

Jesus Prays for His Missionary Apostles

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Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] We'll turn now to our reading for this evening, and Edward Lobb is continuing a brief series through John chapter 17.

! We're going to read the whole chapter for us, just so we can get the context, and Edward will preach on that middle section.

So, John 17, and beginning at verse 1. When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

[1 : 42] 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 the 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. 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. 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 scriptures 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.

[2 : 54] 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.

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 may also be sanctified in truth.

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.

[3 : 56] 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. 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, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Amen. Well, amen. May God bless his word to us tonight. Good evening, friends. Good to see you all. Let's turn again to John's Gospel, chapter 17.

And as Paul explained a moment ago, this is the second of three sermons on this unique Bible chapter. It is unique. You won't find anything closely approximating to it in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

[5 : 19] Well, first, let me give you a brief reminder of what this chapter is doing here in the heart of John's Gospel. The whole chapter is a prayer addressed by Jesus to God the Father.

And verse 1 makes this clear. Jesus, having spoken these words, lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Now, that hour was the great moment, the central moment in the history of the world.

The hour of Jesus' death on the cross. The hour that would secure the salvation of God's people, bringing them forgiveness and the assurance of eternal life.

Jesus prayed this prayer on the eve of his crucifixion. He was with his 11 apostles, Judas having left the company.

He was with the 11 in an upper room in Jerusalem. Now, in the previous three chapters, chapters 14, 15, and 16, Jesus has been instructing his apostles about their future life, how they're going to live after his ascension into heaven.

[6 : 26] He's been giving them an extended briefing, telling them that they will bear witness to him. In other words, they will testify about him.

They will speak about him to a world that will often resist them and snarl at them. A world that will often hate Jesus and those who belong to him.

But, says Jesus, I'm going to send to you, my apostles, the Holy Spirit. And he will give you the power and the energy to keep on preaching the gospel, even when you become massively unpopular.

And if you look back to the last verse of chapter 16, verse 33, you'll see two statements at the end of that chapter, which combine hard-nosed realism with extraordinary comfort.

Jesus says, in the world, you will have tribulation. Now, that is the hard-nosed realism. But take heart, he says, I have overcome the world, and there lies the extraordinary comfort.

[7 : 29] The world, in all its opposition to the Lord Jesus, will not have the last word, because Jesus will prove to be, in the end, indomitable. So he then prays this prayer in chapter 17, and immediately afterwards, and you'll see this in the first words of chapter 18, he and the apostles leave the city of Jerusalem.

They drop down into the valley of the river Kidron, cross the river, enter a garden on the other side, where Jesus is soon arrested, and led away to what proves to be a kangaroo court.

And a few hours later, he is nailed to the cross. Now, the prayer itself, in chapter 17, has a central thrust, a central purpose.

Jesus is praying that the Father will accomplish his great plan of salvation, which is to bring his people to eternal safety and eternal life.

And the prayer falls into three parts. First of all, verses 1 to 5, which we looked at last week, Jesus is praying that the Father will accomplish his great plan of salvation through the completion of Jesus' ministry.

[8 : 36] Then we have the second section, verses 6 to 19, where Jesus prays that the Father will accomplish his plan through the completion of the apostles' ministry.

And then verses 20 to 26, Jesus prays that the Father will accomplish his plan of salvation through the ongoing ministry of all future Christians. That's our passage for next week.

Well, let's turn then to verses 6 to 19. Jesus doesn't quite say in so many words that he's praying for the 11 apostles in this section of his prayer, but he clearly is, and I'll point out how we can be sure of this.

Look, for example, at verse 11, where he says, And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

He means, I shall very soon be crucified and then raised and then ascended to glory. I'll be coming to you, dear Father, but they are remaining in the world.

[9 : 38] So he's distinguishing between a departing Jesus and a remaining band of disciples. And bear in mind that it was the 11 who were actually with him at this very moment.

