Keep Them in Your Name
John 17:6-19

Good morning, it is great to be with you as we open God's Word together.
- If we haven't met yet, my name is Meritt Raup, and I have the privilege of serving over our children and student ministries.
- And working with our high school students every week.
- I have the great joy of seeing firsthand every week how God is working in the next generation.

I'm also grateful for opportunities like this to open God's Word with our entire church family.
- This is our second week together looking at John 17.
- This truly is one of the richest chapters in the entire Bible, as we overhear Jesus praying to the Father.
- Nowhere else in Scripture do we have such a clear window to see the intimacy between the Father and the Son.
- My prayer for this series is that we would be caught up in awe and wonder at what God speaks to us today through this chapter.

We saw last week how Jesus prayed for himself
- He asked the Father to glorify him
- Only Jesus could pray like this.
- He deserves the glory he asks for because of who he is, the work he completed, and the eternal life he offers to us.

This week, we see Jesus now turns his attention to praying for his immediate disciples.
- This takes place on the night before Jesus was crucified.
- Judas has gone out from them, so Jesus is with his now 11 disciples in the Upper Room preparing for his death.
- He prays for his disciples, while they are standing right there listening to him.

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Now, I can imagine what that scene would have been like.
- The disciples are all gathered around Jesus in the Upper Room, it's late at night.
- He begins to pray, and so they close their eyes, bow their heads, fold their hands.
- They listen to Jesus pray for himself, and they nod along in agreement.

Then, they notice a change.
- Peter, James, John, and the others, they begin to slightly open their eyes and look around the room at the others.
- They make brief eye contact to say, "Are you hearing this too?"
- As Jesus keeps going they realize, "He's praying for us!"

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This must have been deeply moving for the disciples to know Jesus was praying for them.

There is something particularly powerful about being prayed for.
- When you have shared a request with your LIFE group or a friend.
- They say, okay well let's pray about it.
- Then you listen as they bring your request before the Lord and plead on your behalf.

- That is a powerful experience that the Lord uses to deepen our faith.

For the disciples, I imagine that this experience remained one of the most significant memories that they had from their 3 years with Jesus on this earth.

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But, this scene isn't merely a past experience
- This scene gives us a glimpse of what Jesus is doing right now.
- Jesus continues to pray for his disciples, and for us, even right now.

This chapter is often referred to as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus.
- Your Bible might even have a heading at the beginning of the chapter saying something like this.
- A priest was responsible for representing the people before God.
- The people would come to make offerings to the Lord.
- The priest would make the offering on their behalf.

In a similar way, Jesus represents us before the Father.
- He goes to the Father on our behalf and knows just what we need.

Hebrews 7:25, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

His prayer ministry did not cease when he ascended into heaven.
- But to this day, Jesus intercedes for his people as our great High Priest.
- This prayer gives us a glimpse of the prayer ministry of Jesus today.

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He knows just what we need prayer for.
- So often, we don't know what we should pray for.
- Or if we do pray, we ask for the wrong things.
- What we think we need, or what we want, that may or may not be what we truly need.

So, Jesus shows us his priorities as he prays for the disciples.
- Even though this is specifically for the 11, we will have no problem in saying that these are the same kinds of things that Jesus prays for us today.
- Let this prayer encourage your heart.
- And let it bolster your faith today.

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There are three main requests that Jesus makes on behalf of his disciples.
- He asks the Father to keep them in his name
- He asks the Father to keep them from evil
- He asks the Father to sanctify them in the truth.

So, we will take these one by one.

Let's begin in verse 11…
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1) Keep Them in Your Name

Jesus prays in verse 11, "And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."

Jesus prays "keep them in your name."

In just a few hours, the disciples will all scatter and abandon Jesus in his final hour
- Peter will deny Jesus three times.
- Of all people, the disciples would have been the ones to keep themselves.
- But even they needed God to keep them.

