Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – John 17:11b-19 – 7th Sunday of Easter

Today the Holy Spirit lets us listen in on one of Jesus' prayers. And as we listen in on Jesus' prayer we hear that Jesus is praying *for us*! Jesus is asking his Father for two things for us: He's asking that God's Word would protect us and that God's Word would sanctify us. Jesus, your Great High Priest, prays for you! He prays that God's Word would *protect* you and that God's word would *sanctify* you.

First, Jesus prays that God's Word would *protect* you. Jesus says, **"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name" (John 17:9).** How does a name protect someone? Armor protects people. Bodyguards protect people. But a name? How can a name protect someone? God's name is God's titles and everything that God has revealed about himself. In fact, God's *name* is equivalent to God's *Word*. God's word is a very powerful thing. God's word created the universe. God said "Let there be light and there was light." Jesus calmed the storm with his powerful word. He raised Lazarus from the dead with his powerful word. God's word is the most powerful thing in the universe. And so it's no wonder that Jesus prays, "Protect them by the power of your name."[1]

God's name was put on us when we were baptized in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God's name or his word protects us from all kinds of things. God's Word protects us from the devil. Jesus prays, **"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15).** God's word protects us from the devil's temptations. Remember when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert? Jesus responded to each of those temptations by quoting God's Word. And we can resist the devil's temptations by quoting God's powerful word, too. The Bible says, **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).** We can resist him by using God's word. When the devil tempts us to sin, we can simply say, "God's word says that's wrong. And I want to obey God's word because God's word says that God loves me and that I am his child."

God's word protects us from feelings of guilt and despair. When we are feeling guilty about some sin, we can simply say, **"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).** Or **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).** With God's word you have the greatest protection that you could possibly have. Jesus, our Great High Priest, prays that God's Word would Protect Us.

And Jesus Our Great High Priest also prays that God's Word would *Sanctify* Us. Jesus prays, **"Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17).** To "sanctify" means "to make holy" or "to set apart as holy." Now there are three senses in which we are sanctified. We are sanctified in the sense that our sins are forgiven. We are sanctified in the sense that we live a holy life. And we are sanctified in the sense that we are set apart from the unbelieving world.

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[1] I owe this insight to a discussion of this passage with the St. John's school faculty during morning faculty devotion.

First, we are sanctified in the sense that our sins are forgiven. Jesus, our Great High Priest, made the sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Jesus says, **"For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" (John 17:19).** Jesus sanctified himself, he set himself apart as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. **"For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" (John 17:19).** Just like the priests in the Old Testament offered sacrifices, Jesus our Great High Priest, offered himself as the sacrifice to forgive all of our sins. Jesus set himself apart as the sacrifice for our sins and he also gave us his own holiness as a gift. So now through faith in Jesus we are sanctified. We are holy in the eyes of God. So we are sanctified in the sense that our sins are forgiven.

Jesus also prays that we be sanctified in the sense that we lead a holy life. The Bible says, **"God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).** We want to live a holy life because God is our Father. And Jesus calls him "Holy Father." God is holy and so we want to live a holy life. God claimed us as his own children in Baptism and so as God's beloved children we want to live a holy life. It's Mother's Day today and all children love their parents and want to be like their parents. Well, God our Father is holy and we children of God and want to be holy like he is holy. So Jesus prays that we be sanctified in the sense that our sins are forgiven and in the sense that we live a holy life. Finally Jesus prays that we be sanctified in the sense that we be set apart from the unbelieving world.

Believers in Jesus are also sanctified, or set apart, from the unbelieving world. Jesus says, **"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" (John 17:14).** What sets us apart from the unbelieving world is God's word which is the truth. In the world there are a lot of lies and falsehood and so Jesus prays, **"Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17).** God's word sets us apart from all of the falsehoods of the unbelieving world because God's word is truth.

But if the unbelieving world has so much falsehood then we might expect Jesus to pray that we be taken out of the world. But that's exactly what Jesus says he is *not* praying for. Jesus says, **"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world" (John 17:15).** Yes, there is a lot of falsehood in the world. But that's exactly why Christians need to be in the world, to testify to the truth. God loves the world and so he sends us into the world to testify to the truth. Jesus says, **"Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (17:17-18).** This is how much Jesus loves the world. He prays that we would be set apart by the truth so that we can proclaim the truth of his Word to the world.

So Jesus' prayer for us today really focuses on God's Word. Jesus prays that God's Word would protect us. **"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name." (17:11)** And Jesus prays that God's word would sanctify us. **"Sanctify the by the truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17)** On the front cover of your bulletin today you see two people holding Bibles. Jesus prays that God's Word would protect us and sanctify us. So let's say "Amen" to Jesus' prayer that God's word would protect us and sanctify us. Let's say "Amen" to Jesus' prayer by believing in and clinging to God's powerful word which protects us and sanctifies us. Amen.