

Out of this World!

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you have your Bible, now's the time to pick it up, and we're going to read together, and we are in a little series that Stephen Ballingale is preaching to us from John chapter 17.

Last week we looked at verses 1 to 5, so we're going to pick up at verse 6 of John chapter 17 and read through to the end of the chapter.

And this is the Lord Jesus speaking to his closest disciples in the upper room just before he is given over to death.

Jesus said, as he prays to the Father, 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.

[1 : 1 2] I'm praying for them. I'm 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'm glorified in them.

And I am 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 to 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. These things I speak in the world, that they might 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.

[2 : 2 8] 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. And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

And I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me, and love them, even as you love me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, that you have given me, because you loved me, before the foundation of the world.

[3 : 53] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know, that you have sent me.

I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, but the love with which you have loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Good evening everyone, and please do have John 17 open in front of you, as we go through this chapter together.

Belonging to someone, means that you take on some of their characteristics. An American social psychologist, caught on to this a few years ago, and did a very serious study, that definitely wasn't a waste of time at all.

He compared photographs of couples, on their wedding day, with those taken 25 years later. And amazingly, his study showed, that even if a husband and wife, had no facial similarities at all, when they got married, some 25 years later, they looked surprisingly alike.

[5 : 09] Slowly, but surely, they were becoming like one another. I'm sure you know some couples, who reflect that. Now, I seriously doubt that any of this science is useful, or maybe even all that true.

But we all know that when you belong to someone, you take on some of their likeness, for better, or for worse. And belonging to Jesus, means we take on many things, which we take very gladly.

But the privilege of belonging to him, means that there are consequences, for how we are viewed, in the world we live in. Being joined to him, changes our relationship, with everyone around us.

Jesus shares with us this evening, how his church, shares in his glory, becoming more like him in the process. We share in his glory, by being hated, by the world.

Hated, by those he came to save. So how are we to relate to this world, which is so against us, and against our saviour?

[6 : 18] How are you to live, when it feels like the whole world, is against you? That question is at the heart, of our passage this week. Are you ready, to remain faithful to Christ, in a world which hates him, and everyone who stands with him?

Jesus in this prayer, is fast approaching the cross. He knows that in less than 24 hours, his time will have finally come. His life of perfect obedience, to his father's will, is coming to its end point.

And he's preparing his disciples, for that happening. The weight of his death, is felt upon every word, of his prayer. And the disciples feel the weight, of his departure acutely.

They're afraid, and they can't quite get their heads around, why Jesus has to leave. And that's the situation, Jesus speaks into.

Last week we saw that, as Christ was readying himself, for his death, he knew that he would be glorified, chiefly in the cross. And that was a great reassurance, for his disciples, that through everything, he was to accomplish, God would be glorified.

[7 : 31] This week we see, how Christ's church, will bear the family likeness, as they become like him, in his death. As they take on belonging, to a crucified saviour.

So let's get into our verses. And this evening we're going to see, one big truth, and then look at two temptations, that we are to avoid, if we're going to remain faithful to Christ. So firstly, our big truth, which is that, you belong, to Jesus, not the world.

In verses 6 to 10, Jesus makes clear, that he's praying for his disciples. They are his concern, in this whole section we're in today. So let's hear, what Jesus highlights about them. Now he shares two aspects, of the disciples, in these verses.

That they belong to him, and because of that, they do not belong, to the world. Look at verse 8 with me. 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. The disciples have received, the words that Jesus spoke to them, from the father. So they've heard, what Jesus said, believed in him, and therefore received him, in faith.

[8 : 48] They were in transformative, life-giving relationship, with him. And it's the same pattern, that we follow today. We hear the words, of the gospel preached, we respond in faith, and receive eternal life, in the person of Jesus.

And because the disciples, have received the word in faith, they belong to him. 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.

Jesus is very clear, that he's not praying, for the world in general. But specifically for his disciples. His friends, sitting around the table with him, at that very moment.

And he wants them to know, that they belong to him. They're his. They're part of his kingdom. If you know God, and have received eternal life, in Christ's name, then you belong to him.

You are united to him. You have a heavenly status, as someone whose home, is not earth, but heaven. You're citizens, of heaven.

[9 : 53] That is where you belong, as someone who belongs to Jesus. Whether you're temporarily living, in this fallen world. And because of that truth, because you belong to Jesus, you are eternally secure.

If you scan over our passage, you'll see just how key a theme that is. Verse six, the people you gave me, out of the world, yours they were, and you gave them to me.

Verse nine, I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me. For they are yours. Verse ten, all mine are yours, and yours are mine.

