprising in some ways, that Jesus does not pray for the world. That doesn't mean that Jesus does not wish for the people who make up the world to be saved. We know that that, of course, is not the case.

But remember that intercession, that the intercession of Jesus is specifically supportive of his people. And the world is not his people. His people are those, as verse 6 tells us, that have been taken out of the world, those that were given to him out of the world. And they have come out from the world and come to accept Jesus. They no longer belong to the world in a theological or moral sense. They're now separate from that. They're in Christ. They're followers of Christ. They now are not of the world.

[9 : 09] And so there is no intercession by Jesus for the world. People need to leave the world, to come out of the world, to leave the world behind theologically, and therefore to enter into then the number of those for whom Jesus is interceding. So if you think strictly about intercession, rather than the fact that Jesus would wish, if you like to put it that way, all of those who are in the world to come and accept him, we know that from the Gospels elsewhere, where he laments the fact that the likes of the people of Jerusalem have not accepted him, despite all that they have seen and heard, they are still of the world. And that's what he's saying here, making this very telling distinction between those who make up the world and those who are his disciples who have come out of the world and now are followers of himself. Now, having said that, we remember, of course, that John 3.16, and John 3.16, the context there is where Jesus, where God and his love are related to loving the world. And there's no inconsistency there with what we're saying here from this chapter. God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. And in fact, it fits in very closely with what we find in John 17 here. God so loved the world in the sense of the world being the world of sinners. That's where we all are. That's what we all are natively.

God did not love people. He didn't begin to love people once they had left the world and joined the number of the saved. What that is saying, of course, is that he so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whosoever believes in him, whosoever should actually come out of the world should not perish but have eternal life. That's, again, version 17 there in chapter 3.

God did not send the world. God did not send a son into the world. That's the other sense of it in the geographical or the non-theological, the physical present order. But that's remembering that God so loved. What did God love when he loved the world? He loved the world of sinners antagonistic to himself.

And out of that come those that Jesus has been given by the Father and come to follow him and come under his intercession as he prays for them. And of course, we remember too that the disciples here are specifically at this point in the prayer, they are those who are his disciples there and then. But as we said earlier, the principles of what we're saying, follow through into all who come to follow him afterwards.

So that's those he's praying for here very specifically. I'm praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. Let's look secondly at the person who is praying. We've taken our time going through the early verses of the chapter very deliberately. And that's one of the benefits of that is that as you take it slowly and try and digest the amount of stuff that's in it. And we have only gone into it, of course, as we've said fairly briefly. But what the benefit of that is that when we come now to verse 9 of the chapter, you're taking with you all that was said before about Jesus himself. Because much of these verses before now have been about him and his relation to the Father, and the fact that he's finished the work the Father has given him to do, and that he's now ready to be taken again, to be glorified with the Father in his own presence. So when he says now, I am praying for them, actually that word, I, is very emphatic in the text. I am praying for them. I, who am mentioned in the previous verses. I, the Son, I, the Beloved Son. I, the Son incarnate. I, the Son who is human as well as divine. I, the Son who is victorious because I have finished the work that you gave me to do. I, the Mediator. I, the Surety of my people. All of those things that are true of him in the previous verses, you might say, that's really the power pack that now feeds his intercession. It's not just that he's praying specifically for those that have been given to him, but he is praying for them as the one who is already the conqueror, the victor, the Mediator, the Surety, the Savior, the Son, the human

[14 : 20] Jesus as well. And that's really what guarantees the success of his intercession. That it's, that it's he, he is the one who is involved, who is engaged in the intercession. Not anybody else, not any other figure, not any other Jesus, but this one. And that's why it guarantees the success of his intercession, intercession. Because it's the intercession of the Son, and of the Beloved One, and of the victor, and of the Mediator. All of that that's, that's packed into who he is, and what he's done. That's really what ensures that this intercession for his people is one that is guaranteed to be of success.

1 John chapter 2, remember these verses as well in chapter 2 of 1 John. I write that. So we're just saying that this is the person who is praying, and it's really the greatness of Jesus that gives us assurance that his praying, his intercession, is acceptable by the Father, and will actually prove to be successful for his people. Now, as we'll see, he's going on to pray for these disciples with regard to their mission in the world. And so he's going to be praying, as we'll see, to the Father to keep them as they go about their mission to the world. So there's a lot in the coming verses to do with mission, and Jesus sending his people in to be missionaries in the world.

Verse 18, as you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. So he's praying to the Father to keep them from the evil one. In verse 15, I ask you, I don't ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. So you have to tie that with the way that he's sending them as his missionaries into the world. Of course, that's really currently very much relevant to ourselves. And this intercession covers God's people as they enter into the missionary engagement that he gives them on his behalf and in his name. And that's why here we have to take that with us as well for our comfort. But that's not the main reason here why he's actually praying.

So we've seen something of the people for whom he's praying and the person who's praying, but the reason he gives for praying is really interesting. I'm praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. That's the reason specifically at this point that he's praying for them because they are the fathers and the Father has given them to him. In other words, the Father has given his people, his disciples into the safe custody that is Jesus himself.

