

John 17:11b-19May 17, 2015 – 7th SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sent by the Savior in Love

✦ **Praying for our protection (vv.11b-12)**

✦ **Empowering our sanctified witness (vv.13-19)**

Dear family of God at New Life:

In his *Forward in Christ* article, “Touching heaven – PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY,” Pastor Luchterhand marveled at the tininess of our prayers compared to God: “If our home galaxy, the Milky Way, were scaled down to the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit in a coffee cup. Somewhere in that coffee cup are the planets, the sun, and you and me. It would seem that our prayers are at best infinitesimally small. But to the Father’s ears, they are big prayers – important prayers of his children who belong to him through Jesus. Speak freely. Your Father hears and answers.”¹ If that’s how big our prayers are to the Father, how infinitely loved are the prayers of His Son! We have confidence because we are **Sent by the Savior in Love** while Jesus Himself is...

✦ **Praying for our protection (vv.11b-12)**

Once at a wedding reception a woman was describing how her son thrived under the influence of a certain coach. Finally I asked, “Was that Carl Lemke?” “Yes! How did you know?” “He was my coach in high school.” I wish everyone could have that experience at least once with a coach that could always get you to play beyond yourself, to put out far more than you thought you had. Our previous head coach just showed videos saying, “You can do anything if you try.” That’s like a pastor telling a child who feels his faith is weak to just say over and over to yourself, “I believe. I believe. I believe.”

That’s not what Jesus did to His disciples. If so, we’d be missing John 13-17. Think of it! Judas was betraying Him. Soon He’d be arrested, tried, crucified, dead and buried. So Jesus comforted and strengthened His disciples – not by telling them to look at themselves. He helped them keep their eyes on Him: pouring out His love in water to wash their feet (John 13), comforting them that He was going away to the cross for them (14), strengthening them with the promise of fruitful lives amid worldly hatred (15), giving them the blessed assurance that their sorrow and grief would turn to joy (16). Now He lets them hear Him praying to our Father in heaven. Jesus is **Praying for our protection**.

Isn’t this strange? How could a traveling teacher about to be crucified help them? How could the Father protect Jesus’ disciples, if His own Son would be brutally murdered by the religious and civil authorities? Jesus knew He was headed for heaven’s crown by way of the cross. He was determined to take us along with Him. He wanted us to benefit from His ascension back to the Father’s side.

For kids of all ages fearful for their faith, Jesus’ “*perfect love drives out fear.*” (1 John 4:18) He reveals the secret of our **protection** right here in His High Priestly Prayer: “*Holy Father, protect them by your name which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.*”¹² *While I was with them, I kept those you gave me safe in your name.*” Did you catch that? Twice: “*...in your name....*” God’s name is His reputation, revealed to us in His holy Word. The Bible is the unfolded name of God. Jesus protects us by teaching us God’s Word. Then and now He asks His Father to use His Word **for our protection**.

Coaches and teachers love their students to succeed. Hearing my former student proclaim God’s Word in the Area Ascension Service last Thursday is how Jesus felt about His disciples. He described us

¹ April 2015, pp. 26f.

to His Father as *“those you gave me.”* Remember last Sunday? Jesus said, *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”* (W.P. 15:16) How would God look? He chose you from all eternity to bring you to faith, have you baptized in His name-reputation, instruct, confirm and commune you in His Holy Supper. How can He let you go? Recall Mount Sinai after the Israelites worshiped the golden calf. Moses pleaded by God’s name-reputation, basically asking, “Will the Egyptians say destroyed your people in the desert because you could not bring them to the “Promised Land?” *“The LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.”* (Exodus 32:14 NIV84) His reputation stands.

See how powerfully Jesus **Prays for our protection:** *“I protected them and not one of them was destroyed, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” “Jesus knew from the beginning...who would betray him.”* (6:64 W.P.) God did not will Judas to betray Jesus. *“For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”* (James 1:13f NIV84) Jesus did know, however, that Judas would make that self-destructive decision. Jesus chose Judas and ministered to him for three years with perfect teaching and preaching. He kept calling Judas right up to the end. Using Judas’ betrayal Jesus pressed on to die on the cross for all our sins. God raised Him from the dead to prove your guilt is gone. Jesus ascended to God’s right hand where He still intercedes for us. He surely can protect us from all evil. Nothing gets through God’s loving hands except what is for our eternal good. *“In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28 NIV84)

✦ **Empowering our sanctified witness (vv.13-19)**

Can you imagine a championship team only wanting to play against little kids? Would that be like “urban cowboys” with big trucks that never go off road, carry a load or taste some mud? Imagine a powerful race horse that never gets ridden, only fed carrots and walked around. Reminds me of my grandma’s horses. They never ran except to follow her on her bike out to the barn to get more oats.

God knows our lives are not like that. No couple stands before God’s altar to take their wedding vows without God knowing how much they need His help to keep them. No communicants come to confess without God seeing the big targets on us. The powers of sin in this dark world and the dark angel from hell are plotting our ruin. So Jesus prays for something better than escape. He prays for our triumph: *“But now I am coming to you and I am saying these things in the world, so that they may be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. The world hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the Evil One. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”* “In the world, but not of the world” – *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”* (Philippians 4:4 NIV84)

Remember cordless phones? We still have some. If the battery connectors get dirty, they won’t charge. A Q-tip and some alcohol can clean the connections like God’s Word cleans our connection to Christ. Wouldn’t matter much for our missionaries in Dominican Republic. Pastor Larry M. Schlomer told us at the Area Ascension Service their power was usually off 23 of 24 hours. The city of Santiago would cheer each night when the power went on. But his son home in America on furlough sat in the dark of Grandma’s living room. When she flipped the switch he was surprised, “Oh, the power’s on!”

The power is on for us too. Jesus is **Empowering our sanctified witness** by this close, clean connection: *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, so they also may be sanctified by the truth.”* Charge up your batteries at church, then don’t be any more afraid to speak up for Jesus than picking up the phone. Jesus still prays. We witness like a little boy in the back of big St. John’s sanctuary. At just the right time, just the right volume, little Michael said for all to hear, “Amen.” **Sent by the Savior in Love.** Amen.