

Series: Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

Sermon Text: John 17:9-19

Key Word: Disciples

(*The accounts in chapters 14-17 are only found in John)

We think sermons should be less of a “*final word*” and more of a “*discussion starter*. ” So, we’re testing this question/answer format hoping to inspire curiosity and conversations about God. As we get into our third sermon on John 17, it may help us to ponder this quote from Professor NT Wright who said, “*So far, the prayer may seem far too exalted for us to join in. But, as we ’ll see in the next two sections, the relationship between Jesus and the father, though it seems extraordinarily close and trusting, isn’t designed to be exclusive. We are invited to join in.*” Let’s jump right into today’s...

BIG IDEA: Jesus prayed for His first disciples.

Question #1: Who is this prayer about? In *verses 9-10* Jesus said, “*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.*” This prayer is so exclusive and special that it’s easy to miss how it indirectly blesses a wider audience. Before we can bask in 5 chapters proving Christ’s unique love for His church, John forces us to wade through 12 chapters of Jesus declaring and displaying God’s love for the world (cf. John 3:16) Likewise, before we can apply *verses 9-19* to US, we must wade through an exclusive prayer for the pioneers charged with carrying on the mission of God’s Son. Conflict can be heard in Christ’s voice as He prayed--He wanted to return to the glory He left to become human, but that also meant leaving His beloved team in danger. This leads to...

Question #2: How were His disciples supposed to carry on? In *verses 11-13* Jesus said, “*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 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.*” Jesus, the Good Shepherd had *guarded* (kept) the 12 and lost only 1. Those odds aren’t bad, but it hurt Jesus to lose any. **Judas** proves what happens when faith is more “head” than “heart.” The guy walked with Jesus but never surrendered His will to Jesus, which made Him an easy target for Satan’s influence. Such is [the nature of local churches](#)...much like OT Israel, we’re a [mixed bag](#) (box of chocolates)--some of us believe with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength while others are

still test driving Jesus. Christ set the tone for how church culture should be--one where “*Judas types*” receive as much time as they want to figure Jesus out. We never force “*decisions*” because only God can change hearts. God’s people don’t unfriend others over disagreements like the world does. We don’t view this as a game of “*them out there*” and “*us in here*.*”* In fact, our categories look more like this...The World: All ideas that oppose God’s ways (not the planet); The True Church: Authentic believers on earth and in heaven (a.k.a. the universal/catholic church, the body of Christ); and The Local Church: Believers and non-believers assembled in specific locations cared for by certain under shepherds. You may recall Jesus said, in the end, He’ll have to filter “*sheep from goats*” and “*wheat from tares*.*”* Until then, churches should be safe places for sinners like ***Judas***, which means they’ll be risky and dangerous places for the faithful. This leads to...

Question #3: How does Jesus protect us as we take risks? The answer is in *verse 11*’s request for His “*Holy Father* (to) *keep them in your name...that they may be one, as we are one*”, and in *verse 13*’s request for “*them to be filled with my joy*.*”* When we think of God protecting us, we often think of the “*Armor of God*”, but here Jesus prayed for 2 other secret weapons: ***Unity*** and ***Joy***. Possessing these grace gifts enables our supernatural ability to “*get along*” and love others without demanding full agreement, conformity, or sinless perfection. In Christ, ***unity*** and ***joy*** are never conditional—they are grace gifts designed to keep people “*in the same room*” or “*abiding closely to Jesus and His Word*” over a lifetime of working stuff out. We may revisit this next time, but first let’s think about...

Question #4: How does sanctification help? In *verse 14* Jesus said, “*I’ve 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.*” In this verse we see the positive and negative impacts of God’s ***Word***, referred to as “*the truth*” in *verse 17*. Positively, it somehow changes our status to “*no longer of this world*” (sets us apart, as we’ll see in a moment). Negatively, it causes the world to ***hate us***. Our knee jerk reaction might be to minimize ***truth*** for the sake of “*getting along*” yet doing so disregards the primary means by which we’re being made new, different, and more like God. Our Creator’s ***Words*** define our identity and purposes. The world says, “*Nobody has the right to tell me what to do with my body*”, but God says, “*I created you and know what’s best to keep you healthy, whole, and thriving.*” Ironically, the ***Word*** that divides also ***protects*** and ***unites***. In *verses 15-19* Jesus said, “*I don’t ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They’re not of* (don’t belong to) ***the world*** (system), *just as I am not of* (don’t belong to) ***the world*** (system). *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* As

you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." There's so much to say here, but here's the main thing I just can't get over...if GOD-IN-A-HUMAN-BODY had to repeatedly be **consecrated in (sanctified, set apart by) truth**, then instead of viewing **truth** as a club for beating people, maybe it's best viewed as a "hot tub" for us all to soak in while God slowly heals and restores us to His image and purposes.