One of our greatest needs as believers in Jesus Christ is to persevere.
- We too recognize our frailty and our weakness.
- If we were left to our own strength, we could never hold on.

So it is incredibly encouraging to know that Jesus prays for his disciples to be kept.

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But it is interesting that Jesus asks for his disciples to be kept by the Father <u>in his name</u>.
- He doesn't say, "Keep them in your love"
- Or, "Keep them in your joy"
- Or, "Keep them in your peace"
- He says, "Keep them in your <u>name</u>."

What is it about the name of God that we would be kept in it?

Well, there is something significant about a person's name.
- This isn't as much the case today in our culture.
- But in many cultures even today, and especially during biblical times…
- A name expressed either a present reality, or a desired reality.

ILL: My wife and I welcomed our first baby last month.
- And we have certainly learned a lot these last few weeks.
- Most of it centers around diapers, feeding, crying, and sleeping (or a lack thereof)
- In the weeks leading up to the birth of our son, one of the most difficult parts was deciding his name.
- So, we made a list of all the possible options.
- And next to each possible name, we wrote down what that name meant.
- Now, we didn't choose his name entirely because of it's meaning.
- We just liked the name.
- His name Silas, which comes from a Hebrew root meaning "prayed for."

So our hope is that he would come to know that we prayed for him, and we will continue to pray for him.

Names express either a current reality, or a desired future reality.
- In Scripture, God's name communicates the reality of his character.
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In many places, the Lord is known by a particular name.
- He is Immanuel – which means God with us.
- He is Jehovah-Jireh – which means the Lord will provide.
- But one particular passage shows us his name in a powerful way.

In the book of Exodus, God calls Moses to lead his people up out of Egypt.
- God appeared to Moses in a burning bush,
- And in Exodus 3:5 he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

God appears to Moses in his holiness.
- So much so that Moses needed to take off his shoes as a sign of reverence.
- God, through the burning bush, calls Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt.

Moses is resistant at first, he says who am I to be the one to lead the people?
- God reassures him and says don't worry, I will be with you.

Then, Moses says, when I go to the people, who shall I say sent me? What is your name?
- This is how God responded in Exodus 3:14-15, "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"…This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

God revealed his name to Moses.
- God is not defined by any outside virtue or character – he is utterly holy.
- He is who he is.
- The I AM WHO I AM.
- His name reveals his character.

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So then, based on the reality of God's name, Jesus prays in verses 6, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

It's through Jesus, that we see God's character displayed
- This is what we saw last week, how the cross is the glory of Christ because it reveals the character of God.
- In Jesus, we see who God is.
- In Jesus, we know his name.

Jesus prays, Holy Father, keep them in your name.
- What a wonderful truth that we would be kept in the name of the Father.

a. We belong to him

The reason Jesus prays that his disciples would be kept, is that they belong to the Father.
- Jesus continues in verse 6, "Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word."

ILL: I have had the privilege to have gone on many retreats with our students.
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- We load up the bus with our luggage and head up to camp for the weekend.
- It's always a great time…
- But, one of the most chaotic parts of the weekend is when we arrive at camp, everyone gets off the bus, and attempts to find their belongings.
- Without fail, every time, in the shuffling around, there is at least one item left behind.
- A sleeping bag, jacket, backpack.

What is first thing that we will do?
- We look to see if there is a name.
- If there is a name, then we know who it belongs to.

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If we have the Father's name, then we know that we belong to him.

The New City Catechism is a resource of questions and answers to help believers rehearse the basics of our faith.
- The very first question says, "What is our only hope in life and death? That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ." (New City Catechism, Question 1)

You belong to God
- Because he created you.
- Because he redeemed you.
- He gave us to Christ as a gift out of his love.

You belong to him, and because of this Jesus prays, Holy Father, keep them in your name.

What a wonderful truth it is to know that you belong in the Father's name.
- That is the best place any of us could ever be.
- Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."

