

Sermon for May 17, 2015 – Easter 7 / Confirmation

John 17:11b-19 (ESV)

Theme: **Jesus prays for you . . .**

- 1) *That you remain a Christian throughout your life (11-13)*
- 2) *That you keep His Word in spite of the world (14-17)*
- 3) *That you share His Gospel with the world (17-19)*

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² 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. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

The world is hostile to Christianity. Even though we have heard and agreed with this statement many times before today, I am certain that we don't fully grasp the danger we are in.

When we hear about hostility to Christ, we think of the persecutions happening in the Middle East or North Korea. Maybe we think about the Christian business people in places like Washington or California, who are being forced to provide services that go against their faith.

But all of that stuff is far away. Here in Kewaunee we are relatively safe, right? Wrong.

Hostility towards our faith is felt every time we turn on the T.V. and watch a show proclaiming a morality different than what God's Word says. It is felt every time a dear friend makes us feel foolish for sharing the gospel, or makes fun of us for not joining in a gossip session. It's felt every time a teacher we admire says something that goes against the Bible. Animosity towards Christianity surrounds us. It's on the air waves, in the newspaper, and definitely on the web!

Brothers and sisters in Christ: regardless of how it claims otherwise, the world really hates Jesus and his followers. I am positive that if we truly understood how precarious our situation actually is, we would be spending a lot more time in Bible study and prayer!

Thankfully there is someone who does see and understand the danger we are in. He takes it seriously – so seriously that He constantly tells us to be on the watch. He takes it so seriously that He prays to His Father on our behalf. Let us consider these truths under the theme: **Jesus prays for you . . .** 1) *That you remain a Christian throughout your life,* 2) *That you keep His Word in spite of the world,* and 3) *That you share His Gospel with the world.*

Part One: That you remain a Christian

Our sermon text is part of a prayer Jesus offered on the night before his crucifixion. He prayed for his

disciples and everyone who, through their preaching, would believe in Him. Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus would ascend to the right hand of the Father, and the disciples would be tempted to feel alone and abandoned. Jesus knew this. He foresaw the dangers that threatened their faith. This is why He prayed:

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

What exactly does Jesus mean when He asks his Holy Father to keep them in His name? Jesus is asking His Father to keep His disciples united in faith – that they might always, as God’s children, encourage each other with the Gospel.

The Bible says that, when ever a person is brought to faith, it is as if God has given him a new birth. Through faith in Jesus' work of redemption, we become God’s children. Jesus’ righteousness covers our unrighteousness to such a degree that when God the Father looks at us, He sees His Son and loves us as such. The Scriptures say: *in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* (Gal 3:26-27 ESV)

Through baptism God has adopted us into his family and placed His name on us. We proudly bear the name Christian because Christ covers us. Every believer is a child of God, and Jesus prays that we remain such.

¹² *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.*

Jesus protected his disciples throughout his earthly ministry. The only disciple that lost his faith was the one who never really took Jesus or His word seriously. Judas loved the world more than his Savior. He merely pretended to follow Jesus – putting on such a show that He may have even fooled himself into thinking He was a pious disciple of Christ. Since he worshipped money above all else; Judas never really was a child of God, but always a son of destruction – a child of the devil – whom God used to fulfill the Scriptures concerning His Son.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: take warning from Judas. The Scriptures say: *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.* (1Jo 2:15 ESV)

But it is so easy to love this world: letting other things take priority over worship, Bible class and personal devotions. It is so easy to drift away from Christ – listening to the world’s encouragement to do whatever you want to do. “You are young. You have time. You can always come back later.” But these are all tricks the devil and world are playing against you. They want you to neglect God’s Word – because they know that if they can draw you away from it, they have drawn you away from Christ and your salvation.

Jesus understands the danger we are in. This is why He prays that the Father keep us in our faith. He wanted us to hear His prayer on our behalf so that we might always find refuge in His Word – confident of the Father’s loving care and watchful protection over us in Christ. Jesus wants us to rejoice in the fact that we are God’s children through faith. We have a special bond with Him. Nothing can separate us from His love. The joy these truths offer sustain us through every evil we face on this earth because we know our God is faithful to all He promises; and this, in turn, moves us to be faithful to Him.

Part Two: That you keep His Word in spite of the world

Amber, Brianna, McCoy and Sara: Jesus has kept you in His tender care all the way up to today. He gave

you opportunities like Sunday School and confirmation to grow in your faith. Make no mistake: even though you may have finished these courses, you have not outgrown your need for the constant study of God's Word. The LORD knows that you need it now more than ever. This is why Jesus prays:

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Jesus has baptized, instructed and confirmed you in His Word. For this very reason the world hates you. It does not want to hear what you believe because it does not want to repent of its deeds. It does not want to hear that it is full of sin and needs a Savior. The natural reaction of men is hatred towards God's Word. And if you remain faithful to that Word, the world will detest you for it. It will do everything in its power to either separate you from the Word or stop you from witnessing it.

Yes, the unbelieving world hates you, but it also needs you. By giving you His Word, Jesus made you his ambassadors on this earth. He wants to work through you to call other people to repentance and faith. No, you do not belong to this world and there will be many times when you will feel so much pressure that you wish you could be in heaven with God instead of on this evil earth, but understand this: God has a plan for you. He has given you His Word so that you might share it with others.

When facing the worlds wrath because of your faith, remember this: you do not belong to this world. You belong to Christ, as Jesus prayed in the last verse of our text: *for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.* What He means is this: "Through my suffering and death on the cross I, dear heavenly Father, will pay for all their trespasses. My perfect keeping of the Law will win their righteousness. My suffering and death will redeem them from all sin. I will do this work so that whoever believes in me might be forgiven of all sin and stand righteous and holy in your sight."

God sanctifies us (i.e., he makes us holy and sets us apart) through faith in His Son. And where do we find this saving truth? Only in His Word! The means of grace (the Gospel in Word and Sacrament) are the only means by which God promises to create and strengthen faith in our hearts. The devil and world understand this fact, and this is why they work so hard to separate us from God's Word. Jesus sees the danger, and this is why He prays that God the Father sanctify us in His truth. His Word is the truth that saves us. It is also the truth God uses to save others through us.

Part Three: *That you share His Gospel with world.*

God has saved and sanctified us for a purpose: to witness his Gospel to the world. Jesus himself prays: ¹⁸ *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

Even as God sent His Son into the world to preach and, thereby, spread His salvation far and wide, so the Son, in turn, sends believers out into the world to preach the salvation that Jesus earned for all. God wants all Christians to be witnesses of His truth. He wants us to proclaim His Law and Gospel to the people of this world so that they might acknowledge their sin, repent, and believe in Jesus for forgiveness. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (Joh 3:16 ESV)

Brothers and sisters in Christ: the world is a dangerous place. We don't even come close to realizing how hostile it is to our faith. Thankfully our Savior knows, and this is why he prays to His Father that we might always be kept in his name (remaining Christians all our lives), that we remain steadfast in His Word in

spite of all the temptations and tribulations the world throws at us, and that we share His Gospel with the World, so that many more might believe and be saved.

This is Jesus' prayer for you, dear Christian. May it also be your prayer for each other. Remain in God's Word and sacraments: for these are the only means God promises to use to keep your soul safe from the influences of the world, and keep you connected with Him until the advent of our Savior. Amen.