That's why you find this prayer in verse 11 and also in verse 12 to be as it is, where he's saying here, I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I'm coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one 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. Now that doesn't mean that he was ever within the, that's a reference to Judas Iscariot, of course, it does not mean that he was ever within the intercession of Jesus. What the verse is really saying is, I have kept them, not one of them is lost for whom I was given, who were given to me as their surety, but Judas Iscariot is lost, but he was never given to him the way the others were. So the father has invested so much love in those that he gave to the son. And that's why the son is here now saying lovingly with regard to them that he is going to look after them. I am praying for them because they are yours. You gave them to me so that in a sense mine as well, he's saying, but they were given to me to look after them, to die for them, to rise from the dead for them, and now to intercede for them, to pray for them, and not for the world. They are the son's treasure, those the father has given him. And your mind goes back to the Old Testament to Aaron the high priest and the wearing of the breastplate with the 12 precious stones in it. As Aaron went about the work that he was doing as the high priest with that breastplate on, the breastplate with the 12 stones represented the 12 tribes of Israel, the whole covenant people of God. And that's really, of course, also something that represents

[19 : 34] Jesus carrying his people on his heart. As he came into this world, as he went into death, as he descended into the grave, as he experienced all of what death he experienced, and then rose from the dead, they were still attached to him. They were in his heart. He was lovingly looking after them, and his intercession continues to look after them, and to actually pray for them, and intercede for them. They are his treasure. That's why he's saying, they are yours. Therefore, because they're yours, I'm praying for them, because I have been charged with looking after them, and lovingly that's what I want to do. Now, Jesus, of course, we could extend that. I'm not going to do that tonight, or could extend the whole of this concept to thinking about how Jesus draws on his own experience in this world.

Hebrews chapter 4, for example, and verses 15 and 16 there, we find there that the experience of Jesus himself in this world is used as a great point of reference for us, where he's saying, since then, we have a great high priest who has passed to the heavens. Let us hold fast our confession, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize without weakness. And there's this wonderful double negative that you find so often in the New Testament, and indeed throughout the Bible, we do not have one who is not able. In other words, it's a way of emphasizing, we most certainly do have one who is certainly able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. But one who is in every way has been tempted as we are, yet without sin, let us then or therefore with confidence draw near to the throne of grace. So as Jesus draws on the experience that he himself had as a human being in this world. So that comes into his intercession for his people. He's interceding with understanding of where they are and what they're at and what they're going through and what they're facing and what the world is and how the world is contrary to them and how the world is against them. All of that he knows personally and builds into his thoughts and intercession for them. He knows very much what that's like. In chapter 2 of Hebrews, you find a very similar emphasis there. Therefore, verse 17, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. And the help very much involves his intercession for them. So the people who are being prayed for are the disciples given to him. You can extend that into ourselves, all of us who have been given to Jesus, who have come to follow him, who have come out of the world, been brought out of the world. So he's praying for them and not for the world. And he is the one who's praying, the person who's mentioned there in the early part of the chapter. And the reason he gives is, for they are yours. Let me finish with three very brief points in application. We're trying to do that as we're going along, but just to summarize it.

Why are we given such wonderful truths as you find in this verse? What use are we to make of it tonight? First of all, it's for information. I'm praying for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. Everything Jesus did and does is for the benefit of his people. Everything.

Yes, it's for the glory of God. Of course it is. But every single thing he has done and is doing is for all of those that were given to him, that have come to follow him and trust in him. And isn't that an amazing thing for us tonight in the midst of a pandemic with all that's taken place over the past year? Everything we've experienced ourselves by way of anxiety, by way of limitations, by way of restrictions, by way of being surrounded by so much death. All the information we have, even in this one verse, tells us that everything Jesus did was for our benefit in all circumstances. Secondly, it's also in terms of application for our separation. Because it's one thing to say that there is a very close, very obvious distinction made between the world and those who have been given to Jesus, those who follow him, those who are his disciples. But on our part, that requires of us that we are a separate people. That we think of ourselves as separate from the world. As he goes on to say in the chapter, as we'll see, God willing, they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

And that, when it comes to your mind and when you appreciate that, one of the ways in which that impacts your mind is that you say of yourself, along with all of God's people with you, I have to be distinct from the world. I have to show that I don't belong to the world in its opposition to God. And I have to show that in every way that God gives me opportunity. And I have to deal with this in a way that seeks from God himself the grace to be sanctified, to be made more and more separate in the way that I live, not just in terms of a theological concept of separation, though that is true. So the application of it tonight for us, friends, is for our information.

[25 : 56] And it's also for our separation, that it really is keyed into our consecration to God and separation at the same time from the world. And thirdly, it's also for our consolation, comfort.

The Jesus who is tonight in heaven is there for us and is there actively for us at all times.

Sometimes you find in this world that people who are elevated or promoted will sometimes lose sight of or certainly neglect to some extent those who are now underneath them in terms of status.

The elevation of Jesus did not lead to his forgetting his people. It actually is the very opposite of that. His elevation is into intercession for them. His elevation is into constant remembrance of them and presenting himself as the basis of their acceptance with God. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me for their use. That's our information.

And it's for our separation, but it's also for our consolation when we realize that our separation is not as clear and distinct as it could and should be. Nevertheless, Jesus knows that. Jesus remembers that.

[27 : 29] Jesus still continues to include us in his intercession for our consolation in realizing that while we're here on earth.

We pray God will bless these thoughts on his word to us. We pray God bless you all. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.