



The Parish of Darfield

All Saints, Darfield and St Michael, Great Houghton

Sunday 16th May 2021

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sermon Supplement—

At our Service of Morning Worship on Sunday 16th May, Carol Hunter interpreted our Lord's Prayers for His disciples just before His arrest on Maundy Thursday.

With her permission we include a transcript to allow a wider audience the opportunity to share her thoughts.

John 17: 6-19

6. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name- the name you gave me- so that they be one as we are one. 12. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

John 17:6-19

Jesus is with His disciples ~ it's Thursday evening and in just a few hours He will be handed over to the authorities and that will be the last the disciples see of Him before He dies on the cross on Friday morning. And Jesus has been explaining to His disciples over a last supper that shortly He will be leaving them after three years of ministry and close friendship.

So, not surprisingly, the disciples are rattled ~ they don't quite get yet all that will happen, but they are deeply disturbed by Jesus talk of leaving and they're asking the obvious question: ~ "How will we survive, how will we keep going?" They are scared.

And it's at this point in the evening that Jesus prays for them ~ a prayer that is recorded for us here in John 17. He prays for Himself, His disciples and for all those who will believe in Him, and He prays specifically about the concerns that are facing the disciples.

Jesus doesn't ask that they might have an easy life, but that God would keep them and would help them fulfil their mission.

He specifically addresses the very fears and concerns that the disciples will have after He's gone. The fact that God will not leave them alone.

That they will be strengthened for the task that God has given them.

And while Jesus is praying specifically here for His immediate disciples, these things apply to us (because if we are followers of Jesus, if we're trusting in Him and what He's done for us, we are disciples too) ~ things that we can take as encouragements and challenges as we seek to live for Jesus in a difficult world.

We are rescued from the world

We are protected in the world

We are sent out for the world

And, God does it all through His word.

'Cause it's through the word of God that we are saved, by the word of God that we are protected and with the word of God that we are sent.

So first then, we are rescued from the world.

Jesus prays to His Father and says in verse 6:

"I have revealed You to those whom You gave me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to me and they have obeyed Your word"

Let's first of all be clear what Jesus means by the world. In John's gospel, the world doesn't mean planet earth with all its God created beauty. It means everything and everyone that is opposed to God. It's human beings in opposition to God, seeking to run their lives without reference to the God who made us.

And as such this world is heading for disaster.

But the remarkable news is that in spite of all the world's sin, John tells us that God so loved this mucked up rebellious world that He sent His One and only Son Jesus Christ to die so that we might not face judgment and eternal separation from God, but that we might know God personally and be right with Him and enjoy life with Him forever.

So that means there are only two types of person on this planet.

There are those who belong to the world, in other words those living in opposition to God. And there are those who belong to God, who God has rescued and brought out of the world, spiritually speaking. And time and time again in John's gospel, Jesus makes that clear.

There is no third way. You are either for God ~ or against Him.

Two ways to live ~ with or without God in Jesus.

As He prays, He shows His disciples that they have been rescued from the world, from life without God and this He says has happened by God's initiative - Verse 6

"I have revealed You to those whom You gave me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to me and they have obeyed Your word"

And in verse 9: "I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given me, for they are Yours"

Jesus is saying something here which is quite amazing. He's saying that we are actually a love gift of God the Father to His Son Jesus.

Jesus says that God gave Jesus His people.

Christians are God's people which He has entrusted to His Son.

Now I've met people (and I'm sure you have) who've thought that they're God's gift to women, but have you ever thought of yourself as God's gift to Jesus?

If you are a Christian, then you are God's gift to His Son. Jesus says it quite clearly ~ that we disciples of Jesus are God's

"I'm not praying for the world" says Jesus "but for those You have given me. For they are Yours"

God's people whom God has lovingly taken the initiative to rescue.

He's taken them out of the world.

In His love God has taken the initiative to rescue them from a future without Him.

He's given them a new life and a new hope.

So when we go through times of great pressure and difficulty, when it seems our faith is being swamped by so many pressures all around us, let's allow this truth to strengthen and stabilise us ~ that God takes the initiative to rescue us and that He loves us so much.

To think you are unloved is one of the most debilitating things a person can suffer.

When Princess Diana gave her very candid Panorama interview back in 1995, she said:

"The greatest disease of all is the disease of being unloved"

They were very sad and tragic words.

But the Christian can know that there is One who loves us far more deeply and passionately than we can ever imagine.

God has set His special love upon His people.

You belong to Him and nothing can separate you from His love.

He went to the most extraordinary lengths to bring you back, by allowing His only son to be sent into the world to die on a gruesome cross for you.

Here's where the word comes into it. Look at verses 6, 7 & 8:

"You gave them to me and they have obeyed Your word. Now they know that everything You have given me comes from You. For I gave them the words You gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that you sent me"

It's through God's word we're saved.

See how Jesus describes these disciples. They've obeyed God's word in verse 6. They accepted the word in verse 7. They believed that God sent Jesus in verse 8.

To become a Christian you have to accept the message about Jesus ~ the word of God.

Christians have moved from being members of the world to being members of the people of God by trusting the word of God.

