

Seventh Sunday of Easter

“Belonging, in Christ – in God”

John 17:6-19

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Analysis by Michael Hoy

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: "In the world"

Step 1-Initial Diagnosis : *At Risk*

"The world has hated them because they do not belong to the world," Jesus says in his prayer (v, 14). More than the world being at risk, the initial problem here is that his disciples may be at risk in the world, and precisely because of their identification with him. Jesus is fully aware of the risk. He even knows it to be part and parcel of their connection with him. Yet how public are they, the disciples (even we, the disciples), willing to be?

Step 2-Advanced Diagnosis : *Belonging to the world*

"They do not belong to the world," Jesus says. Ah, but that is the danger when life is at risk. There comes a compromise, here and there, on our belonging. We turn to something a little less risking maybe even because we believe that it makes life seem better – for us, at least. Witness the one who betrayed for a price that "the world" has to offer (12:4-6; 13:21-30, 17:12; 18:2-3). Witness also Peter's denial while taking in the warm and safe fires that "the world" has to offer (13:36-38; 18:10-11; 15-18, 25-27). But that is the wrong way to belong. In fact, it is not belonging. It is what Jesus called "belonging to the world" (15:19).

Step 3-Final Diagnosis : *Destined*

It's not as if there is no accountability for all this denial and false sense of belonging. There is the final accounting of God, to whom all belong, even in denial. And God does the work of where all are destined. There is no fate, no evil, apart also from God's own judgment. With only the world's possibilities to

sustain them, there is little to live on, let alone glow. There is only the destiny of being “lost” (v. 12).

PROGNOSIS: “In Christ”

Step 4-Initial Prognosis : *Sanctified*

Yet consider that it is Jesus himself who comes seeking and saving the lost. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.” (3:16) It is this very One who comes now to the defense of his own – all his own – to pray for them, for their protection. Protection from what? Protection not only from the world’s hostility and hatred, but from the judgment of evil and condemnation. (v. 15) And this he bears in petition to the Father, as if by right. “All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.” (v. 10) They are those now “given” to him (v. 6), that they may be “sanctified in truth” (v. 19). The “holying” truth comes, as does the “glorifying,” by way of the cross and resurrection of Christ, by which he claims ownership of the lost.

Step 5-Advanced Prognosis : *Belonging to Christ*

See all that Christ blesses his own in his glorifying-that-sanctifies! They get to know God by name (v. 6). They get to keep his Word by faith and believing (vss. 7-8). They are protected in his love (v. 12). And from all of Christ’s benefits, their joy is complete (v. 13). They/we belong to Christ and in Christ.

Step 6-Final Prognosis : *Given to Risk*

What that empowers is the risk of confessing this belonging, even in the midst of the hostility of the world. Jesus says, “I am not asking you to take them out of the world,” (v. 15) and that is because we have a place in this world – Jesus’ place. Faith empowers us not to leave the world, but to risk beyond conformity, to embrace the challenges, and precisely for the very reason for which the Son was himself “given” – for the sake

of the whole world, which God so dearly loves. Because of the One who makes us holy, we risk in his name; even the risk that may seem blasphemous to “the world,” in God’s name.