They're the ones who are listening to this prayer. There's nobody else there. They must have assumed that it was they that he was talking about. Then look at verse 12. While I was with them, I kept them in your name.

I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction. Now, the son of destruction can only be Judas Iscariot. And Jesus is saying that he has guarded all the rest of his little band.

Now, he must be speaking about the 11 there. Then look on to verse 20. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

And you see, he's distinguishing there between these and then others who are going to follow later on. It can only be the 11 that he's talking about. So in verses 6 to 19, he's praying for the apostles before he turns to pray for future generations of Christians at verse 20.

[10 : 51] But it would be quite wrong to think that the blessings that he's praying for the apostles have nothing to do with us. We can safely assume that the things that Jesus asks for for the apostles are just the kind of things that he wants to pray for all Christians.

Now, we are not apostles. We never will be. But we're in the same boat as the apostles in the sense that we're like them. Weak, but called to be missionaries.

So if we can get our heads around what Jesus wants the apostles to know and how he prays for them, we shall understand much more clearly what he wants us to know and what he wants us to experience.

So friends, let's put on our reading glasses, if they're not upon our noses already, and we'll focus on verses 6 to 19. I'd like to bring out the teaching of this section under two simple headings.

First, why Jesus prays. And second, what Jesus is asking for. First then, why Jesus prays.

[11 : 55] Or to put that slightly differently, what are the grounds of his praying? What are the reasons for his praying for the apostles as he does here? Let's notice four reasons.

First, the Father has given them to the Son. Look with me 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. You'll see twice in that one verse, Jesus says, you gave them to me.

Now we noticed the same point last week in verse 2, where Jesus says that the Father has given him authority to give eternal life to all whom you have given to him.

There's a lot of giving there in verse 2. Authority, given by Father to Son. Eternal life, given by the Son to his people. And then his people, given to the Son by the Father.

[12:58] And it's the same thing repeated here in verse 6. You gave them to me. You have given these people to me. Now if you had been Jesus, and had been given a vast number of people by God the Father, would you have been glad to receive such a gift?

Now just look at, we have here a tiny section of the Universal Church gathered here this evening. Here we are, warts and all, including me, Warthog Lob.

What kind of a gift are people like us to the Lord Jesus? Think of this on the domestic level for a moment. Some of the gifts that we receive, we love them and treasure them, keep them.

Others we would really not have received at all, because they land us in real difficulties. The pet rabbit that starts to bite the children. The car that runs beautifully for a month or two, and then goes wrong, and gives us all sorts of problems.

Is Jesus pleased with the gift of dodgy, dicey people that the Father has given him? Well, astonishingly, he is. Look at what he says about them in verse 24.

[14:11] 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.

So pleased is he with the gift of all his people that he passionately wants to spend eternity with them. That is extraordinary, but it's true. This gift of people given by Father to Son implies that the Son is going to take responsibility for them.

He doesn't just, as it were, stick us in a back cupboard and forget about us. He begins to work on us. He nurtures us. He improves us. We're given to him warts and all, but he begins to work on the warts, to reduce them, to subdue them, ultimately to remove them altogether in the world to come.

Jesus prays for his people because we have been given to him by God the Father, and he is delighted with his Father's gift. But notice where this gift originates.

Look again at verse 6. Those whom you gave me out of the world. That's where we come from. The Father, as it were, extracts every believer from our native environment, which is the world.

[15:34] So the Father did not find us shining and smiling and radiant in Ikea or John Lewis's perfect purchases. He found us in a dark and dreary and hostile place, which is the world.

And from the world he took us and gave us to Jesus to be under new ownership. Now the world is our native environment. And in John's gospel, the word world always means human society as organized without reference to God, not only without reference to God, but hostile to God.

We all start life in the world. We in the world and the world very much in us. And it's the world that molds our nature, which is why we naturally hide from God and resent the idea that we owe him our allegiance.

But because of his extraordinary kindness, he extracts us from the world and gives us a new nature and a new identity.

