

Seventh Sunday of Easter

JESUS PRAYS FOR US

John 17:6-19

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Analysis by Cathy Lessmann

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.”

DIAGNOSIS: Without a Prayer

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Standing in the Need of Prayer*

Jesus knows that soon he will be leaving his disciples in a dicey standing-in-the-need-of-prayer situation; that they will be left to bear the brunt of all the animosity and unbelief previously aimed at him. He knows they (and future disciples) will be entangled and harassed on account of being left “in the world”—that the world will hate them (v. 14). He knows that “the evil one” will be on constant attack, working to divide them, always enticing them to desert him.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Identity Crises*

Jesus knows that because of their predicament, the disciples will be dismayed and doubting, asking existential questions (as we all still do!) such as: “Why are we suffering so much?” “Does God really love us?” “What is truth?” The temptation will be great, in the midst of such doubt, to succumb to the allure of other gods which promise prosperity, power, prestige, or simply a decrease of suffering. Jesus knows such doubt reveals a deep-down identity crisis—not so much about “whom” one is, but “whose” one is.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Without a Prayer*

It’s not surprising that Jesus talks about “belonging” at least seven times (vv. 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16) because what’s at stake here is the issue of “ownership.” Simply put: Whatever a person puts trust in becomes one’s god (Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Creed). Put differently, one is “owned” by that god. This would not be all that bad if such gods could deliver on their promises to give life, love, and goodness. But

they can't and never will. In fact, they end up sucking the life out of those whom they possess, leaving them without a prayer. But we have the inside scoop that God Almighty grieves over this, for he has "lost" (v. 12) those who were originally his.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus Prays for Us

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Is Sanctified*

Even without disciples realizing how desperately in need of outside help they are, help comes their way as Jesus intercedes (prays) for them/us. His words translate into a live-action rescue mission in which he becomes the answer to his own prayer! By what he refers to as his sanctification (v. 19), and we know as his death and resurrection, he clinches a cosmos takeover, the redemption of the lost. As if he is making out his last will and testament, he now entrusts all his hard-earned "belongings" to his Father, saying "they are yours" (vv. 6, 9, 10).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Disciples Are Sanctified*

As Jesus returns to the heavenly Father, he reassures the disciples that he is their link to the Father, that when they trust him (Jesus), they will "know" and "belong" to his heavenly Father as well. This belonging will fill them with great joy (v. 13), and they will "know the truth" (v. 17).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Protected*

Finally, Jesus prays that his disciples be "protected in your name" (v. 12). Knowing "whose" they are will change everything for fearful disciples: Because they will gain confidence to withstand the trials and tribulations that come their way, even (maybe especially) in the midst of suffering. They will gladly be stand-ins for Jesus and go "into the world" (v. 18) giving him glory (v. 10). And like him, they will employ their lives as prayers of intercession for other lost ones.