Verse eleven, Holy Father, keep them, in your name. Verse fifteen, I do not ask that you take them, out of the world, but that you keep them, from the evil one.

Through this passage, Jesus is hammering away, at this point, you have been given, past tense, given, with certainty, to him. If you believe in Jesus, you've been given to him, you have his stamp of ownership, and he will keep, and guard you, forever.

[11 : 01] The Lord Jesus, the one who we saw last week, in verse two, has authority over, all flesh, over everything. The one who can grant, eternal life, to those who belong to him.

He is the one, we belong to. So whatever happens, in this world, and in this life, we shouldn't be afraid, of the long game. We know that our futures, are eternally secure, because we can trust, in Jesus as our savior.

As the one, who will jealously, protect and guard, what is rightfully his, his bride, his church. But because of that, because you belong to Jesus, you do not, belong, in this world.

that's where the rubber, that's where the rubber, hits the road. You do not belong, to this world, and it will hate you. You won't just feel like, an outsider, but an enemy, a public nuisance, someone to be avoided.

The disciples were, verse six, given Jesus, out of the world. And Jesus is, as he often did, in his own ministry, making a very sharp distinction, between those, who belong to him, and those, who belong to the world.

[12 : 23] He's not afraid, to make that distinction, between those, who belong to him, and those, who reject him. And being clear, about that, helps set up, the rest of what he says. There isn't a kind of, black or grey spectrum here.

There is a sharp, black and white distinction, between you as a believer, and that lovely neighbour, or family member you have, who puts you to shame, with their kindness, and thoughtfulness.

Or that colleague, you have, who's always got time for you, and is so helpful towards you. If they haven't received Jesus, then they are part of the world.

They don't belong to him, and they are under the influence, of the evil one. We might find that hard to believe, but look at verse 14 with me.

I have given them, the disciples, your word, and the world, has hated them, because they're not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

[13 : 25] Jesus doesn't miss the mark here. The world has hated the disciples, precisely because, they belong to Jesus. And it's because of the word, that they have and share.

Since the disciples, hold out Christ's word to the world, they're hated, just like Jesus was. Isn't there something in you, that thinks the world, should actually love hearing the gospel?

That it should be grateful, that we're preaching good news, of great joy to them. When I'm thinking about it, in my own head and heart, I see a beautiful message of salvation, to anyone who believes. I see a life full of joy, and one which helps you to live, as the human, that you've designed to be.

I see that it gives incredible dignity, to each and every human life, and guarantees the kind of everlasting security, and blessing, that money just can't buy.

Internally, I really do think, that the world should be grateful, that we're holding out the gospel to them. And it should, people should respond, to the saving news of the gospel, with real joy. But if I keep expecting that, and if you keep expecting that, then, well, we're living in a fantasy land, aren't we?

[14 : 36] Our eyes and our hearts, may have by God's grace, been open to the light of the gospel, and seen its wonder. But the world still hasn't. It still lives in the darkness, and it loves the darkness.

It perceives of Christianity, as more of a threat, than anything else. So it wants to shut out, any signs of light that it can. Remember, the same forces, that crucified Jesus, are alive and thriving today.

And the devil wants to destroy, those who belong to Jesus. And we'll all feel that threat, in many different ways, depending on, where we are in the world, and who we associate it with.

Because our whole world, is anti-God, to its core. It's threatened, by the invasive power, of God, and his gospel. So wish us to put a stop to it, to call it evil.

To force you to dilute the message, into something so weak, you can barely taste it. That was the reality, for the disciples, and for us too.

[15 : 46] It's true for all Christians, so we shouldn't be surprised, that when we share the gospel sometimes, or when we share Christian morals, with our unbelieving friends, that we are hated for it. Not just brushed aside, not just sidelined or ignored, but hated.

Jesus doesn't mince his words, but says that we all will be hated, for our allegiance to him. If we are to become, like the one we belong to, it will necessarily result, in the world around you, hating you.

Your neighbors, your colleagues, friends, family, some of them, will hate you. This is our calling, as Christians.

Since we are joined to Christ, we will share in his glory, the glory, of a crucified savior, who the world rejected. With that in mind, we can move on to see, the two great temptations for Christians, as we live in a world, we don't belong.

So our first temptation, is isolation, that we would withdraw, from a world which hates us.

[17 : 07] When we know, we are going to face pain, and rejection, it is natural, in our fallen human weakness, that we will want to, avoid that pain. It can be very tempting, to want to retreat, to a safe space, among our brothers, and sisters who love us, where we feel like, the world can't hurt us.