Jesus wants us to overhear his prayer so that we would truly grasp the wonderful truth that we belong to Him and are kept in his name.

Now, if you are here today, and you realize that you don't belong to his name, but you want this to be true of you,
- Then I invite you to come to him today.

Romans 10:13, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
- Call on his name, believe, and you will be kept and belong to Him.
- We would love the opportunity to talk more with you about this.
- We would love to pray with you after the service as well.

Jesus recognizes he is about to leave his disciples, and they are going to remain in the world.
- He knows that they are going to face evil in this world, and that their faith will be tested.

<So, he also prays to the Father and asks that his disciples would not only be kept in his name, but also that they would be kept from evil.>
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2) Keep Them from Evil

Jesus prays in verse 15, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

Jesus is honest in his prayer about the evil his disciples will face in this world.
- He doesn't speak as though evil doesn't exist, but he prays so that his disciples will be prepared to face evil after he leaves.

Now, you don't need me to tell you that there is evil in this world.
- Our newsfeeds tell us about all kinds of evil every single day.

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So, the question is, what are we to make of this as believers?
- What does Jesus want us to know about this?
- What does Jesus pray for us about this?

Well, he wants us to remember that we are not of this world just like He is not of this world.

Verse 14, 16, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world… They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

ILL: You've likely felt this if you've ever visited another country.
- I remember stepping off the plane in another country for the first time.
- Many things looked the same
- But the language was different, so I couldn't read anything.
- The landscape was different.
- The people were different
- Even when we went to Burger King for a meal, we thought it would be the same as here.
- It was close, but it wasn't quite the same.
- It was immediately clear that I was in a different country, and that was not my home.

In a similar way, we live in this world, but we are not of this world.
- Because we belong to the Father, our home is with him in heaven.
- Jesus went to the Father to go prepare a place for us.
- We look forward to the day that we will live with him in eternity.

But until then, we are here, living in this world.

Jesus also wants us to remember that we will be hated by the world.
- He says, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them…"
- There is a real enemy who is opposed to Christ in this world.
- Just like Jesus was opposed by the enemy while he was here on earth,
- We should also expect that we will face opposition as his followers.
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This helps us make sense of why there seems to be so much persecution and opposition to the cause of Christ.

- The horrific execution of Christians because of their faith that still happens around the world today.
- The imprisonment of church leaders for simply worshipping the one true God.
- The senseless mistreatment in public society of those who stand firm in the truth of God's Word.

Jesus never promises us that we will be loved by the world

- He is honest that some people will hate us because of Him.

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What is Jesus's answer to this opposition?

- Well, he doesn't remove us immediately from the world, but he keeps us from evil.

He says in verse 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."

Jesus's concern is not primarily to remove us from the presence of evil, rather it is to keep us faithful to the end.

ILL: When I was in high school, I went on a multi-day bike trip with a group of friends.

- We had trained in the months leading up to the trip to develop our stamina.
- The trip was long enough that we couldn't carry everything we needed with us on our bikes.
- So, one of my friends' mom drove in car alongside us carrying extra food and water and our gear.
- Even though we had trained for this trip, there were moments when our legs were tired and we were hungry, that the thought popped into our minds.
- "We could just ride the rest of the way in the car."
- It would have been a lot easier.

Nobody actually did this, we made it all the way on our bikes.

- It was worth it in the end!

The purpose of the car was to sustain us through the trip

- Jesus is committed to sustain us through our trip here on earth.
- It may be difficult sometimes, but in the end it is worth it.

He prays to the Father, not that we would be taken out of the world, but that we would be kept from evil.

Remember that we belong to him!

- No one can take us away from him.
- Not even the evil one himself.
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John 10:28-29, “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”

The evil one has come to kill, steal, and destroy.
- But Jesus holds you in his hand secure.
- He will keep you from evil, and he will sustain you until the end.