What does all this mean for our church? It means wrestling with some challenging questions like:

- 1) What's the right balance of wanting to be in Heaven with God and focusing on our earthly mission (i.e., How can we experience graces like unity and joy without isolating from the world we're called into?)?
- 2) What concessions must be made to remain in relationships with sinners and faithful to truth (i.e., How can we uphold truth in ways where sinners don't mind being around us?)?
- Along the same lines, 3) Since God is meant to be known and experienced, how can our Sunday services rightly serve "academics" and "feelers"? (i.e., Might unity in Christ depend on discussing truth AND the degree to which we seek God together in worship, repentance, prayer, etc.?)?

Let's pray: Father, this prayer is such a generous gift to us! I love how Scripture describes the words and works of Jesus and how we get to know Him as He interacted with other people. However, this prayer helps us know the character of Jesus in a deeper, richer way. I mean, nothing is like hearing someone converse with the person they love and respect most. Nothing compares to hearing about how things we're between the two of you before Jesus chose to leave that glory to indwell a human body. This prayer causes so much conflict for me...it speaks of how we're safe and secure but also how the mission involves danger and loss. It makes me crave being with you in Heaven, but also inspires me to be a better representative of you here, so more people can be with us up there. I guess, like Jesus, the best thing for me to ask is that you'd "sanctify us in your truth, so that others may also be set apart by it." Amen.

Let's sing: "Only by your love for me in Jesus"

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Being equal opportunity offenders:** "Our {words} must be the Truth, not just true. The war on Truth is almost lost. All sides of these debates have resorted to propaganda, hysteria, and half-truths to win arguments. But our faith is founded on the idea that there is such a thing as Truth. We are not the originators of that truth, but we are its bearers. We believe that God has made the world in such a way that it is comprehensible and logical. Our {words} should make this clear to our hearers. We have to demonstrate how the Bible creates a comprehensive

worldview that works, is consistent across time and culture, and makes the best sense of the world around us. We have to hold up the idea that the Bible is the final arbiter of Truth, for all of us. This means that we have to be subject to the Truth of the Bible first. It means that, as pastors, we have to lead the way for our people by subjecting ourselves to Truth that we don't like; truth that we wish weren't true but is anyway. It means we have to preach ideas that are unpopular to both our congregation and our world. We have to routinely offend the Left and the Right, no matter how you define those terms. The Bible is an equal opportunity offender, and no one should escape its offense, least of all you." Pastor Justin Anderson

- **The son of destruction (perdition):** "Only the 'son of perdition' had succumbed to Satan. The phrase 'son of perdition' or 'son of destruction' is a Semitic expression for one who is destined for damnation. Of course, Jesus was referring to Judas, whom He called 'a devil' (6:70), who welcomed the idea of Satan to betray the Lord (13:2), and into whom Satan entered (13:27). Judas had not been 'lost,' because he never truly believed. He merely occupied a place among the faithful, a circumstance predicted by prophecy and utilized by God to accomplish His purposes (cf. Ps. 41:9; John 13:18)." Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Satan's evil influence:** "Jesus also prays for their protection, particularly from Satan (17:15b). He recognizes the power of evil for he lost one of his disciples to Satan (13:27; cf. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:12), and now he understands that representing God in this world is an invitation to genuine battle... 'We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one' (1 John 5:19)." Professor Gary Burge
- **Predestination isn't the point here:** Jesus made an interesting SIDE COMMENT about the Scriptures foretelling Judas' betrayal which leads some to wonder, "Did God override his ability to decide for himself?" Can God be sovereign while humans make truly free choices? We shouldn't let such mysteries bog us down too much, and if I'm being honest, no answers have settled this mystery for me. More importantly, it's not the point here; rather, it's that Jesus knew how it felt to lose a follower to Satan's influence and was praying for the protection of the others. To frame the idea another way...when loved ones walk away from Jesus, do simple answers satisfy your hurt, fears, and doubts? Do you say, "*Oh, well, it was meant to be*" and never grieve their loss again? I see Jesus begging His Father for a guarantee of protection help as they (and us) carry on with the mission. When loved ones are lured away by Satan's evil influence, as Judas was, what keeps US from despairing and falling away too? OR, on the flip side, what drew the other 11 back to Jesus after they also forsook Him? Shouldn't that be our focus here?
- **Truth shapes and supports our mission:** "This word, this divine revelation, will become essential equipment in their testimony and survival in the world...The church has the truth, not a set of opinions, and the world should sense the strength of its conviction...His disciples...remain in the world. This is the environment not just of unbelief and cynicism, but of abject hostility (15:18–27). The mission of the church, the task of Jesus' followers, is to challenge this world (16:8–11), to draw out those who love the truth and bring them into the flock... 'For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith' (1 John 5:4). This empowering, this confidence, is the source of their joy (17:13b; cf. 16:22)." Professor Gary Burge
- **The tension:** "They are distinct from 'the world'. Insofar as they are the new, cleansed people they have become through Jesus' call and teaching... 'The world', remember, in this gospel