But Jesus says, no. Don't stay away, from that fight. But roll up your sleeves, trust in him, and live boldly, among the world.

In verse 15, he makes that obvious. After acknowledging, that the world, will hate his followers, just as it hated him, he doesn't try, to wrap us up, in cotton wool, and keep us comfortable, and happy.

No. Instead he says, I do not ask, that you take them, out of the world. Jesus has, no interest whatsoever, in taking us, away from the fight, kept at a safe distance, from the battle.

He's not taking us, away from the pain, of seeing people, reject him. And he's not keeping us, from the rejection, of man. He's not going to do that, because he has people, out there, who belong to him, who need rescuing.

[18 : 22] There are many people, out there, who have been given to Jesus, by the father, who belong to him, but they haven't heard of, and received him, in faith yet. And we are just, not going to win them, for Christ, if we are all scared, retreating into our, holy huddle.

Only doing, what we feel safe with, and only ever filling, our diaries, with Christian things, and Christian people. That only leads to us, creating our own, Christian bubble, where we feel like, we and our children, are safe, wrapped up, nice and safe, away from the world, we live in.

Rebecca Manley Pippert, gives a very helpful, illustration of this, kind of attitude, in her book, out of the salt shaker. Let me read a section, of it to you. She writes, we must not become, a rabbit hole Christian, the kind who, pops his head out, of a hole, leaves his Christian, roommate in the morning, and scurries off, to class, only to frantically, search for a Christian, to sit next to, an odd way, to approach, a mission field.

Thus he proceeds, from class to class. When dinner comes, he sits with the Christians, in his dorm, at one table, and thinks, what a great witness. From there, he goes to his, all Christian Bible study, and he might even, catch a prayer meeting, where the Christians, pray for the non-believers, on his floor.

But what luck, that he was able, to live on the only floor, with 17 other Christians. Then at night, he scurries back, to his Christian, roommate, safe. He made it through the day, and his only contact, with the world, were those mad, brave dashes, to and from, Christian activities.

[19 : 57] What an insidious, reversal, of the biblical command, to be salt, and light, in the world. I'm sure you see, the point she's illustrating.

You can't evangelize, to a world, that you're not part of. And we can't win the lost, if we're not among them, living alongside them, sharing their lives, their sorrows, their joys with them.

You can't, take gospel opportunities, if you're not in a position, to have any at all, because you're too busy, with church activities. Isolation, is not the way, for us to live, faithfully for Christ, in a world, which hates him, and all who stand with him.

As tempting, as the safety, and warmth, of a lovely, Christian bubble may be. Let me ask you, are you, involved, in the lives, of people, who aren't Christian yet?

We all have opportunities, to share the gospel, with the world, but are we making, and taking them? Are we getting to know, our neighbors better, rather than hoping, we just don't bump into them, when we get home, after a long day at work?

[21 : 10] Are you helping them, when they need a hand, with their bins, or with something in the garden? Are you actually, spending time with them? Maybe even inviting them, into your home? Is any of your chat, moving beyond, what the new neighbors are doing, or the road works, the council are doing, at the end of the road?

Or with your colleagues, are you getting to know them, as people, rather than just workers? Are you taking time, to show real interest, in their lives?

Their family, their back story, their hopes in life? Or if you're at school, or studying, are you just spending time, with the one Christian, in your year, rather than being, a witness together, among your classmates?

Or joining a sports club, so that you can be, a witness there too? It's worth considering, how you spend your week. Are you only, filling your time, with church, to the point where, if the chance, to actually spend time, with some people, who don't know Christ, came up, you'd be too busy, to take it?

It could be, having dinner, with the family, across the street, joining a choir, a book group, or a five-a-side, game of football. We may need, to look at our diaries, and plan in sometime, where we can have, real gospel opportunities.

[22 : 36] And most importantly, in all of these situations, are you sharing the gospel, when God grants you, that opportunity? Jesus is very upfront, that we will face, hatred and rejection, from the world, because we belong to him.

We're not of this world, it's threatened, by Christ and his people. But, verse 15, he will keep you, from the evil one.

The devil will never, lay a finger, on your eternal status. He will never harm you, in any lasting way. For you have been given, by God the Father, to Jesus.

And you belong with him, forever. That's the kind of security, we need, in our mission mindset. We can go into battle, into enemy territory, in schools, universities, neighborhoods, and even our own families, for some of us.

Knowing that we are, eternally secure, and that the enemy, can't hurt us forever. We're to be, reassured by that.

[23 : 46] Well, we're to live in a world, that hates us, and not run away, from the fight. So how then, are we to live, in the world?

