

Bible Study Guide: Week of 5-10-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 17:6-19

[Jesus prayed:] ⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

[Jesus prayed:] ⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

This passage occurs during Jesus’ farewell discourse in John’s gospel. It is a prayer that scholars have dubbed Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer.” He is praying to God, giving thanks for his disciples and asking for God’s protection and guidance to be upon them. You may begin to feel like Jesus is talking in circles here. There are lots of phrases that seem circular, such as “mine are yours and yours are mine” and “you gave the words to me and I have given the words to them.” Jesus is not being redundant here, but rather is making clear that the unity and closeness that the Father and Son have shared since the beginning are now shared with the disciples, as well.

⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Jesus knows that he is about to return to the Father—he will be crucified, die, be buried, be raised on the third day, and will ascend to the Father. For this reason, he says “I am no longer in the world...and I am coming to you.” In light of this fact, along with the fact that his disciples will still remain in the world, Jesus prays for the Father to protect the disciples “in your name that you have given me.” This is more than a prayer for mere protection from enemies or threats (although this is included); rather, Jesus is praying that they be preserved “in the name of the Father.” This word for “protect” can mean to guard, maintain, or keep intact. To do something “in someone’s name” means to do something in accordance with that person’s will or essence. Therefore, Jesus is asking the Father to preserve the disciples in God’s will. We might say, “keep them firm in God’s will and ways.” Jesus further hints at his true intention by ending this request with “that they may be one as we are one”—again, this is more than protection from outside threats; it is that the disciples are to be preserved and held fast in unity with each other and with God.

¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Here, Jesus refers to Judas Iscariot as “the one destined to be lost,” showing the contrast to his prayer in the preceding verses. The opposite of being protected in God’s will and being kept in unity with God is to go one’s own way as Judas did. It is not clear which scripture Jesus is referring to here, although he says something similar to this phrase (“I have lost none of those whom you gave to me”) three times in the Gospel of John.

¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

Here Jesus highlights the dichotomy between “the world” and his Kingdom—the place to which he is about to come. This reaches its height in Jesus’ trial before Pilate in which Pilate questions whether Jesus is a king. Jesus, in reply, states that his “kingdom is not of this world.” The term “world” in John’s gospel represents a creation (specifically human beings) hostile toward God and opposed to God’s kingdom. Here Jesus reminds the disciples that they are different from “the world.” Yet even though Jesus states that the disciples are not “of the world,” he is clear that they must remain in the world and he asks God to protect them as they do so.

¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

Once again, we flash forward to Jesus’ conversation with Pontius Pilate in which Jesus claims that he speaks the truth and that everyone who belongs to the truth listens to his voice. Pilate responds, “What is truth?” Well, Jesus has already answered that—here in this passage. God’s word is truth, Jesus claims. That same true voice that has called the disciples to follow now continues to speak, this time from the mouths of the disciples—they are the ones who will now be sent into the world, just as Jesus was sent.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Jesus says that the disciples have kept his word. What does it mean to you to keep God’s word?**
- 2. What do you think it means to be one just as Jesus and the Father are one?**
- 3. What do you think it means to be hated by the world? How are we to live in the world while the world “hates” us?**