

Seventh Sunday after Easter  
John 17:11b-19 (Series B)  
“You are Protected for His Purpose”  
May 24, 2009

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Heavenly Father and from Jesus Christ, our Risen and Ascended Lord and Savior. Amen.

11b- [Jesus said] Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12-While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13- But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have joy fulfilled in themselves. **14- I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I not of the world.** 15- **I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.** 16- **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** 17- **Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.** 18- **As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.** 19- **And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.**

Why do you get up every morning of the week? Wouldn't you rather sleep in late every chance you get? That would be nice, but each day you have reason to get up. You have to get ready, eat breakfast, and either go to work or get your children ready for school. Everyone's days are different from others, but we all have something in common, and that is to fulfill our duties, whatever they might be.

Sometimes, after facing the daily grind of doing the same thing day after day, we start to question what in the world the purpose is. We all have our own unique set of God-given responsibilities. That's true, but is there anything that ties it all together for one purpose?

I look out onto this congregation and I see one purpose among all of us. We are God's adopted children. We've been washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, forgiven, renewed. And, we are living forever. As such (and we certainly are), we've been given a purpose. We've been given a purpose to live for our Heavenly Father who, through His Son, Jesus Christ, made us as such.

That purpose is in complete harmony with the purpose God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer, die, rise, and ascend- that the lost might be saved. Verse 18 of our Gospel reading Jesus prays to His Father, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

This Gospel reading records the prayer Jesus prayed right before His betrayal. He prays this prayer within the earshot of His disciples. He prays that they be protected from evil. Jesus knew that for the same reason the world hated Him, the world would also hate them. Jesus does not pray His Father take them from the world, or even keep them from temptation and sorrow. But, Jesus prays His Father guard them from the power of satan, from their own sin, discouragement and despair.

These men needed to remain. They had a purpose now and that was to go into the world and proclaim forgiveness of sins. He knew the world would hate them because the message they were to carry. A very special purpose had become their number one purpose in life. Yes, these disciples had other responsibilities in life, we’re sure, but the fulfillment of all responsibilities in their lives now centered on that special, wonderful purpose Jesus had given them.

Right after our Gospel reading ends Jesus goes on in prayer. He prays, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Not only does Jesus pray protection for these apostles but also for each and every single one of us. And, we need it. The rest of this sermon covers what we need protection from. How we receive that protection (what exactly that protection is), and the very purpose of that protection.

We need protection. Protection from what exactly?

I read a short article lately. The title was “Goodness’ Sake.” The article discussed how the American Humanist Association, last Christmas season, paid to have signs posted on public buses Washington D.C. What was on the signs echoed the popular holiday song, “you better watch out, you better not cry,...etc.” The signs said, “Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness’ sake.” During the same season buses in London carried signs with, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”

Make you mad? Such things certainly can. And, perhaps that’s the purpose of signs like that, maybe not. But, whatever the purpose behind such signs like that, is it the kind of thing we need protection from? There is a lot of this stuff going on in the world, even right at this moment. There always has been, and this will continue. Let us always remember, those behind such efforts- Jesus suffered and died for them too. And, they, just as much as anyone else, need to hear their sins are forgiven.

But, is this the sort of thing we need protection from? Before we go after those behind things like that, there are some important things we need to consider. Under point one of the sermon outline there are three things listed that we need protection from. The first is our own sinfulness.

We remember what both Adam and Eve did when God came to them and confronted them about their first sin. They each pointed a finger at someone else. It’s easy to point the finger at either satan, or someone standing nearby.

Friends, we have been washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb of God. Our sins are forgiven. We just heard Absolution just moments ago. It’s a sure thing, it’s God’s promise. Yet, being the sinful people we are, it does

happen that we do not always believe that it's true. Maybe there's a particular sin you just can't believe is forgivable, or there are some sins you just don't want to confess. Maybe, you have thoughts that there just has to be something more to it than Jesus' simple Words, "your sins are forgiven." Maybe there is some slight, small thing you have to do or feel for it to come true and be complete, which is not true at all. Jesus says "your sins are forgiven," your sins are forgiven.