doesn't mean simply the physical universe as we know it. It means the world insofar as it has rebelled against God, has chosen darkness rather than light, and has organized itself to oppose the creator... 'the world' in this dark sense is not the place, the force, the sphere, that determines who the disciples most truly are. What they now need, therefore, is to be kept from being pulled back into 'the world' with all its wickedness and rebellion." Professor NT Wright

- **The power of prayer:** "Prayer causes us to look to God for success rather than to the world. Jesus acknowledged in His prayer that the desires of the world are opposed to those of the Father (17:9, 11). The world is not a friend to grace; therefore, we should expect resistance, not help in proclaiming the good news. Prayer helps us remember whom to thank for success, even when the world appears to be cooperative." Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Our need to be sanctified (set apart for God's purposes):** "Jesus' third concern has to do with holiness (17:17–19)... This Greek word refers to something made holy, but the means to achieving this holiness is through separation. God is God by virtue of his difference, his transcendence, his otherness with respect to all creation. Anything (a mountain, a temple shovel, a priestly garment, a people) that belongs to him or serves his purposes should consider itself 'holy' and set apart from common use. It refers to a life that is so aligned with God that it reflects God's passions completely (for good, against evil). Such a person can be considered 'sanctified,' holy, attached to God's purposes and presence. In this case Jesus understands that a complete attachment to the truth discovered in God's Word will be the means of achieving this holiness (17:17b)." Professor Gary Burge
- **Our Creator knows what's best for us:** Sin causes humans to confuse identity with activity, however God says these things should be rooted in His image. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ offers to restore our identity by making us new by grace through faith. As we try to walk that out, God's Word becomes a constant source of cleansing and renewal. We are NOT the sum of what we do. Christ has freed us to act from our created identity. We maintain our sanity the way Jesus did...by letting God's truth continually wash away the alluring lies--by being continually sanctified (set apart) by the truth and through repeated prayers, consecrating (devoting) ourselves to the one who loves us so much that He stepped into our world to deal with everything preventing us from cherishing His.
- **Being heavenly minded AND doing earthly good:** "This spiritual anticipation of return to heaven is precisely the orientation Jesus desires for us (17:24). Jesus not only is preparing a place for us (14:3) but is eager for us to join him there, to see his glory, to witness the tremendous love the Father has for him (and us). We are invited, then, to reflect on what such a vision means in our own spiritual lives. How will it change our living and our praying if we fill our imaginations with such a vision? How will it change our investment in the world (while not denying our commitment to the world, 17:18) if we, like Jesus, are genuinely en route to the place of God's glory? How will such a vision change our view of suffering? Of mission? Of ethics and evangelism? Of worldliness?" Professor Gary Burge
- **The challenge of being different:** "Christians are 'in' the world while not being 'of' the world. How do we delineate this? What guidelines do we make? How do we live as if we do not belong to the world yet avoid the problem of sectarianism, or a secluded, sheltered life that cannot reach the world any longer?" Professor Gary Burge
- **Why it's good to listen to prayers:** "Jesus is not talking to his disciples, he is talking to God. We are invited to listen in. But if this is private prayer, if this is Jesus' personal conversation

with God, what use is it to me? We need to see such prayers as teaching vehicles. They are meant to be overheard so that disciples can study them and learn...In Ezra 9:6–15, Ezra offers to God a moving prayer of sorrow and repentance, and upon hearing his words the people are filled with grief (10:1). Ezra knows that this prayer not only moved the Israelites but will move any who might read his account...A similar role for prayers appears in Acts, where Luke records a lengthy prayer uttered by the church (Acts 4:24–30)." Professor Gary Burge

