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Lord's Day Morning  
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#95

## “The Extent of Prayer: God’s World”

John 17:18-20

### Introduction

Jesus has prayed for some wonderful things for us in this high priestly prayer at the end of His life. It’s a wonderful prayer, not only because of what it tells us of Jesus’ heart for us as He headed to the cross, but also because it gives an insight into what He continues to pray for us as He intercedes even now at the right hand of the Father.

We have every confidence that what Jesus asks the Father the Father will grant. That ought to bring you great encouragement as you learn that He is praying that you would bring great glory to God in and through your life . . . that He is praying for your joy . . . that He’s asking the Father to keep you from evil and to cause you to grow in holiness . . . that He’s praying you would be a man or woman of truth.

All of these things are desires in the soul of every true believer. If only we could have these things in fullness right now. But there is only one way that could happen and that way is exactly the opposite thing that Jesus prays for. You see, the fullness of each of these things will be realized when we end our earthly journey and are ushered into the presence of God in heaven. But Jesus has prayed, *I do not ask that you take them out of the world.* Why, we may ask, could Jesus not save us and take us to the glorious perfection of life in heaven?

The answer to that question is our subject today. For as Jesus continues to pray, He prays for our mission on earth. As we will discover this

morning, we have been sent into the world by Christ, *just as* Jesus was sent into the world by His Father. We may rather be in heaven, or we may rather be distracted by our own amusements while here on earth, but the responsibility for evangelism and missions has been given to us by Jesus Christ.

### [John 17:13-26]

Who have you prayed for this week to know Christ?  
Who have you talked to this week about Jesus?  
What plans have you made recently to take the gospel to those without Christ?  
Do you sense any personal responsibility for the evangelization of the world?

If we are to believe the Word of Jesus here, then He has sent us into the world in the same way that the Father sent Him. So what exactly does that mean? What exactly is the comparison?

Certainly we recognize that there are some significant differences.

- Jesus was God who became a man. Not only was He perfect, but He filled a unique position as a federal head. That is, He stood to represent other people. All of the elect were tied to Him in the same way Adam was a federal head representing all of the human race. As Adam fell so did all mankind. As Jesus lived victoriously, so do all His elect.
- As part of that work, Jesus also died for others. He took the sin of His people upon Himself at Calvary. And with that sin, He took the wrath and penalty of God for us.
- Jesus' ministry was filled with the power and authority of God. He knew what was

in the hearts of men. He controlled the elements of creation to demonstrate His identity.

So in all these ways, Jesus' being sent by the Father is different than how Jesus has sent us. We do none of these things. We are not sent as Saviors, Redeemers, or 2<sup>nd</sup> Adams representing other men. But still, Jesus is clear. *As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*

And by the way, as an important side note, if you wonder if verse 18 is directed solely to the apostles or if we are included as well, I would argue that all of us are included. Verse 20 indicates that Jesus is praying for future Christians. In His Great Commission to these apostles in Matthew 28:20 He says they are to be *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* II Timothy 2:2 and the model of ministry laid out in the book of Acts all indicate that going into the world is a task given to the people of God. So having said that, how are we sent out like Jesus?

### I. The Vision is the Same

The reason Jesus was sent by the Father and the reason we are sent by the Son is so that we can be involved in God's work of redeeming a fallen world. We understand that even though Jesus never left the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, He was nonetheless sent to the world. *For God so loved the world . . . For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.* This has been one of the great themes of John's gospel. *There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

The theme of our Purdue CORPS rally Friday night was vision. And the thing we tried to press down upon the students was the fact that they are here, not just at Purdue but in the world, because God has a purpose for them that is connected to God's redeeming purposes for His creation. Vision is simply coming to understand your unique calling in contributing to God's purposes. Or to put it most simply, vision is answering the question *why am I here?* If you can answer that question from God's perspective, you've got vision.

And motivating God's vision for the world is His glory covering the earth. It's that vision that motivates us to pray for Burkina Faso. It's that vision that gives us the courage to talk to our neighbor about Jesus Christ. A vision for the world is a big thing. It can't and shouldn't be tied down to one particular means. We need to be careful about not getting too caught up in debating particular strategies. Being sent into the world can include going next door, going to the jail, going onto the campus, or going to the remotest part of the earth. There are a lot of ways that Jesus sends us into the world. The key question is *do you understand that you have been sent?* The vision for God sending His Son and the Son sending us is the same – it is to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

## II. The Cost Remains.

Being sent is not an easy thing. Jesus left heaven to become a man. Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Going is hard. Staying is easy. Jesus doesn't pray *Father take them out of the world*. Staying with Jesus would have been easy. But instead He sent them. And it is costly.

It takes money to go into the whole world. But God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. If spending money to take the gospel to other lands is a misuse of funds, then we don't understand biblical economics.

It takes people to reach the world for Christ. But what are we if we are not aliens and strangers – sojourners in this life, called to be ambassadors for Jesus. It takes people. But God has always raised up people who would go.

But there are other costs too. We have to be willing to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ. We have to be willing to humble ourselves before men. One student told him how boldly and blatantly the fellow students in his science department at Purdue mock God. It costs something to identify with Christ in a world that hates Him.

I'm always amazed at the story of Paul's missionary journey to Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. In those places they were opposed, mocked and nearly stoned to death. It was a time of great fruitfulness but also of great distress and difficulty. Yet after being run out of these towns, they almost immediately returned to each place. The personal cost faded in comparison to the advancement of the kingdom. In our day and age we would cry out against such ministry strategy. 'How foolish to risk people's lives. Why would you send anyone in harms way?' Because it cost something to take the gospel to the world.

Being sent, whether to a neighbor or to Sudan or Japan or Yemen will cost you. It will cost you your life. Maybe not physically, but certainly spiritually. Will you take up your cross and follow Jesus into the world?

So, we are sent like Jesus.

- The vision is the same – it's the world
- The cost Remains – it's not cheap

### III. The Outcome is Secure

When the Father and the Son entered into the Covenant of Grace, the Father promised His Son that if He became a man, fulfilled the Law and died for their sins, He would give Him all of the elect. Because He is God, this plan of salvation was secure. God would redeem the fallen world.

Missions lost its focus in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. As liberal theology began to take root in the mainline denominations, the historicity of Jesus, the authority and inspiration of the Word, and the very nature of man all came into question. Clearly the gospel was compromised. So missionaries were left with a calling but no eternal objective. If there was a question as to whether a man needed to be saved from his sin, certainly there was no question that his way of life could be improved. So missions focused on humanitarian needs to the exclusion of the spiritual. Hospitals were built, schools started and agricultural methods taught, but the gospel was no longer preached in many places. Now, to couple humanitarian help with the gospel is biblical, (Jesus fed the 5,000 as well as preached to them), but to remove the gospel is to abandon the purpose of God

Jesus' prayer in John 17 makes it clear that His work was accomplished in order that men and women would believe in Him and be saved. Verse 19 & 20 says *For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that*

*they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.*

As we learn to live holy lives, as we are set apart by the Word of God – just as Jesus consecrated Himself to do His work, we have the promise of success. God is committed to using you as the means to save His people. You represent Jesus Christ here on earth. He has prayed for those who will believe through your word. The more you become like Him, the more clearly people will see Him and hear Him through you.

So this is part of Jesus great prayer. We would do well to understand how serious Jesus is about this. Do you see your work here on earth as being connected to a world being redeemed by God? Will you take up your calling as a *sent one*? And if so, how will you do it? Who will you pray for? Who will you talk to? Where will you go?

This is His prayer: *Father, as You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*