

FPFWC Christian Development



Jesus and Calls in His Ministry

January 2021

Winter Quarter

January 23, 2020

Lesson #4 – Called For the World’s Belief

SCRIPTURE TEXT – John 17:14-24

Key Verse - Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.—John 17:20

ICE BREAKERS –

1. *What does your life-style indicate about your relationship to the world?*
2. *How is the Father’s relationship with the Son an example for us to follow in our relationships with other Christians?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

Matthew 26:36–44; Mark 14:32–40; and Luke 22:39–46 give brief accounts of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Their focus is on His agonized petition that He might be spared the crucifixion. John’s Gospel, by contrast, doesn’t include that prayer. Instead, it features Jesus’ lengthy and detailed prayer for His disciples.

That prayer comes at the end of a lengthy section known as the Farewell Address (John 13–17), the longest recorded speech by Jesus. After washing the disciples’ feet and dismissing Judas into the night (13:1–30), Jesus told His confused followers that He would not be with them much longer (13:33). He gave them a “new commandment” to be followed after His departure from the world: “As I have loved you, ... also love one another” (13:34).

The remainder of Jesus’ goodbye speech builds on this theme by explaining how God would express His love for the disciples (examples: John 14:8–21; 15:26–27; 16:5–15), why “the world” would hate them (example: 15:18–25), what it means for Christians to love one another, and why it was essential to do so (17:20–24; see commentary below).

In the opening section of the prayer (John 17:1–13), Jesus reflected on His pending death and reminded the Father that the Son’s mission would continue through the disciples. Therefore Jesus asked His heavenly Father to equip the disciples in certain ways so they could continue His work. The form and content of that equipping is the subject of today’s text.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

17:14–16. The communication to the disciples is now complete (**I have given them Your word**). Jesus reminded the Father that **the world has hated** His disciples because of their identity with their Savior. But instead of asking the Father to **take them out of the world** (v. 15), Christ asked Him to **keep them from the evil one** (vv. 11, 15). This phrase could be translated, “keep them from evil.” But Johannine usage strongly favors “evil one,” i.e., Satan (1Jn 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18,

19). Paul also mentioned this protection (1Co 10:13; 2Co 12:9). Verse 16 repeats v. 14b, showing that our new relationship to Christ is the foundation for His request for our protection. For more on v. 15a and its implications for Rv 3:10, see the comment on Rv 3:10.

17:17. Sanctify means to “set apart” for God’s use which, according to v. 18, is the mission to the world. All sin involves being deceived in some regard. Sanctification or growth in holiness (Rm 6:22; 1Th 4:3) includes the process of replacing lies with truth. God’s **word is** the source of this **truth**. Scripture is not just “true,” as if there were another standard to which the Bible rightly conforms. All Scripture is “God-breathed” (see comment on 2Tm 3:16) and therefore is the source of truth, just as Jesus is truth (14:6).

17:18–19. Sanctification (v. 17) is not isolation from but mission to the world. Just as the Father **sent Christ into the world**, so too Christ has sent His disciples **into the world** (cf. 15:6; Mt 28:18–20). Jesus prayed, **For their sakes I sanctify Myself**, signifying how He has set apart Himself to the Father’s will (i.e., to go to the cross in fulfillment of Jesus’ mission). There is nothing commanded of the Christian, even being **sanctified in truth**, that Christ has not first modeled.

17:20–21. Christ prayed for **those also who** would **believe in Him through** the disciples’ **word**—their preaching and writing of Scripture. His prayer was specifically for the unity of all believers (**that they may all be one**; v. 21; cf. v. 11). The prayer is answered foremost through Spirit baptism in which every believer is placed into the one body of Christ (cf. 10:16; 1Co 12:13; Rm 12:5; Gl 3:28; Eph 4:4). Elsewhere believers are commanded to live out this integral unity (13:34–35; Rm 12:16; 1Co 1:10).

17:22–23. Jesus prayed for a unity parallel to that between the Father and the Son (**that they may be one, just as We are one**). The full answer to Jesus’ prayer will not come until heaven, when all believers are **perfected in unity** (v. 23). But to maintain that His prayer has not been answered is to suggest that He has failed in His mission or that His prayer was not in accordance with the Father’s sovereign will. It is better to argue that there is fundamental unity among all believers in the key points of the Christian faith (for example, the authority of Scripture; salvation by grace through faith; the deity of Christ; the triunity of God; the resurrection of Christ, and the second coming), while the details are clearly disputed. The problem arises, however, when believers become divisive about the secondary issues. In order to reach **the world**, Christians are to practice their positional unity in Christ (see comments on vv. 11, 21). There is no more shocking truth about believers than that God has **loved them even as** He has **loved** His own Son.

17:24. For the fifth time, Jesus addressed God as **Father**. For **they ... whom You have given Me** (cf. v. 2). As a direct result of Jesus’ prayer, every believer will **be with** Christ in heaven **where** He will be (cf. 14:2–3).

LESSON NUGGET – If we bring division to the body of Christ, we are working directly contrary to the prayer of Jesus, and we are blowing our witness to the world. The witness of the unity of the church is a powerful evidence of who God is, as He brings together diverse people from different backgrounds and makes

them one. Division in the body drives people away. They can have that anywhere.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary