

May 2, 2021

“Hearing Jesus Pray - Part Two”
John 17:6-19

FCF: Wrong priorities and assessment of needs

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Listening to Jesus pray reveals His desires for us.
(magnet) We need to lay hold of this.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

“The Starving Time” of Jamestown was a terrible period during the winter of 1609-1610. There were about 500 residents at the beginning of that winter. But there were only 60 still alive by the time spring came. The reasons are simple. They had chosen a strategically defensible position on the banks of the James River. But it was also an area surrounded by swampland.

In fairness, the settlers had never planned on growing all of their own food. The idea had been to depend on trade with the local tribes which would hold them during the periods between supply ship visits. But tensions with those tribes were such that that idea proved unworkable.

In hindsight, they had failed to make the necessary preparations for a difficult mission. They were holding to the wrong set of priorities because of a wrong assessment of their needs.

We can do the same - following Jesus yet with a wrong assessment of our needs.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 17:6-19](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

“What is a planetary protection officer?” That’s worth knowing, given we have probes on the surface of Mars. A PPO is a NASA specialist in extreme biology with a twofold task. First, protecting Earth from alien life - certifying sample-return missions, making sure safety standards are met and no contamination comes from there to here. Task two goes the other way - protecting Mars from Earth. On the chance there is any life out there, we don’t want to export anything from here to there. That means clean-rooms and the scrubbing of all components that go into building a spacecraft. Again, the idea is protection, the guarding against possible threats.

Protection is the theme of this prayer. The immediate context is Jesus’ prayer for the eleven (the twelve minus Judas). Jesus’ departure is coming - the cross and His ascension, forty days after the resurrection. So He prays that they will be kept, guarded and protected. We see reference to that three times. And many commentators have noted that, while this is a prayer especially for those eleven disciples, it is not exclusively for the eleven disciples. It includes us.

So think with me. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus, our high priest, lives to make intercession for us. Meaning He is praying for us. Praying what? The things we read here. As we said last week, listening to Jesus pray reveals His desires for us. We need to lay hold of this.

So what things? First, what we would be kept from. Second, what we would be kept for.

I. KEPT FROM

First, what we would be kept from. This is Jesus’ prayer for our protection.

A) Corruption from the World

1. Not the fallen world

One front would be corruption from the world. This is not referring to mere physical space.

2. But the rebellious world

In John's Gospel, this is usually a reference not to the seen but unseen - a broken system, bent from its rightful Ruler. Defiant, disobedient, warped, wicked, and hence, the word "worldly".

The disciples have been given to Jesus out of the world. The world stands in contrast to them and hates them because of this. For they are not of the world. And there is pressure to conform.

B) Destruction by the Devil

So Jesus is praying against the corruption of the world. And also destruction by the devil.

1. What is unknown

(**READ John 17:15**) We can't know the source of our hardships and struggles. There are several possibilities - our sin, the sins of others, a broken creation, the Lord's discipline, or Satan's work.

2. What is known

We simply can't know. But we can know that Satan is ever active, moving, intent to work as he is allowed in those things and to be who he is - the Deceiver, Accuser, Tempter, and Destroyer.

With all of this in mind, Jesus prays we would be kept from corruption and destruction.

Illustration:

In fact, that very night, Jesus said some sobering words to Peter (**READ Luke 22:31-32a**). Several years later, Peter wrote these words (**READ 1 Peter 5:8**). We really need to hear this.

Application:

This is why Jesus is praying for protection for us, even now. What should that do in us? Two things. First, it should humble us for we clearly need such prayer and cannot stand without it. But this should also embolden us. For it is Jesus praying this for us. And He will be heard.

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II. KEPT FOR

Jesus prays we would be kept from and then kept for. This is a prayer for our purpose.

A) The Fullness of Joy

1. Explanation

First, Jesus prays that the disciples would know His joy (**READ John 17:13**). This means a deep rooted gladness and rest, a contentedness and anticipation. Jesus had this and wants them to know it as well - His joy within them, the very joy that sustained Him that night in that hour.

2. Possibilities

For what can we have such joy? Reflecting on this, Jerram Barrs lists several things (**READ**):

A deep contentment in knowing the truth; a thankful and glad awareness that we are loved by the Lord; a happy amazement that we are forgiven and accepted by him; a pleased and glad recognition that this is his world; a delight in receiving the good gifts that come to us daily from his hand; an eager anticipation of the bliss of the life to come.

Note that circumstances cannot touch these. No wind can sheer these roots. They are too deep.

B) *The Call to Mission*

So Jesus prays we would be protected and kept for such joy. And for the call to mission. As is often said, we are to be “in the world but not of the world” (READ John 17:14-19).

1. Not of the world

We are not to be of the world. We bear the Father’s name and have a new nature. We have been sanctified in the sense of being set apart. And we are being made new, transformed by the Holy Spirit as He works the word of truth into our lives. We have been and are being sanctified.

2. But in the world

So we are not to be of the world. But that is not an end in and of itself. It is to serve the purpose of our being in the world. We have been sent just as Jesus has been sent. We are not to retreat, to hide behind our fortress walls. Our lives are not to be spent in isolation from the world but in imitation of Jesus and His incarnation. That’s what it means to be in but not of the world.

Put another way, Jesus is praying we would be kept from one set of things - corruption and destruction - that we might be kept for another set of things - His great joy and our mission.

Illustration:

This requires wisdom. Jesus speaks to this balance in the Sermon on the Mount. After the Beatitudes, He then says (READ Matthew 5:13-16). Live this way and this will follow.

Application:

Jesus prayed for these things to be realized in the lives of His followers. Surely, we must pray this way as well. For the fullness of His joy - as we meditate on the many possibilities for that joy we have. For our call to mission - as we ask for both the needed wisdom and courage.

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CONCLUSION:

Napoleon said that “the secret of war lies in the communications” ([Army Code Talkers](#)):

During World Wars I and II, the military needed a quick and reliable means of protecting its radio, telephone and telegraphic messages from enemy intelligence. American Indian tribes had their own languages and dialects that few outside the tribes understood, and many of their languages were not even written down. Their languages were ideal for the task at hand and fortunately, a large number of Indians had joined the armed forces.

In France during World War I, the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division, had a company of Indians who spoke 26 languages and dialects. Two Indian officers were selected to supervise a communications system staffed by 18 Choctaw. The team transmitted messages relating to troop movements and their own tactical plans in their native tongue. Soldiers from other tribes, including the Cheyenne, Comanche, Cherokee, Osage and Yankton Sioux also were enlisted to communicate as code talkers. Previous to their arrival in France, the Germans had broken every American code used, resulting in the deaths of many Soldiers. However, the Germans never broke the Indians’ “code,” and these Soldiers became affectionately known as “code talkers.”

That success carried over into World War II and played a major role in the battle for Iwo Jima.

Friends, as we listen to Jesus pray, there is no code that needs to be broken. We know exactly where we stand. He describes us as having been given to Him by the Father. So, in His eyes, we are a gift. We know where we stand. And we know how He prays for us. Even now.

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