

May 12, 2024

St. John 17:11b-19

Hear What Jesus Prayed for Us

- I. That We Have His Joy
- II. Kept from the Evil One
- III. To Be Sanctified and Sent

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Many years ago I was asked to visit a man in his mid twenties who was dying from a cancer. I vividly recall entering his hospital room and found myself standing in the midst of six sad, weeping people. I introduced myself. They just looked at me. I told them who sent me there. They acknowledged that, but I suspected they preferred I wasn't there. I went to the bedside. The man was very ill, but understood what I was saying. I shared the Gospel, and expressed my hope that he would trust in Jesus. He turned his head the other way. I had a prayer and, afterward, asked if anyone wanted to talk. They shook their heads "no." I told them I would pray for the man and them. They said nothing. I said, "Good-bye" and left.

Whenever I recall that incident I am reminded of Paul's words: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing...(I Cor.1:18a)." And these words, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (I Cor.2:14)." I think to myself, that's where I was. Jesus was a nice man, but, for the most part, the Word was folly. If I had died I would have perished into unending tears, incomprehensible flames, and total darkness. The following words are impossible to digest for those who have invested everything to gain this world.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath...(Eph.3:1-3).

This morning we are to . . .

HEAR WHAT JESUS PRAYED FOR US

I. That We Have His Joy

Jesus prayed,

"Holy Father, keep 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 (vv.11b-13)."

Our text for this morning is part of Jesus *High Priestly Prayer*. I want to call your attention the last words of verse 13: "...these things I speak in the world, that they (the first disciples) may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." What's so important for us to note is that the words Jesus speaks in His *High Priestly Prayer* are also for us. Seven verses later, Jesus prays: "I do not ask for these only (the first disciples), but also for those who will believe in me (that's us) through their word (v.20)." "Their word" is the written Word given to us; the Scripture. And so, Jesus' prayer for us is, "that (we) may have (His) joy fulfilled in (us)."

Here's the tragedy of His joy for us: People sacrifice so much for their desires of this world. And, dear friends, we see where this has taken everything? Eighteen years ago, Dr. Gene Edward Veith wrote: "A dirty little secret in the psychology of human depravity is that the sense of transgression - what C.S. Lewis called 'the tang of evil' - is part of sin's appeal. Ironically as sinful behavior gains social acceptance, those who crave the rush of transgression must seek new taboos to break (*World*, April 8, 2006)." Well, they have found them, with more to come.

His love and willingness to purchase us from the death and hell we deserve moved him to step in and take the punishment for our sin. We are forgiven and have the promise of eternal life. With this in mind, Paul writes:

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col,1:11-14).

And so it is that Jesus prays . . .

II. Kept From the Evil One

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of this world, just as I am not of this 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 (vv. 14-16)."

Does that disturb us...just a little? If the world hated the first disciples it hates us. The world doesn't want to face the fact that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The world doesn't want the Triune God meddling with its agenda.

Our battle with sin is always there with its desires. Please listen to this word of God given to Moses regarding embracing the lies and twisted thinking "the evil one" shoves at the sinful flesh; this Word that applies to the New Testament church today:

"...one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant (the Old Testament Covenant which points to the New Testament Covenant) blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike (that is, the whole land, whether wet or dry will be swept away - everything will be taken away). The Lord will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven (Deut.29:19,20)."

When Jesus prayed "keep them from the evil one" He was not suggesting that Satan would not confront us. He was praying that God will keep us from being eternally consumed by the devil. We must have knowledge of Scripture and be ready to discern the many voices of the day. Paul writes, "...what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor.11:12-14)." In other words, he's very shrewd in his presentations of the Gospel, but there's always that one, subtle glitch that lead to hell.

Peter writes, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (I Pt.5:8,9)." And we remember what Jesus taught, "(Satan) was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him (remember Adam and Eve?). When he lies, he speaks out of his character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn.8:44)." We must have working knowledge of God's Word?

III. To Be Sanctified and Sent

And so, Jesus prays: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world (vv.17,18)."

Christ prays that we are sanctified, set apart, and hold on to the truth of His Word, not the boasting and self glorification of this world. Earlier, Jesus said "...the flesh is of no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life (Jn.7:63b,64)."

God give us ears to hear! God give us strength to confront our moments of self-deception and the many pervasive lies of this world: **the flesh counts for nothing!** Luther wrote:

...(Jesus) asks that God complete the separation between the believer and the world, sanctify the disciples wholly by consecrating them to God alone, through the power of the Word... it is the power of God in the Word which must continue to keep them separated and consecrated. And this sanctification and these fruits of faith are not our work and ability, but God's mercy and divine power.

When Christ prayed for those first disciples He was also praying for us. We hear Him praying that His joy will be ours forever, that we would be kept from being destroyed by Satan; that we would be set apart to be His and witness to the lost. P.E. Kretzmann wrote:

Thus the disciples (the ones then and the ones now) are sanctified and remain sanctified; they remain in the Word of Truth, in and through which the sin which persists in troubling them is forgiven; and they receive strength both to combat the evil and to carry out the will of the Lord for the proclamations of the Word to others (Vol. I, p.506).

Jesus prayed for us; for our eternal joy in Him. God help us to remember this, when the flesh and the evil one start ripping at us - as they do and will.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott