

Seventh Sunday of Easter

THE PATRON, THE BROKER, AND THE CLIENT

John 17:1-11

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Analysis by Norbert E. Kabelitz

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

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. ¹¹ And 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."

Note: Regarding the title: See Frederick Danker on the Greco-Roman patronage system in Benefactor, pp. 318-319 and 487-493,

Clayton Publishing. House, St. Louis, Mo. 1982; and Brian Stoffregan's Easter 7 notes of 5-12-02 regarding Malina and Rohrbaugh's Social -Science Commentary on the Gospel of John, regarding the Patron, the Broker and the Client metaphor.

DIAGNOSIS: Addiction to the World

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Dominated by Worldly Values*

The phrase “those whom you gave me from the world” (v. 6), suggests a before and after circumstance: “from” a former (alien) allegiance to a new allegiance (Jesus). In John the word “world” implies an alien dominion and lifestyle devoid of God’s kind of life. To be “worldly” suggests being driven by the interests and hunger of bodily needs without reference to the life and purpose for which we were made. At the center are the desires and demands of the ego (the “I” within “sIn”) curved in on itself. It is the demand of the “flesh” that it be served. “It is the construction upon life that human achievement and possessions are the purpose of living and the source of happiness.” John calls this the “desire of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of riches. All of that comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:16).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Corrupted by World Values*

Being “in the world” (v. 11) suggests being in a dangerous environment worthy of divine protection, and subject to misplaced confidence. It is in the world where the affirmation is made that the individual has the power within to become worthy and important. It regards life as something that can be measured. It seizes advantage and rank through power and possessions. It discounts God. It does not count on God for

one's true life and happiness. The primal characteristic of such a world is unbelief, a dynamic rejection of God and of God's things, and carries in its wake a host of maladies and infected fruit. Unbelief simply does not care about God. God is outlawed. Unbelief's central question is "Who is Lord?"

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Condemned As "Children of Wrath"

Jesus does not pray on "behalf of the world" (v. 11). God has not abandoned or lost interest in the well being of the world (see John 3:16!), but the situation of the disciples (or Church) is one where the world's hostility against the Gospel draws clear lines between the Church and the world. The disdain of the world gets expressed in ridicule, distortion and caricatures of God, Christ, and the Church found in present-day pop culture. It is exemplified by the Da Vinci Code where creeds are "understood as irrelevant, repressive clamping downs by villainous stupefiers" (M. Marty, Sightings, 6/7/04). Jesus means that those who preach and live the Gospel will be hated and derided and despised (John 15:18-25; 17:14-16). The Church (disciples) will experience resistance even as did Christ (1 John 3:13). But a worse alternative awaits those who choose not to resist: "by following the course of this world in which we live, we were dead through trespasses and sins, and "by nature children of wrath, like everyone else" (Eph. 2:1-3). We become prime candidates subject to God's judgment (see 1 John 5:6 and Co. 3:6)

PROGNOSIS: A Redeemed Community of Faith in the World

Note: God as "benefactor" (patron) gives to Jesus' people (vv. 2, 6, 9) glory (v. 5), authority (v. 2), the work (v. 4), everything (v. 7), the words (v. 8), God's name (v. 11). All these are "brokered" by Jesus who gives to people eternal life

(v. 2) and God's words (v. 8).

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Graced by Patronage

In and through God's gifts, brokered by Christ as mediator, authority is conveyed to give eternal life, maintained by the "words" given. Eternal life is essentially a quality of life which incorporates God's life and purpose. Christ finishes the work given Him through the Cross ("the hour has come," v. 1). In brokering this for the people, the Father elevates the reputation (glory) of the Son and restores His primeval fame as coworker for the good of the world. The Father is benefactor, who makes us His own through Jesus as mediator. The Benefactor via the Broker invests us with the value, worth, reputation of the Broker (v. 10) connecting with the Father, who as Benefactor "made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Trusting the Broker

In this redemptive transaction we have received the truth (v. 8). God's resources as shared and mediated (v. 8): we are called by the Gospel. In this way the client too is glorified, through faith in the one who brokers the Father's gifts on our behalf.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – Faithful Clients

While yet in the world, we—who are called by the Gospel—get prayed for, receive protection and "oneness" (v. 11, read "faithfulness"). [See Crossings.org Thursday Theology #281, Oct. 30, 2003, regarding "that they may all be one."] Knowing what God is up to in Jesus, we seek to fulfill our calling through the Father's name (v. 11). The oneness we share is not some mathematical unity, but faithfulness to who we now are, belonging to both Christ and the Father, sent into the world as Jesus himself was (v. 18), no longer addicted to the values of the world, and witnesses to this transaction for the sake of the

world the that world may believe (v. 21).

(See also rich resources in Richard Caemmerer's Church in the World, Ch. 2 and 3, Concordia Publishing House, 1949.)