Our hostility towards him becomes love for him. Our ignorance of him is replaced by a growing knowledge of him. And once we've become Christians, given by the Father to the Son, we find that we no longer belong to the world.

[16:50] Look on to verse 16, where Jesus is speaking of his people. And he says, they are not of the world, not now, just as I am not of the world.

They've been removed from the world and they now have a new home and a new environment to live in, which is Jesus himself. That's where we live. We in him and he in us.

But here's something striking to notice. Although the Father gives us to the Lord Jesus, our relationship with the Father is not thereby terminated.

Verse 10 makes this point. Verse 10, All mine are yours and yours are mine. Yes, the Father has given us to the Son and we now belong to the Son, but we still also belong to the Father.

And that's why we continue to pray to the Father. We pray in the name of Jesus because Jesus is our means of access to the Father. But we can now pray both to the Lord Jesus and to God the Father because all mine are yours and yours are mine.

[18:00] So let's rejoice in the fact that if we are Christians, we have been given to the Son by the Father. And it means now that we belong to him. We belong.

We're no longer waifs and strays, no longer despairing little things with no home to go to, little things who are lost on the margins of humanity. We now belong.

We are possessed by a Master who cares for us more than we shall ever understand. So there's the first reason why Jesus prays for his people. The Father has given us to the Son, so the Son prays for those who have now been entrusted to his care.

Yeah. It's warm work preaching. I think it sends the red corpuscles around at increased speed.

Let me just take a sip of water as well. We're coming on to the second reason in five seconds. Okay. So second reason why he prays for his people.

[19:05] He prays for his people because he has revealed God's name to them. Look again at verse six. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

So the Father gives the disciples to the Son and the Son then reveals or manifests the name of the Father to them. Now this means much more than simply letting them know what God's name is.

We often let each other know what our names are. This I'm sure will happen at the end of this service. You'll go to somebody that you don't really know and you will say to him hello I'm John Bull and he will say to you and I'm George Smith and on you go you've revealed your names.

You've manifested your names to each other and that's the beginning one hopes of a friendship. But the name of God the Father is much greater than John Bull or George Smith.

In the Old Testament God's fundamental central name is the Lord sometimes written down as Yahweh or Jehovah. I am who I am and that's the name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus chapter three.

[20:22] I am who I am. His being his amness his amhood is the central fact of the universe. He is unshiftable.

He is self-sufficient. He has other names as well which are revealed as the story of the Old Testament unfolds. So for example he is El Shaddai the Almighty.

He is the Holy One of Israel. He is the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. And there are several other names. But in the Bible the name of God reveals much more than his identity.

His name or names reveal his character his power his mission his plan his love and compassion his antagonism to human sin his work and office as judge and saviour his providential care and much more.

A name like George Smith reveals nothing of a man's character or ability but God's names open up to us a wide overview of his being and his power.

[21 : 29] So when Jesus says to the Father in verse 6 I have manifested your name to the ones you have given me he is looking back over the three years of his public ministry the whole course of his life there and what he means is that he has been revealing the true character of the only God through his own example and his life and teaching he is the revelation of the nature of God the Father.

Just turn with me a page back if you will to chapter 14 for a moment chapter 14 in verse 7 and I think we can see more clearly what's going on here chapter 14 verse 7 in this verse Jesus says to the apostles if you had known me you would have known my Father also from now on you do know him and have seen him at which point the apostle Philip like the most inattentive boy in the lowest class at school says to Jesus Lord show us the Father and it's enough for us so Jesus says to him with a touch of real irony have I been with you all this time and still you do not know me Philip whoever has seen me has seen the Father how can you say show us the Father do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me now be clear on one thing he's not saying that he is the Father not at all the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son but what he means in verse 9 is that his nature and the Father's nature are one and the same nature so to see Jesus to listen to Jesus to watch Jesus at work is to see an exact reproduction of the Father's life and character because the Father and Jesus are in one another and by the way friends doesn't this help us in talking to friends of ours who are not Christians your friend who's not a Christian might say to you but how can we possibly know God

God is invisible God is opaque God is unknowable you can say no he's not unknowable he's revealed his nature in the clearest and sharpest lines in the person of Jesus in the person and words and works of Jesus read the story of Jesus and you will immediately be getting to know who God is so there's the second reason why Jesus is praying for his disciples he has revealed God's name to them and of course they are to pass that on to others third he prays for them because the apostles are now at last really making the connection between Jesus and God the Father I know that Philip we've just seen this is fairly clueless but there has been great progress look at John 17 and verse 7 now they know that everything that you have given me is from you they didn't know that a while ago but now the truth is really dawning on them now they know these things when I was a schoolboy aged about 15 one of our teachers took a few minutes in a classroom lesson to explain to us what was meant by a disclosure a disclosure

I think he came from the north of England actually so he pronounced the word disclosure which was fascinating to me because I was a soft southerner anyway he explained this idea really clearly and he put it like this you're looking at something you can't make sense of it at all it's opaque it's inscrutable it's infathomable unfathomable it's incomprehensible but suddenly you see it I guess today we would call it a light bulb moment we suddenly join the dots the thing which was dark and mysterious suddenly becomes as bright as day now look at the beginning of verse 7 again Jesus says to his father now they know for a long time they were clueless but the disclosure has at last been made the light bulb has been switched on so what do they now know according to verse 7 they now know that everything you have given me is from you what then has the father given to Jesus verse 8 tells us words

I've given them the words that you gave me God has given Jesus words to pass on and what have the apostles done with those words look at verse 8 they've received them in other words they've taken them on board they have allowed the words given by the father to the son to reconstruct their thinking and in particular they're thinking about who Jesus is and where Jesus has come from let's pick it up halfway through verse 8 they have received the words you gave me and consequently have come to know in truth that I came from you and they have believed that you sent me and that is why as he says in verse 9 Jesus is praying for them now friends we are right at the heart of John's gospel here Jesus is praying for the apostles because this is the message that the apostles are going to spend the rest of their lives passing on that

[27:08] Jesus came from God and that God the father sent him it's all about his identity John's gospel is all about the identity of Jesus if you ever find yourself sitting an exam in the religious studies department and the exam question says what is the central theme of John's gospel the only right answer is John's gospel is all about the identity of Jesus and if the examiner gives you 0% for your answer you can be sure that the examiner is a goose now just think about the people who were living in Jerusalem in about 30 AD when Jesus was doing his public work of teaching!

people were discussing him all over the place who did they think he was his identity was not obvious he didn't have a halo on his head his clothes were the ordinary clothes of a young Jewish working man his hands were workman's hands and the question where has this man come from was a much debated question to which there was no obvious answer you could look at him and it wasn't obvious now a moment just flick back to chapter seven because we have a good example here of the way that people were discussing the origin of Jesus we get a flavor of Jerusalem life here this preacher has arrived in Jerusalem he's been doing wonderful things and saying wonderful things and people are wondering who he is so look at chapter seven verse twenty five the conversation is about who Jesus is and where he came from verse twenty five some of the people of

Jerusalem therefore said is not this the man whom they seek to kill yet here he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ but we know where this man comes from and when the Christ appears no one will know where he comes from when they say we know what they mean is Galilee Nazareth in Galilee it was widely known that Jesus was a Nazarene now look on to chapter verse forty in the same chapter chapter seven verse forty the discussion is still here about the identity and origin of Jesus so from verse forty when they heard these words some of the people said this really is the prophet prophesied in the book of Deuteronomy whereas others said but some said is the Christ to come from