How may we live, faithfully for Christ, in a world, which hates us? That brings us, to our second temptation, assimilation, to become like the world, so that we're not hated.

Since we know, we're hated by the world, we're commanded, to evangelize, we can be very tempted, to conform, to the ways of the world. Jesus himself, as he prayed these words, was in the next day, going to face, the most brutal hatred, the world had ever seen.

Yet, he doesn't pray, that we would be taken, from the fight, but that we would live, distinctively, in the midst of it. And that is hard.

There's no sugar coating it. Remaining faithful, to Christ in his word, is hard today. And it often comes, at great cost. As our culture, moves further away, from biblical truth, and particularly, biblical ethics, the Christian, will have a target, on their back, all the more.

[24 : 58] Therefore, the pressure to conform, will be even greater, as we seek, to avoid the pain, that comes with worshipping, and belonging to, a crucified Christ. Let's think about that, for a few minutes.

Where are our, pinch points, where we feel pressure, to conform to the world? We tend to focus, on pressures like, sexual ethics, because they're the very, obvious, surface level sins, of our day, that our culture is obsessed with.

And standing firm, to Christ in that, can have significant, consequences. Like, losing your job, or friends, or your family, turning against you. But sin, is bigger than that.

And the devil, has a firm hold, of far more, than just our culture's, sex lives. How many of you, feel pressure, to conform to a culture, of gossip, in your group of friends?

Where you're always talking, about people behind their backs. How many of you, feel pressure, to define your life, by your academic achievements? Willing to sacrifice, church life, and serving the Lord, so that you can get, those extra few marks.

[26 : 10] How many of you, feel the pressure, to conform to a culture, of rampant, careerism at work, where you, and your paycheck, are at the center, of your own universe? Or how many of you, feel pressure, to conform to a culture, of materialism?

Always wanting, the next big thing, and judging everyone else, who doesn't have it. When you are actually, in the world, are you remaining, faithful to Christ, in word, and deed?

In all of these areas, if you're living, among real people, who aren't believers, we're all going to be tempted, to compromise the gospel, because we're worried, about our witness. We'll think something like, I'm going to be really loving, and affirming, to this person, so that I'm viewed well, in the office, or neighborhood, and can have a good platform, to share the gospel, from that.

It would harm, my gospel witness, if I were to actually, speak about the truth, of the Bible here. People might, misunderstand it. They might hate me, and then I won't get, any other gospel opportunities, in the future.

So I'm just going to, leave that issue. It's not central, to the gospel anyway. So it's okay, for me to sidestep it. But let me ask you, if you are doing that, why?

[27 : 30] Is it because, you earnestly care, for the salvation, of that person? Or do you just want, to be liked? And do you just want, to avoid pain in the world?

I wish it weren't the case, but I think more often than not, we just want to be liked. So we'll be morally fuzzy, on the big issues of the time. But if you've already, compromised yourself, and your values, your gospel witness, is harmed.

The gospel speaks, into these current issues, and when it does, we might be hated for it. We may lose friends, jobs, and our own family, may even turn against us.

But you've not done, anything wrong, if you faithfully, take a stand for Christ, and are hated for it. If everyone, in your year group at school, suddenly turns against you, because you've been faithful to Jesus, it hasn't harmed, your gospel witness.

You've stood for him, and his word. And we are to keep on, holding out that gospel, even if we are afraid, of how people will respond. How utterly heartbreaking, would it be, to get to the end of our lives, and realize, we've spent more time, worrying about being liked, or getting promoted, or being successful, than making sure, our colleagues, have had a chance, to know Christ, for themselves.

[29 : 02] What a shame, it would be, to care too much, about what your neighbors, in number 32 and 36, say about you, behind your back, for holding true to the gospel. That you don't actually, invite them, to read Christ's word with you.

We all feel the pressure, to conform, to give in, to give up Christ, for the sake of comfort now. So how can we live, among the world, while remaining distinct from it?

That's what Jesus addresses, in verses 17 to 19, and his message, is very clear. Stand firm, in his word. Look over these verses, with me 17 to 19, and I'll read it, with the footnotes, that are included.

Jesus prays, set them apart, 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 set myself apart.

That they also, may be set apart, in truth. Jesus wants the disciples, to be set apart, for the mission, of the gospel. Not set apart, from the world physically, not retreating, from the world, but being set apart, or sanctified, in truth.

[30 : 18] In our conduct, in Christ, and his word. That's what, sanctification means, in this context. Not the gradual, growth of Christ's likeness, but the act, of being set apart, for a particular task.