Quotes related to the larger context:

- **Full life:** John said he wrote this letter to help us find "*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*" Chapters 1-12 contain 3 years of real-life stories where people met Jesus during His public ministry. Chapters 13-21 slow way down as Jesus began to reveal His (God's) heart to His disciples in the week leading up to the cross and resurrection.
- **The bigger picture:** *Chapters 13-17* form a unit, which is often called His "*Farewell Address.*" **13:1** begins, "*Jesus knew his hour had come to depart out of this world*", and **17:1** begins, "*Father, the hour has come*". The middle 3 chapters (**14-16**) are about another Comforter. The bullseye of this unit is the parable of the true vine, making it the central theme of the entire unit (**13-17**) "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me*" (John 15:4). Why such a huge section on comfort and abiding in Christ? Well, because the disciples were becoming uneasy as Jesus ramped up the cryptic talk about His departure and death. Anxiety is evident in their questions (**13:36, 14:5, 8, 22**), and Jesus affirms His purpose for this address in **chapter 16:1**, "*I've said all these things to keep you from falling away*"; **16:6**, "*Because I've said these things, sorrow has filled your heart*"; **16:25**, "*I've said these things in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father*"; and **16:33**, "*I've said these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*" This unit of Scripture gives the church her marching orders (i.e., *to glorify God by loving one another like Jesus loves us*) and is filled with comfort for when the world wears us down and we lose sight of the goal.
- **Farewell Addresses:** "Academic studies have compared Jesus' Farewell Discourse with those of dying teachers and leaders in antiquity. Jacob's last words in Genesis 49 are typical of this form, as is Moses' farewell in Deuteronomy 31–34. Not only does Moses identify his successor, but he gives teachings that must be recorded and a final blessing. Apocryphal Jewish literature from Jesus' day offers more tantalizing parallels. In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs each of the twelve sons of Jacob give farewell instructions, blessings, and prayers. In the Testament of Moses, we overhear Moses' final words to Israel and Joshua. We even possess 'testaments' of Solomon, Job, Isaac, and Adam³⁰—fictionalized farewells imagined by Jewish authors between 100 B.C. and A.D. 200. Jewish testaments imagine the dying (or departing) person surrounded by his most intimate friends and family. Standard literary elements generally appear. For instance, they always show a concern for the comfort and encouragement of those left behind. Often there is an exhortation to obey the law, and a deposit of writings is left behind.³¹ In some cases, the departing person passes his 'spirit' to his followers or successor. Moses and Elijah do this respectively for Joshua and Elisha (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9; 2 Kings 2:9–14). In the farewell of Jesus many of these elements appear. He

encourages his disciples and comforts them (John 14:1). He also urges them to be obedient (13:34; 15:12), and from John's perspective the 'literary deposit' Jesus leaves behind is the Fourth Gospel itself. Moreover, Jesus promises that his Spirit will indwell and empower his followers following his death (14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:3, 13). In other words, we have in John 13–17 all of the elements of a Jewish farewell." Professor Gary Burge

- **Change of focus in Chapter 13:** "This section signals a change of focus as Jesus turns to 'his own' and shows them his love...In the end there is no explanation of the cross other than the love of God. There can be no other, for we certainly do not deserve it and can never earn it." Pastor Bruce Milne
- **The heart of God:** "Here, in five chapters (13-17), in only 155 verses, and in less than four thousand words we are given what the Puritan writer Thomas Goodwin called “a window into Christ’s heart.”" Professor Sinclair Ferguson
- **Book Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, "***Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***" Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “*zōē*”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it's “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”

Other Articles/Songs/Videos:

Direction for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the discussion around 30mins. Go for a single, not a home run.
3. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparation questions for John 17:9-19.

- As you read this section, which words stand out as you and why? What are some takeaways you get from this part of the prayer where Jesus prayed for His first disciples?

Application questions from John 17:9-19.

- What's the right balance of wanting to be in Heaven with God and focusing on our earthly mission (i.e., How can we experience graces like unity and joy without isolating from the world we're called into?)?
- What concessions must be made to remain in relationships with sinners and faithful to truth (i.e., How can we uphold truth in ways where sinners don't mind being around us?)?
- Since God is meant to be known and experienced, how can our Sunday services rightly serve "academics" and "feelers"? (i.e., Might unity in Christ depend on discussing truth AND the degree to which we seek God together in worship, repentance, prayer, etc.?)?

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>