Galilee has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem the village where David was so there was a division among the people over him you see some of these people knew their Bibles to some extent they knew the prophecy from the book of Micah which reads from you Bethlehem Ephrathah from you shall come forth one who is to be the ruler in Israel some of the people knew this prophecy but they didn't know that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem they knew that he came from Nazareth so they couldn't link him with this prophecy of Micah but the truth is that although Jesus was born in Bethlehem the apostles needed to understand that his ultimate origin was neither Bethlehem nor Nazareth it was heaven if Jesus was merely from Bethlehem it might demonstrate that he was a human king of the line of David but if the real truth was that he had come from heaven and had been sent to the world by

God the Father it demonstrated his divine nature his deity as God the Son let's turn back to chapter 17 and verse 8 Jesus rejoices that the apostles have come to know the truth that he came from the Father and they have believed that the Father sent him so they put two and two together the disclosure of Jesus real origin and identity has been made to them and that is why verse 9 Jesus is praying for them this is to be their message to the world as it is ours our message is that Jesus has come from heaven and God the Father sent him and because he is divine he has divine power to rescue sinners and to bring us to eternal life a mere man born in Bethlehem like King David couldn't ever do that for us so

[31:59] Jesus prays for them because they are now at last really making the connection between him and God the Father now there's a fourth reason why Jesus is praying for them on the eve of his crucifixion and this can be stated very quickly and that is simply that he is about to leave them there it is in verse 11 and I am no longer in the world but they are in the world and I am coming to you he's been with them for about three years and during all that time he's been guarding them and instructing them and correcting them but all that is about to end now certainly the Holy Spirit is about to be poured out on them and the Spirit will Jesus physical presence will soon be withdrawn from them and they will be facing the cold blasts of the world's antagonism like men walking into a north wind he's praying for them because he is about to leave them now we'll move on to a second section in just a moment where we'll see the requests that

Jesus actually makes for his apostles but let's pause and think again about the physical situation in which Jesus is praying this prayer he's praying this prayer in the presence of the apostles now why would he do that after all most people when they pray do it on their own in fact in Matthew's gospel chapter six Jesus says to his disciples when you pray go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who sees in secret but that is not what Jesus is doing in John 17 his eleven friends are sitting around the table with him he doesn't leave the table and go off to find a quiet room where he can pray on his own he stays with them because he wants them to hear this prayer and they do and John who is one of the eleven!

writes it down years later so why does Jesus want them to hear this well the answer must be because he's instructing them yes of course he is really praying he's truly praying to his father but the prayer has a horizontal dimension as well as a vertical one he wants the apostles to grasp what he's saying here because if they do they're going to understand him more clearly and they need to understand him clearly if they're going to preach him clearly so what are the big points for them to grasp well first they need to understand that the father really has given them to Jesus because when they understand that they will rejoice in the security of their position each of them will be able to say I am known and loved by both the father and the son and I belong to Jesus forever I have been gifted to him by God the father has truly manifested

God's name and therefore God's character to them and to the world they are no longer ignoramuses about God and they are in a position to help those who still are ignoramuses and that's where we all start as ignoramuses do you remember how Paul said when he went to Athens and he was speaking to some very intelligent and senior people the grey beards of Athens and he noticed in the streets of Athens an altar which had on it an inscription to an unknown God to an unknown God so he says to these senior men in Athens the God whom you worship as unknown I am now going to proclaim to you now that's exactly what the apostles can now do and that's what they did and you and I can do the same we proclaim the truth about God to those who don't yet know it we have been ignoramuses and we are able to help now those who still are ignoramuses about

God and then thirdly the apostles are now understanding the real identity of Jesus that he has come truly from God and that the father has sent him the father's sending of Jesus is Jesus authentication if the apostles now truly know that Jesus has come from God and has been sent by God they know that they are not attaching themselves to some half mad Charlie of a preacher a kind of loose cannon not at all they are now serving God the son who has been sent by God the father well let's turn now to see what Jesus is actually asking the father for as he prays for the apostles there are three requests are we still alive folks if you're asleep raise your hand okay three requests the second section will be will be shorter than the first one I'll tell you what these three requests are before we actually look at them first keep them in your name verse 11 second keep them from the evil one verse 15 and third sanctify them in the truth verse 17 three requests these requests once they're once they're met it is not going to be a gift that is instantaneously delivered to them like your shopping basket at the checkout at