The temptation to not believe is discouraging. And, not only do we have our old sinful nature nagging at us but the world around fuels those temptations in our own hearts. We can become discouraged to the point where we say, "ah, forget it, I'll never get this faith thing right." And, what is there, on our part, to get right? Jesus got it right. He fulfilled everything in our behalf. He suffered and died in our behalf. And, now we hear God's promise that our sins are completely, not partially, completely forgiven. What matters is that Jesus got it right, and He did, He always does.

We need to be protected from despair. We look out into the world and see all that's going on. Easy to believe it's worse now for us than it was for the disciples, or for any believers who lived before them. In a sinful world, it's always tough for believers. Yet, God has spoken! He has claimed you as His own with His own Word. He says it, it is most certainly true.

How exactly does this protection happen? What is the means of protection God provides? It's been stated several times already, His Word. Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in your name,..." There is power in His name and Jesus knew this. What His name indicates to us is His power and who He is to us. He is the Almighty. He is the Savior. He is the One, the only One, who speaks, and it is so!

When we hear the name ‘Jesus Christ,’ when we hear the name ‘Holy Father’ we may rest assured it is the One who loves us, has mercy on us, and gives us His Word of forgiveness. “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me,…” Jesus prayed. Jesus once proclaimed of Himself, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This authority Jesus claims as His own is the authority to claim sinners forgiven and to be His own. When we hear His name, rest assured it is He who has forgiven us and wants to continue doing so. All with His Words, “your sins are forgiven.”

There is certainly no question we are forgiven. Certain we are forgiven, we are certain we are going to Heaven. Being certain of this we are certain that Jesus’ prayer is being answered again and again that the Father protect us from our own sinfulness, discouragement, and despair brought about by not believing His sure Word of Promise.

Part three, as you see on the outline, what is the purpose of such protection? He loves us! He wants each of us to belong to His Kingdom, and that is why He has already brought each of us into His Kingdom. The purpose God sent His Son into the world is so that could be. That is why Jesus became flesh, why He was tempted, why He allowed Himself to be mocked, why He suffered and died, so God could claim us as His own. That was His plan. That was His purpose.

This was for the entire world, not just for us here, but all people of all time. That being God’s purpose, to save the lost, Jesus sent His disciples to get that very Word of Promise out into the world. And, where that Word of Promise, that Word, “your sins are forgiven,” is preached, is proclaimed, is taught, and shared, there you find forgiveness of sins happening. Amazing

what His Word does. It is not just something that is spoken; it is a Word that does something, something amazing.

God' purpose through Jesus Christ to save the lost is a purpose that goes through us. We have been made one single Body, the Body of Christ, with One single message of the forgiveness of sins. Just as God's name indicates who He is, a gracious and merciful God, does our name, the Body of Christ, indicates who we are to the world, the deliverer of the Word.

So we remain set apart and together. That Word of forgiveness brought each of us into the Body of Christ. That very same Word keeps us there. Now we have fellowship with Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ, we have fellowship with God the Father, our Creator. What we all have in common is what we have received. That is what fellowship between each of us means- we have all received the same promise. Protected and guarded from old sinful self. Protected and guarded from a world that hates us. The means of protection- the Word of Promise, "Your sins are forgiven!"

God's purpose, our purpose, is the purpose God sent His Son into the flesh, so the lost might be saved. The life you have, it is not your own, it was purchased, and it belongs to Jesus Christ who purchased it with His blood. The very purpose Jesus was sent in to the world to do for all is the very purpose we are sent out into the world to deliver and share.

With that purpose in mind we consider those who hate our Lord, who hate us for the message we carry. We consider them for the same reason Jesus considered them while dying on the Cross for them- that their sins may also be forgiven. They deserve nothing different from what we deserve. And, God wants them to have just what we ourselves have received.

We are protected for His Purpose. We are secure and assured with His Word of Promise. There are others out there that so much need what we have.

Why do we get up each morning, go to work, and do the things we do everyday? Why are we here this morning (evening)? Why do we raise our children the way we do? God works through us. We pass along God's promise to our children, so they too can pass it along to their children and to anyone they come into contact with in their lives. Why do we have the functions, the committees, the boards in our congregation that we have? All so His Word of Promise, starting here at Trinity, gets spread throughout the world.

His Purpose in our lives is one single purpose- to save the lost. We are One unified Body, with the very same purpose. Now we pray, "may all our doings in life be according to that purpose." Friends, for each and everyone of us,...there is someone out there who needs to hear what we have heard so often- "Your sins are forgiven." Amen.