



John 17:10–12

10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the

one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Reflection

We're in the upper room in a house in Jerusalem the night before Jesus dies. The whole city is teeming with religious pilgrims come to celebrate the Passover festival. This evening every household is sharing the Passover meal together, every dinner table an occasion of intimate, family joy, the eating of lamb with bitter herbs in remembrance of the glories of Israel's past and the faithfulness of their God who had sacrificed a lamb so that his people might be 'passed over' by the angel of death and set free from slavery in Egypt all those years ago.

In this particular room, the Lamb of God is preparing for the event that the original Passover points towards, relegating it to a mere foreshadowing and faint echo of what is about to take place on a universal scale. More than a thousand years later Jerusalem is still celebrating the first Passover and exodus from slavery in Egypt, but for all eternity heaven will sing about the glory of what will take place in the next few hours. The Lamb of God is about to be slain for the sins of the world. Billions of people are about to 'pass over' from death to eternal life, eternally redeemed by the blood of the lamb from slavery to Satan, sin and death. Outside this little room there is great merriment; inside, great mourning, because the disciples' friend and Lord is about to die.

The curtain is closing on Jesus' ministry. Just one final act, one last scene, that will leave heaven and earth speechless, an ending that no-one anticipates, so terribly beautiful, so impossibly perfect, the kind of climax that will one day be realised by all of humankind to be the climax and centrepiece of all human history. And this closing scene is set in motion in John's gospel with Jesus' high priestly prayer, a full chapter, John 17, of prayer between Jesus and his Father which by the power of the Holy Spirit has been preserved for us forever in Scripture. This prayer is holy ground. It is the prayer that Jesus prays for himself, his disciples and the church on the night before his self-sacrifice for the sins of the world. Not only is it a model for our prayer life, like the Lord's prayer, but also it provides us with a unique window into the

very heart of our Trinitarian God, as the Son of God prays to God the Father carried along by the Spirit of God. In today's passage, Jesus continues to pray for his disciples, reading from John 17:10–12,

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In these words, Jesus, perfectly one with his Father, prays two things for his disciples. He prays firstly for their protection from the world and the devil, and secondly for unity, that they may be one Jesus and his Father are one. Let's deal with each of these in turn.

Firstly, Jesus prays for their protection from the world and the devil. John's gospel has had much to say about the world in which we live, and most of it very dim. We're surrounded by darkness, not light. The kingdom of this world is presided over by the prince of this world, the devil, which means that it is radically and irreconcilably different to the kingdom of God. The world and the devil are daunting enemies, traps and snares have been set everywhere in

our culture designed to lure us unwittingly down the wide and well trafficked road to destruction. Jesus cites Judas, in verse 12, 'the one doomed to destruction' as evidence of Satan's reach. If it can happen to one of Jesus very own disciples, who'd shared three years of intimate life with the Lord of the Universe, who'd cast out miracles in Jesus' name and heard 100 New Testament's full of teaching from his lips, then the danger is extremely real and desperately urgent for us all. Humankind's most urgent need is to be protected from the world and the devil, to be snatched back out of their hands from the brink of eternal punishment, and Christians too need daily protection from the evil surrounding us. Where does this protection come from? In verse 11 Jesus prays,

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name,

We're protected by the power of God's name. To ancient Jews a person's name represented a person's whole personality, their character. God's name is basically his revealed character. Jesus prays that his followers will be protected by the power of God's name, that they might draw strength and freedom from God's revealed character in Scripture and in the person of his Son, strength that will carry them through Satan's temptations and power to defeat what the world is about to throw at them. We recall Jesus' recent promise in John 14:13, God's name is powerful, Jesus' name is powerful,

13 And I will do whatever you ask in

my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Secondly, Jesus prays for unity. And this unity flows out of living in God's name. See verse 11 again,

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

It says much about the importance of unity amongst believers that this is Jesus' first prayer for us after his prayer that we might be delivered from Satan and the world. And just as our protection comes through God's name – through understanding, meditating over and desiring the attributes and character of God – this

too is ultimately how we are unified as his people. A W Tozer provides this illustration:

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified.

Think & Pray

Spend some time to close today meditating over the dangers of the devil and our world. Consider your work place culture, our steady diet of entertainment and media, the expectations of our peers, and the financial goals and pathways that have become the expectation and norm in our city. Jesus prays urgently for protection from influences like these. Are you awake to the dangers or are you resting easy in their arms? What does God's revealed character teach us in terms of how to safely navigate these dangers?

And then spend some time thinking about unity. The famous composer Felix Mendelssohn said, 'The essence of the beautiful is unity in variety.' The opposite is also

true. There is the deepest ugliness in division and discord when there should be unity. Think broken marriages, family court and dysfunctional churches. The answer to disunity according to this passage isn't extended times of fellowship and social activities at church, it's every member increasingly taking on the character of God and living wholeheartedly for his name. Ultimately that is what will unify us husband and wives, families and church families; unity in variety gathered as one in Jesus name, and there can be nothing more beautiful.

Pray today for this vision, for protection and peace and unity in Jesus' name.