[37 : 36] Tesco bang there it is it's all yours right now no these requests are for the long haul to be fulfilled over time first then from verse 11 keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one now we've seen already that the name of God is the revelation of his character and his power and that name as verse 11 makes clear has been given by the father to the son and that means that all the character and power of God the father has been poured into the character of Jesus father and son are of one character but the apostles and by extension we modern believers are also involved in the name of God you see Jesus is praying here keep them in your name we who are Christians are being kept in God's name those who are not Christian believers are strangers to God's name and

God's power but believers are kept there his name is our new identity let me give a simple parallel a young woman gets married and she gets a new name Miss Smith becomes Mrs.

Brown and that is her new identity now she doesn't feel very much like a Brown initially takes her a while to get used to it she probably signs her name as Smith for a few months but eventually she feels utterly and totally brown and she remains brown for the rest of her life to become a Christian is to take the name of the Lord think of the third of the Ten Commandments for a moment thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain that commandment is not simply forbidding us to use the Lord's name as a kind of expletive it's about our whole life and lifestyle we're to live in such a way as to honor the Lord and display his transforming grace it's about our lifestyle being worthy of the Lord whose name we now bear if we are in his name we don't want to dishonor the glorious name that is now ours so when Jesus prays keep them in your name he's asking the Father to keep the apostles and us faithful to the revelation of God's nature that Jesus has opened up to us we live in his name we represent his name we carry his reputation before the eyes of the world we pray hallowed be thy name not least in our own lives but there's a consequence to this which Jesus speaks of in verse 11 keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one to be kept in the wonderful name of

God will issue in an ever-growing oneness or unity amongst Jesus's people now think of that for a moment is that an idea that thrills you or does it slightly unsettle you you might think for example I know I'm in the same church as Reginald Fotheringay but he's a cantankerous old badger and I'm not sure that I want to get too close to him I'll stick to my friends I like them but I shan't be in a hurry to invite old Reginald round to my house for tea and biscuits but in verse 11 Jesus is making it clear that once we are involved up to the neck up to the hilt in the name of God we will inevitably be reaching out to each other in real love and friendship growing unity is a powerful consequence of our being kept in the name and character of the true God this is why divisive behavior in the church is so contrary to the spirit of New Testament faith now we come to the Lord from very different backgrounds

African Middle Eastern Far Eastern American European British ex-Hindus ex-nominal Muslims ex-nominal Christians ex-Atheists ex-Hippies ex-Nature Freaks the list is endless isn't it and those differences cannot be eradicated and they don't need to be either our growing unity is not a human culture thing it's a reality that grows out of the Bible and our shared understanding of the gospel it's that that unites us we trust the Lord Jesus if we're Christians we have all been humbled to the point of recognizing and confessing our abject sinfulness and our need for forgiveness and we have all been thrilled and overwhelmed by the knowledge that Christ died for sinners to save us and set our feet on the road to heaven that's what we have in common Jesus our savior what the father does for us is to keep us in his name the name which he has given to Jesus and inevitably we will grow in our desire to be united we will leave behind the isolation and the loneliness of so much in modern life where each person has their own individualized headset and earphones covering their ears stay away from me

[43 : 08] I'm listening to Beethoven I don't want to talk to you that sort of isolation gets replaced by a growing desire to talk to share life to study the Bible with others to laugh together to eat pork pies and donuts together to discuss the challenges and the opportunities of serving Christ in the modern world the unforgiven life is the isolated life the forgiven life is full of joy and laughter as we learn to relax in each other's company and not to be on the defensive Jesus asks his father to keep his people in his name so that we may be one even as we are one says Jesus in the final phrase of verse 11 and the we of that final phrase means of course himself and the father the divine royal we that unity between father and son is a perfect unity perfect love perfect joy perfect understanding perfect harmony and Jesus his prayer is that our unity in the

