



John 17:13–19

13 'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify

them by the truth; your word is truth.
18 As you sent me into the world, I
have sent them into the world. 19
For them I sanctify myself, that they
too may be truly sanctified.

Reflection

John 17. Jesus' high priestly prayer; intimate communion and communication between Father and Son the night before Jesus dies on behalf of all believers. A window into the very heart of God and God's heart for his people. Today God's heart is for our joy, mission and holiness. Yesterday it was for our protection and relationships; that we would be constantly growing in our knowledge of him, especially his Fatherhood. In that way, we would keep growing in oneness and as

we'll read today, be flooded with his joy in our hearts, be missional and be holy. Today's passage begins at John 17:13,

13 'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they

too may be truly sanctified.

This rich passage teaches us about joy, mission and holiness.

Firstly, joy. Surely the pursuit of happiness – experientially, relationally and metaphysically – is the fundamental pursuit of life, once our basic needs of safety, food and shelter have been met. And so, to experience joy – to experience the perpetual state of settled, unshakeable and overflowing happiness – must sit amongst the highest attainments of the human condition. All religions aim at it, but it is only found in Christ. Are you joyful? In Christ and in Christian community we certainly have every reason to be – but we must appropriate that joy. Jesus' intention as he prays for his followers in John 17 is that his

joy might flood our hearts. As we live life in his Father's name, as we are constantly kept aware of and grow in our knowledge of God, and especially his Fatherhood, and as we are unified as a community of believers around this knowledge, Jesus' prayer and promise is that our hearts will be flooded with the full measure of his joy within us. As Romans 5:5 says, our

hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

So firstly, Jesus prays for our joy, his joy, Jesus' joy, poured out in full measure in our hearts as we live life in his Father's name, unified in our diversity as his adopted children worshipping and depend-

ing on our Father together. But secondly, Jesus prays for mission.

Of course the world is going to be hostile to our joy. Of course we aren't going to fit it when we follow God's word over theirs. If the world despised and rejected the one that we are modelling ourselves on, can we really expect to be treated any differently? Jesus continues in verse 14 stating the same,

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

What is our response to the inevitable hostility of the world around us? Not withdrawal, but mission. Joyful mission. Read-

ing from verse 15,

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

In the long history of the Christian church there has been the constant temptation to withdraw from the world. Asceticism, monasticism, breakaway sects and communities in every era seeking to shut out the world around us, protect our children and ourselves from the sinful temptations

and outright persecution from the culture that surrounds us. But Jesus Christ was no monk. Night and day he walked amongst people from every walk of life: Jew, Gentile, slave, free, from the upper echelons of Judaism to a sexually promiscuous Samaritan woman, from Roman rulers to turncoat tax collectors Jesus Christ did not withdraw from the world for a moment. He came to earth on mission, he died on the mission field, and as a result the gospel has gone out to all nations.

Joy, mission; and finally, Jesus prays for holiness. As we experience the fullness of his joy in our hearts and in our communities living life in his Father's name and as we continue Jesus' mission on earth Jesus prays that we might be sanctified, or made holy. Verse 17,

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Verse 19,

19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Not isolation or assimilation; but holiness. We're not to withdraw from the world but equally we're not to assimilate with the world and become indistinguishable from those around us. Instead Jesus prays that we might grow in holiness while on mission in our world. And how does this happen? Verse 17,

by the truth; your word is truth.

We are sanctified (which means made increasingly holy) by the inner workings of the Holy Spirit as he applies God's word to our hearts and minds and lives. As we give ourselves over to his work, as we live life in our Father's name, aspiring with our whole heart to grow up and be just like Dad, as we meditate over his word, his guiding, his precepts, and his character the Holy Spirit grants us the desire of our hearts and we become like him. We are sanctified, made holy, and are increasingly set apart from the world so that we can be most effective in mission to our world.

Think

Joy. Mission. Holiness. There is so much to savour and ponder in our text today. Are you joyful? Are you fully appropriating the

joys of the Christian faith? Or are you rich but living poor. Are you a missionary like Jesus? Or have you withdrawn from the world. Take a stock take of your friends – are they all Christian? What you get up to on nights and weekends – mainly church activities? Have you somehow, unwittingly and over time withdrawn from the world? Or on the flipside, are you so comfortable in the world that you have become almost unrecognisable as a Christian? A compromise here and accommodation there, and then all of a sudden instead of looking at you and seeing Jesus your colleagues at work look at you and see themselves?

Then there is holiness, the most important pursuit of the Christian life. J C Ryle,

‘A true Christian is one who has not

only peace of conscience, but war within. He may be known by his warfare as well as by his peace.'

Do you have war within as you battle for holiness? Are you giving yourself over to the painful work of the Holy Spirit ever refining and refining and renovating your character into the image of Jesus? Heb 12:14,

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Not isolation, not assimilation; but holiness in mission because

without holiness no one will see the

Lord.

Pray

Pray today for an ever-deepening relationship with our Father in your life and in your church. Pray that as a result your local gathering of the family of God would experience his love and unity and the fullness of his joy. Pray today for mission – not isolation, not assimilation but Christ glorifying, God honouring, Spirit empowered mission to your friends, family, work colleagues, neighbours, casual acquaintances and strangers at the shops. And pray for holiness, God's word unleashed in your life and applied to your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, moving in you and radically changing you to the blessing of your every relationship and to the glory

God. Please pray these things for me too.
In Jesus name. Amen.