For verse 19, that's what Christ himself did. He set himself apart, for his death on the cross. And he did that, in order that those, who belong to him, will be ready, to follow his pattern, and set themselves apart, for the task he's given them.

For the whole reason, he sent them into the world. Remaining faithful to Christ, is standing firm, in his word. Especially, when the world wants us, to give it all up.

We need to know, and remember, that God's word, is good enough, for the public square. We don't need to keep it hidden, hoping that our friends, don't realize what's in it, or they find the bits, they think they might hate us for.

The Bible is pure wisdom. And we can boldly share it, with the world, because through the word, God saves. We are equipped, for the battle we face, in the world, by the word, hearing it, absorbing it, living it, as it conforms us, not to the likeness of the world, but to our crucified, saviour.

[31 : 42] The word, is what will keep us going, and keep us focused, on the goal we have, that great goal, of bringing glory to God, by bringing him souls, who belong to him, through the witness, of a suffering church.

That's what we're sent, into the world for, to glorify God, by sharing the gospel, with people, so that they may glorify him too. It will guard us, against just becoming, like the world we live in, instead, enabling us, to live distinctively, like Christ, among it.

Well this all sounds, like quite grim reading, can't it? The world will hate you, but you've got to be, living in it. And as you do so, don't take the easy route, of conforming to its ways, so that you can avoid pain, but remain faithful, to Christ, taking up your cross, which means, you will be hated, even more.

But let's close, with a couple of encouragements, from the Lord Jesus. This prayer, is a deeply reassuring, prayer for the disciples, as they were about to enter, a world full, of hostility.

So how may we be encouraged to? We need to remember, that Christ, is glorified in this. That's what he says, in verse 10. He is glorified, and the disciples, remaining faithful to him, despite the great persecution, and pressure they faced.

[33 : 17] And this reminds us, that we're not doing this, for our comfort, or our own reputation, but for his glory. For he, is our good, and faithful savior.

Not everything we do, as a church, is going to make the world, love us. In fact, most of the things, we do as a church, the world is going to look at, and sneer, mock us, say we're stupid, that we're irrelevant.

But we're not doing it, for our reputation. We're doing it, for his glory. For he's our good, and faithful savior. Later on, when the disciples, faced imprisonment, hatred, public mocking, and even death, Jesus' words to them, would have given them, such comfort, and assurance, that he hadn't, abandoned them, and they hadn't failed.

He knew this was going to happen. He knew they would face opposition, and be vilified, for what they preached. And he would be glorified, through all of it.

And of course, Christ himself, is our perfect example, in this. He didn't withdraw himself, from the world, but instead, became one of us, and died, so that we may have life, in his name.

[34 : 47] And he didn't conform, to the world's sinful patterns, but he remained, distinctively, and uniquely faithful. Devoted, to the will of his father, so that we would be saved, and he would be glorified.

We have the great privilege, of following in the footsteps, of our Savior, who loves us. Our Savior, who sends us his spirit, living in us, so that we are able, to follow him, wholeheartedly, with great joy.

For Jesus, prays these things, verse 13, that they may have my joy, fulfilled in themselves. That's a surprising little phrase, for Jesus to drop in there, don't you think?

When he goes on, to talk about, how we're going to be hated, directly after. He's saying, that there is real joy, to be had, in standing faithfully, in solidarity, with one another, and with our Savior, shoulder to shoulder, against the same, hostile world, that put him to death, and which he came to save.

In his prayer, Jesus wants to reassure, his disciples, that God would continue his work, and would keep the disciples, in his hands, even when the world, inevitably turned against them, as it will do, to us also.

[36 : 14] How tempting, will it be, when you're in the world, this week, to just speak about, Novak Djokovic, or 10 Downing Street, or whatever it is, rather than, preaching the gospel, to a world, which hates you.

How tempting, will it be, to just avoid the world, and avoid the fight, entirely? Jesus was praying, for these things exactly, and he wants you, to keep living, in the real world, being brave, and bold, in the battle, and keeping on, holding out the gospel.

We, because we belong to him, we can be assured, that whatever comes our way, whatever hatred, we may face, we don't need to worry, for we belong to him, both now, and always.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, you know, how afraid, our hearts are, of faithfully witnessing, to you in this world.

You know, how fearful we are, of being hated. Please help us, to keep on holding out, the gospel to the world, knowing that many, will turn against us, but expectant, that many, will turn to you.

[37 : 45] Help us, to remember, that heaven is our home, and to treasure, the glory of God, rather than the praise of man. In Jesus name, and for his glory, we ask this.

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