And that's why the gospel, the good news about Jesus remains central in all we do here in All Saints and in Houghton and in Ardsley and Thurnscoe.

Because that is the way God rescues people.

He does it through His word about Jesus, the gospel.

We're rescued from the world, by God's loving initiative, through the word of God revealed in Jesus.

And we are protected in the world in verses 11 – 16, and this is what Jesus specifically prays for His disciples. (vs 15) *"My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it"*

Let's first notice Jesus says that He does not take His disciples out of the world.

Though Jesus is going to be with His Father, His disciples are still in the world.

We may be rescued from the world opposed to God in its rebellion and sin, but that does not mean that we are cocooned in some holy huddle totally removed from a desperately needy world around us, who need to hear the gospel.

"My prayer is not that You take them out of the world" He says.

As Christians we're meant to be rubbing shoulders with non-Christians in the world around us.

If we weren't, then surely Jesus would just whip us straight to heaven when we became Christians.

No, although we do not belong to the world ~ although our citizenship is in heaven, we are in the midst of a world in rebellion against God.

So Jesus prays for protection for us in the world.

Why do we need protecting? Because we face hostility from the world and the devil says verse 14

"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one"

We will have trouble from the world around us ~ it's getting harder to be a Christian ~ taking a stand for Biblical truth can make us very unpopular with a world that doesn't want to hear about Jesus

And it's not just the world we receive trouble from, it's also the devil.

'Cause behind the world's antagonism stands the devil himself, who is deeply opposed to God's purposes and God's people.

Yes, he is defeated through the cross, but in his death throes he can be dangerous.

According to Peter, he's like a prowling lion, and we need protection.

So how are we protected? Vs 11 *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name, the name You gave me, so that they may be one as we are one"*

Jesus prays that His disciples would be protected by the power of God's name, the name God gave to Jesus.

In the Bible, people's names reveal people's characters.

Jacob means deceiver, which is exactly what he was.

Abraham means the father of many nations, which is exactly what he was.

When it comes to God's name, God's name reveals His character.

When God revealed His name to Moses He said that His name was I AM.

It showed that God was the eternal one, the unchanging one.

So when Jesus says here that God will protect us by the power of His name, he means not some mystical aura that will surround us, but rather the power associated with His character, the very character that we see in Jesus (as Jesus says in verse 6 – I have revealed You (or literally Your name)).

Jesus has revealed the very character of God.

It's by God's word that we are kept.

And we'll be protected by that truth.

God will keep us in the truth about Himself

Here I find myself reminded how vitally important for us to keep we rooted in the bible, and prayer (not as a formular of words, but an ongoing conversation and relationship with God/Jesus that helps to inform and shape everything that we are and everything that we do).

Again this is something we need to remember when we're going through tough times.

When we're under pressure from circumstances, temptation, or stress or doubt, whatever hardships we're facing, we can be assured that God will keep us as we trust in Him.

We can be assured because Jesus has prayed for it and He has not lost one.

(Do you notice that in verse 12 ~ not one has been lost)

Yes there was Judas, but he showed by his action that he was not one of God's people.

This does not mean that we will always be immune from suffering and attack.

Being a Christian will not mean we are kept in a bubble safe from all harm.

No - we're in the world.

But God will keep us.

He will never let us go.

He will protect us and keep us in His love.

And we need to keep trusting in His word, where we have been shown His character and works, ultimately in Jesus (The Word made flesh).

It may be that some of us are feeling totally overwhelmed at the moment, feeling like we're are on the very edge. Don't be discouraged and don't be down hearted.

For if we belong to Jesus, then Jesus prays that God will protect us by the Word or God, His name.

And He will do it ~ we're protected in the world.

And finally, we are sent out for the world. See what Jesus says in verse 17:

"Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified"

The word sanctify means to declare holy or to set something apart.

When I was growing up, we would have a whole set of crockery and cutlery and glasses and table-cloths which my mother would use for very special guests. Such guests were very rare because the crockery was very expensive. So only the poshest people (and prospective husbands) would be treated to such finery.

So we could say that the crockery and all the rest was sanctified for that purpose ~ it was set aside for a purpose.

And Jesus is saying that He has set apart His people for a purpose.

He prays to God to sanctify them by the truth, that is the word of God.

We are declared holy and washed clean by God through the word, and the truth of the gospel.

But holiness is not just about moral purity ~ it's also about purpose.

We've been entrusted with a task to do as God's holy people.

We are set apart for His purposes.

And verse 18 says that those purposes are to be sent into the world.

God has rescued us from the world and we are sent back into the world with the word of God.

Jesus set Himself apart so that He could save us.

That's what He means when He says that He sanctified Himself.

He didn't need to be cleaned up and declared holy 'cause He was perfect.

But He set Himself apart so that He could sanctify us, make us clean and set us apart.

And then He sends us into the world.

We have a gospel to proclaim!

May Jesus' prayer be balm to our souls as we take encouragement from the fact that we are:

Rescued from the world through the word of God.

Protected in the world by the word of God.

Sent out for the world with the word of God.

May God give us strength to be the kind of people He longs for us to be!

Amen