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***Jesus' Prayer for Us***  
***John 17:6-19***

<sup>6</sup> "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. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for 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. <sup>9</sup> I 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**. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And 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. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that <sup>[b]</sup> you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, <sup>[c]</sup> so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But 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. <sup>[d]</sup> <sup>14</sup> I 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. <sup>15</sup> I am **not asking you** to take them out of the world, but I ask you to **protect** them from the evil one. <sup>[e]</sup> <sup>16</sup> They do **not belong** to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> **Sanctify** them in the **truth**; your **word** is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

<sup>20</sup> "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, <sup>[f]</sup> so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Do you think about the fact that **Jesus prayed for us**,  
 that Jesus continues to interced for us?

This prayer of Jesus is so **important**, and special isn't it?  
 Like much of the last half of the Gospel of John,

it was some of his **final words** on earth.  
 And it **wasn't a silent** prayer—  
 it was a prayer that he wanted us to **hear**,  
 that he wanted to be **written** down so that all his followers would know  
 exactly his heart for us.

And **what** did he pray about?  
 He prayed that we would be **one**.  
 That we would have **unity**.  
 He prayed that we would **remember** all that he taught us.  
 He prayed that we would have his **joy**!

And he prayed that we would be **in but not of** the world in which we live.  
 Listen again to verse 14-18:

*I 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.*

<sup>15</sup> *I am **not asking you to take them out** of the world,  
 but I ask you to **protect** them from the evil one.*<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *They do **not belong** to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.*

<sup>17</sup> ***Sanctify** them in the truth; your word is **truth**.*

<sup>18</sup> *As you have sent me into the world,  
 so I have **sent them** into the world.*

Did you notice what he **says about the world**?

He says we **don't belong to it**, just as he didn't.

But he says we are **being sent into it**.

In fact, he says specifically in verse 15: <sup>15</sup> *I am not asking you to take them out  
 of the world, but I ask you to **protect** them*

A lot of Christian **theology and practice** has been built upon these verses,  
 and others like it in the New Testament.

There are denominations who emphasize **not being of the world**, being holy,  
 being separate, because we do not belong to the world.

And that is **true**.

We belong to **God**.

We are **children** of God, **not of this world**.

But Jesus specifically prays  
that we would ***NOT be taken out of the world*** in verse 15,  
but rather that we would be ***sent into it,***  
and ***protected*** from it.  
There's a ***difference.***

The ***Presbyterian*** church, like many denominations,  
has emphasized this ***in not of*** message—  
not taking ourselves away from the concerns of the world,  
but instead being in the ***middle*** of them, addressing them,  
working to bring God's ***good news and peace and reconciliation***  
to the world, as far as it depends on us.

We have always been a people who care about ***social justice.***  
Unlike some believers who are just biding time  
til Jesus comes again and takes us home,  
we believe that we have a responsibility ***to live out Jesus' way of life***  
in this world—to be witnesses to God's gospel and grace,  
and see lives transformed because of it!  
That means we work for ***justice, and mercy, and truth.***

Which ***isn't easy*** in this day and time, is it?

It's seems better to ***retreat from*** the world.  
In fact, we spend a lot of time and energy doing so, right?  
Just think of how much time and money is spent on ***leisure*** in the U.S.  
Millions, billions of dollars—to help people escape the cares of this world.  
To get away from work and worries.  
And there's a ***time and place*** for that, isn't there?

Our ***women's retreat*** was such a time and place.  
It was so refreshing and relaxing to be out on a farm in nature,  
enjoying God's creation, not thinking about our families or jobs.  
Just this past weekend Ed and I got away to my ***parent's farm again,***  
and celebrated our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and that was great.  
We need the time away to rest from the cares of this world---  
***but we do that IN ORDER TO return to it.***

It's like the **bucket** theory.

We need to be **filled** with God's peace and love in times away,  
so that we have **something to give** to others, right?

Without retreat and relaxation, we will fall apart, you know?

But we get filled up, **so we can pour out** again.

As Jesus reminds us, we are **sent** into the world.

We are **not like** the world.

We do **not love** the world.

But we do have to **live** in it, and we have a **mission** in it.