Christian fellowship should grow more and more like their unity in heaven keep them in your name that's his first request second keep them from the evil one verse 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one they are not of the world just as I am not of the world now the world is the sphere in which the evil one the devil well the way Peter puts it in his first!

letter! the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour which is a horrible picture true picture but horrible but it means that for seven days a week and 24 hours a day our malignant and wily adversary Satan is on the prowl he prowls in the streets in the shops in our places of work in our homes in our television sets our computers our social media his aim is to devour us and that means to lure us into sin even to turn us away from the Lord altogether in the Lord's prayer we pray deliver us from the evil one and this is just the same request but here it's in the mouth of Jesus keep them from the evil one so what is our relationship with the world we saw from verse six that the father has taken out of the world what he has removed us from is our allegiance to the world we no longer belong to the world because we now belong to

Jesus but we still live in the world and in verse 15 Jesus asks the father not to take us out of the world why not because we have good news of salvation to take to the world and we must get on with our life once we are Christians our allegiance to the world has been terminated but our residence in the world goes on and that's why we need to be protected from the powerful temptations that Satan throws at us now this helps us in our prayers for each other when we pray for other Christians well of course we're going to pray for things like the restoration of health when somebody has been unwell for wisdom to make good decisions about work and family life and so on for perseverance in Christian service but let's often pray for others that they may be protected from the power of the evil one if it's important to

Jesus to pray that it needs to be important to us if you want to think more about the devil's tactics do read CS Lewis screw tape letters you'll find them very informative then third and last the last request comes in verse 17 sanctify them in the truth your word is truth sanctification is about being set apart consecrated becoming more holy that means becoming more like God in our thinking Don Carson in his big and excellent commentary on John's gospel writes this in John's gospel sanctification is always for mission so Jesus is praying for his people that we become more and more prepared for and focused for mission for taking the good news to the needy world well how is this going to happen well quite simply by getting the

[48 : 06] Bible ever more deeply into our systems Jesus says sanctify them in the truth your word the Bible is truth the rugby player prepares for his hard work by training the fisherman prepares for his work by buying a lot of warm and waterproof clothing the missionary and every Christian is a missionary prepares constantly for mission by reading the Bible carefully and regularly look at verse 18 as you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world Jesus sends the apostles first and us into the world so the push the shove if you like that the father gave to Jesus impelling him into the world is the same push with which Jesus shoves us out of our cozy nests not to bark at the world like a pack of fierce dogs but to tell the world the sweet wonderful news that there is a savior who loves them dearly and who calls them to repent and believe the good news and be saved and then remarkably look at verse 19 and for their sake

I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth now the word for consecration is the same as the word for sanctification so here is Jesus on this evening summoning up his determination to go forward on the following day good friday not to preach good news but to offer the sacrifice which will be the content of the good news so this is the way Jesus prays for his apostles and for all his people keep them in your name let's treasure the name of God and the name of Jesus because that very name becomes our identity and our source of strength keep them from the evil one Jesus never underestimates the power and viciousness of the devil and neither must we and sanctify them in the truth the Bible is the truth and prepares us to be serious missionaries so let's develop an insatiable hunger for the words of

God and let's pray that that hunger will increase amen let's bow our heads and we'll pray our dear Lord Jesus we think of you on that Thursday evening seated around the table with the apostles praying this prayer very nearly 2000 years ago and how wonderfully it has been answered by your father we thank you for your instruction and we pray now for each other that we will be kept in the father's name that we will be kept from the evil one and his fierce power and filled with a great love for the word of God just as the father sent you Lord Jesus into the world send us out into the world again and again so that many others will hear the good news and believe it and be saved we ask it for your name's sake amen amen amen amen

Thank you.