

Seventh Sunday of Easter

YOUR WORD IS TRUTH

John 17:6-19

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Analysis by Carolyn Schneider

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: From the World

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *To Be in the World*

As he prays Jesus reveals that he is worried about his friends because they are and will remain in the world as he leaves it. What is worrisome about the world? If one looks at what Jesus prays about, one can deduce that the world is the place where people get lost and, wandering, fall into the traps of evil, where they become separated from God’s name and from each other. People are deceived in the world, where everything is false and nothing is the truth. It sounds like our world. In the world of consumerism, the tendrils of marketing creep into every cranny of our lives, inserting suspicion into every relationship: Is this for money or is this for real? Even the “image” or “name” we project has been developed and sold to us, especially to those of us who are young and vulnerable. In the world of politics, we have to ask whether the spin we hear is the truth or a mask for the hidden agenda of a well-funded lobby group. Perhaps, instead, it is the sugar-coating needed for the ones with decision-making power to make their will sound good to the powerless who will be affected negatively in reality. Indeed, the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, a man of the world, is so confused that we hear him ask Jesus later in John’s gospel, “What is truth?” (John 18:39).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *To Be from the World*

It is not only Pilate who is confused. One of Jesus’ twelve closest friends, Judas, has become lost in the world, so Jesus is praying out of painful personal experience for his remaining

friends so that they might not get lost, too. Those who, like Judas, are lost, are said to be “from the world”; they are children of this deceptive world who have never absorbed the truth. To Pilate’s question, “What is truth?”, Jesus gives an answer here, speaking to the God he calls Father: “Your word is truth” (v. 17). This truthful word is that the world’s works are evil and so the truth is unwelcome in the world (John 7:7). Jesus warns his friends that those who speak God’s truthful word will be hated because they are not “from the world.” He says that out of painful personal experience, too.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *To Share the World’s End*

When Jesus says, “Your word is truth,” he means the same thing as he meant earlier in John’s gospel when he said, “I am...the truth” (John 14:6), since this gospel begins “in the beginning” when “the Word was with God and the Word was God,” and moves to Jesus’ time, when “the Word [meaning Jesus himself] became flesh and lived among us,...full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14). Now Jesus is about to be killed and he knows it. He is entrusting his friends to God in his prayer. It is like a last will and testament, naming God the executor and guardian of all that Jesus has, including his own life and person and those of his friends, which all came from God and were God’s to give in the first place. “We are one,” Jesus tells his divine Parent (John 17:11). Jesus must pray that the Father will keep his friends because when the world, from then until now, kills the Word that creates life (John 1:4), what is left for it? It must end in death.

PROGNOSIS: From the Word

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *To Share the World’s Beginning*

Then they both end in death: the world and the Word. But

precisely here is where John's good news begins. Just as the creation of the world is described in Genesis like this: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void..." (Genesis 1:1-2), so Jesus has become for his friends a new origin, a new genesis. They have received and kept God's Word (that is, Jesus himself), so that now they, too, are from God because they are from Jesus, not from the world. When Jesus rises from the tomb, this new life out of death is opened to all creation because Jesus sends his friends into the world just as his Father sent him into the world. They go with his peace and his own Spirit, or breath (John 20:21-22), the very one that "swept over the waters" in the beginning (Genesis 1:2).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *To Be from the Word*

Jesus exudes so much love for his friends as he prays and commends them so highly to God. Where would the vulnerable "Word made flesh" be without the friends who receive him, hard as that was, and is, at times? Just as Jesus keeps them in the name of the Father, so they also keep him, God's Word (v. 6). They know the truth, Jesus says to his Father, "and they have believed that you sent me" (v. 8). As Jesus' friends become his own people, so he becomes their own person, so much so that he says, "I have been glorified in them" (v. 10). Jesus is so happy with his friends that he wants them to know it and to be just as pleased as he is. He makes this prayer to his divine Parent out loud in their hearing so that his joy might be fulfilled in them, and so that they might remember it when they face the hatred of the world.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *To Be in the World*
Jesus and his friends are so bound up in each other that when Jesus sets himself apart as Truth, he does it so that the friends who are from him and attached to him might also be made

holy as truth in the world. Thus, we are in the world but not from it, if we are from Jesus. God keeps us together in his name so that we may keep one another, "so that they may be one," as Jesus puts it (v. 11). It is a great gift of support. Together, we join Jesus in his prayer, as the gospel of Matthew records it: "Our Father in heaven, ...Do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:9, 13). Meanwhile, we are sent to do truth in the world, and where the Truth is, there is life and a new creation. The community that acts and sounds like Jesus is a solid alternative to the deceptions that are from the world.