*1 John 2:15-17 says, . "Do **not love the world or anything in the world.***

*If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ....*

*The world and its desires **pass** away,*

*but whoever does the will of God **lives forever**"*

We **serve** in the world,

but we do it for the God,

and the **life that endures** far longer than anything in the world.

One of my favorite passages is **Romans 12:1-2**. Listen to Paul in verse 2:

<sup>2</sup> **Do not be conformed** to this world,<sup>[c]</sup>

**but be transformed** by the renewing of your minds,

*so that you may discern what is the will of God—*

*what is good and acceptable and perfect.<sup>[d]</sup>*

The question is **HOW?**

How do we **stay strong, not conformed** to the world?

Well, that takes us back to Jesus' prayer for us.

<sup>15</sup> *I am not asking you to take them out of the world,*

*but I ask you to **protect** them from the evil one.<sup>[e]</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> *They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.*

<sup>17</sup> **Sanctify** them in the **truth**; your **word** is truth.

<sup>18</sup> *As you have sent me into the world, so I have **sent them** into the world.*

Jesus prays that we would be **protected** from evil.

Just like we pray in the **Lord's prayer**,

*lead us not into temptation, but Deliver us from evil.*

And then Jesus says something that we need to really think about.  
 He says, ***Sanctify them in your truth.***  
 Your ***word*** is truth.

So how are we to be in the world, but ***not of it?***  
 How are we to be engaged with the world, but not just like it?  
 With Jesus' ***protection***, His ***guidance***, and His ***truth***.

I can't think of a more timely message for this day and time.  
***Sanctify them in the truth—your word is truth.***  
 Wow.  
 Do we need that, or what?

We live in a world of ***fake news***, which astounds me.  
 It's so frustrating, isn't it?  
 Everything is ***sensationalized, stretched, partial truth, or none at all.***  
 In a world where truth seems to be always relative,  
 Where can we find ***truth? Meaning? Morality?***  
 A path to good, and not evil?

Well, here's the great news.  
 We have ***scripture***.  
 God's word.  
 We have the ***life, death and resurrection*** of Jesus Christ.  
***Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.***  
 This is ***still what we have to stand*** upon,  
 but now, we have the ***life and example of Jesus*** Himself, and all of His words.

Because we have the truth of Jesus Christ,  
 we can be ***in but not of*** the world, right?  
 That's how we do it, ***through Christ***,  
 Through the power of ***Holy Spirit*** in us, given by Jesus, right?

We can't do it alone—but if we ***stand*** firm upon our Savior,  
 Upon his love, and unity and truth.  
 Then we can truly be sent into the world as ***ambassadors***  
 of God's ***love, and unity and truth!***

Do you believe that?

Do you think of *Jesus as someone to believe in?*

In a world where it seems like every person of power or prominence,  
is fallen or corrupt?

We hear on the news daily about the lies and hatred of even our leaders!

So, I think having Jesus to believe in, is incredible news!

What about you?

But it is *not an easy road*, is it?

It's *far easier* to just follow the crazy news,

Go for what's *sensational*.

Conspiracy theories.

Ignore the *real story, or any truth* underneath or behind it all.

It's far *easier* for us as a people, to be *pulled apart*.

Our world is more *divided* than ever, it seems.

And it's *so easy—far too easy*—to *demonize* those who are not like us.

If you're a *Republican*,

it's just super easy to say those bleeding heart *Democrats* are crazy.

If you're a *Democrat*,

it's just super easy to say those conservative *Republicans* are crazy.

If you're *white*, it's easy to say that people of color have *issues*.

If you are *not white*, it's easy to say that the whites are all *prejudiced*.

This is what we see, isn't it?

If you're on *Facebook or Twitter or the internet or cable news*,

it's just far too easy to *see only what you agree with*,

and *chime in* with all the haters.

We have *lots of EASY roads*.

Jesus is calling us to something *far more challenging, something higher,  
noble, and worthy, and eternal*.

Jesus is calling us to

A *HARD* road.

A *narrow* path.

Remember those words of Jesus?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14:

<sup>3</sup> “Enter through the **narrow gate**; for the gate is wide and the road is easy<sup>[a]</sup> that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it.

<sup>14</sup> For the gate is **narrow and the road is hard** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Wow.

That’s what he said---That’s **OUR road, isn’t it?**

Takes a lot more **energy, effort, and brain power** than following fake news, and going along with the hatred and corruption of the world.

It’s a narrow path, and few find it.

That can be overwhelming, right?

Our path is not big and wide.

It’s really just two lines.

One **vertical, and one horizontal**, you know?

Remember this?

In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus says this:

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their **cross** and follow me.

Our path in life is a **cross**.

It’s not easy, it’s more **challenging**.

It requires thought, dedication, commitment.

But as Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:13:

**We can do ALL things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us!**

Isn’t that word great?

That’s our hope—**our great hope**.

We are not ever in this alone.

We have the **Holy Spirit** in our hearts, to guide us and show us how to be **in but not of** the world.

That is our gift, if we will **listen and pay attention**.

With this as our courage and strength,

we can **stand up** for all those things that Jesus prayed for us in John 17.

We can stand up for **love**, not hatred.

I was listening to the radio this week, and heard those famous words of Martin Luther King, Jr:

*Through **violence** you may murder the liar,  
but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.  
Through violence you may murder the hater,  
but you **do not murder hate**.*

*In fact, violence merely increases hate.*

*So it goes.*

*Returning violence for violence multiplies violence...*

***Darkness cannot drive out darkness:***

*only light can do that.*

***Hate cannot drive out hate: only LOVE can do that.***

Sounds like what **Jesus would say**, what Jesus **DID** say, right?

Jesus is the light of the world, who **drives out hate and violence**.

So, that's our question---will we give into the hate?

Or **lean into the love?**

With the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us,

We can stand up for **UNITY**.

I'm a member of our Presbytery's governing council,

and this past Monday we met to talk about business,

but we also spent time talking about something truly important:

***how to be united despite our huge differences.***

See, on that council are men and women,

older and younger, white and Native American,

conservative and liberal, Republican and Democrat, shy and outspoken.

It's a true **cross section**, which is wonderful.

But it means of the 20 of us,

there are about **25 different opinions** on pretty much everything!

***What we agree on is this: Jesus is our Lord and Savior.***

Because that is our foundation.

***The rest we can figure out*** if we are sure of that.

This is what I love about our church---we too are diverse, and yet one in our belief in Jesus as Savior.

So we decided as a council that we should **truly listen** to one another,

not be forming our opinion and statement

as someone we disagree with is stating his or hers.



Which isn't easy, is it?  
 Only natural to be thinking of a comeback,  
 when someone you disagree with is talking,  
 but that's not the way of Christ.

We talked how to be open to the Holy Spirit,  
 speaking to us through one another, ***even those we disagree with.***

And how, when we are addressing issues like climate change or LGBT issues  
 or women's issues, we should not just debate.  
 But rather ***sit down around a table together and listen.***  
 And we hope to model that for all of our Presbytery.  
 Amen to that.

Finally, because we are ***in but not of*** the world,  
 we can stand up for ***truth and justice.***  
 We have some incredible models of this—Martin Luther King, Jr.  
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer.  
 Oscar Romero,  
 Desmond Tutu,  
 Nelson Mandela.  
 But there are also our friends right here, in Owasso, and in this church.  
 Who stand up for truth and justice.  
 Where is God ***calling YOU to stand up*** for what is right?  
 Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: ***Our lives begin to end the day we become  
 silent about things that matter.***

What are ***we being silent about?***  
 What are the things in our world, in our sphere of influence,  
 That ***matter?***

When I think about this—I think about this ***church's capacity for love.***  
 The way we can truly ***embody our mission*** statement,  
 which is Jesus' Great Commandment in Matthew 22,  
*to love God, and our neighbors as ourselves.*  
***ALL*** of our neighbors.  
 You've done that for me, and especially for my family.  
 I encourage you to keep on going along the cross-shaped path of love.

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel:***

We are ***in, but not of,*** this world—through the power of Jesus Christ.

He is our ***model of love, unity,***  
***and he is our source of truth.***

And as Jesus prayed for us—when we pursue his way of life,

We will find his ***joy.***

What could be better than that?

***To that, all God's people said, Amen.***