The gospel of Luke records another conversation that occurred on this same night in the Upper Room with the disciples.
- Jesus foretold to Peter that soon he would deny Jesus three times.
- Of course, Peter, as the character that he was, said, “No way! I will never deny you. Even if everyone else fails away, I never will!”
- Jesus leaned in a said to him, Luke 22:31-32, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”

Peter did deny Jesus three times, but in the end, his faith did not fail.
- Jesus prayed for him, and he prays for you.

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast
When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold, through life’s fearful path
For my love if often cold, He must hold me fast

<Jesus prays to the Father that the disciples would be kept in his name, and that they would be kept from evil.>

But Jesus isn’t merely concerned with them making it to the finish line, he is also concerned that they grow in their faith along the way.

3) Sanctify Them in the Truth

He prays in verses 17-19, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

Sanctification is a big Christian word.
- Simply put it means to be made holy like Jesus is holy.

Jesus wants you and me to be more like him, free from the sin that entangles us.
- This is why Jesus came to die, why he rose again, and why he prays for us today.

God is holy.
- We saw earlier that Moses removed his shoes because the ground was holy due to God’s presence.
- If we want to have a relationship with a holy God, then we too must be holy.

God uses his Word to make us holy.

- The more we know the truth, the less we will be led astray by lies
- The more we are confident in his promises, the deeper our hope will be anchored.
- The more we steep ourselves in his Word, the more we will be like him.
- The longer a bag of tea sits in hot water, the stronger the flavor.

Make it your aim to know God's Word.

- This is why we focus so much on God's Word in our worship.
- Through the reading and preaching of his Word
- In the songs we sing
- And the prayers we pray.
- God's Word powerfully transforms us over time as we know it well.

But we must also know God's Word in our personal lives.

- Make it a habit to read His Word regularly and seek to understand it.
- Talk about His Word with other believers to sharpen one another
- Memorize His Word so that you have ammunition to fight back against temptation.

We must be people of the Word if we are going to be sanctified.

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He also calls us to live holy as a witness in the world.

- Just as Jesus was sent into the world, we too are sent into the world.

God has given us a mission to spread the good news to the ends of the earth.

- It began with the disciples, and it has continued on ever since.

Often when we think about being sent into the world, it can be intimidating and frightening.

- What do I say to others?
- What if I don't know the answer to their questions?
- What if they reject me?

Rather than giving us tips and tricks to be successful, Jesus prioritizes our own holiness.

- Your own life is perhaps the most powerful witness you can make to others around you.

It is fitting that we are celebrating baptisms this morning.

- Your own personal testimony of sanctification is one of the most powerful tools to share Jesus with others.

You don't need to know all the answers, you don't need to have all the words to say.

- You simply need to tell them what Jesus has done for you.

Jesus healed a blind man one time.

- And the pharisees kept questioning the man to figure out what happened to try and pin Jesus down.
- The man got frustrated after a while and said, "I don't know much about this Jesus guy. One thing I do know – I was blind, but now I see."
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Know your own story, share your own story.
- Tell them what Jesus has done for you to make you holy like Jesus.
- Tell them the good news that they can be made holy as well.

Just as the Father is committed to keeping us in his name, and keeping us from evil, he is also committed to seeing our sanctification through to the end.
- The apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

Our Father in heaven is faithful to his promise.
- If Jesus prays for it, we know he is serious about seeing it through to the end.
- He will surely sanctify you completely on that day.
- Until that day, we continue to grow to be more like Christ through his word.
- We trust that he is praying for us now towards this end.

CONCLUSION

I hope you have been encouraged by Jesus's prayer to the Father for his disciples.
- He prayed that they would be kept in the Father's name
- He prayed that they would be kept from evil
- He prayed that they would be sanctified in the truth

We know that Jesus did not cease to pray when he ascended to heaven, but he continues to pray for his people even today.
- If this is what Jesus prayed for his disciples, we can trust that he prays likewise for us today.

Your love for God will grow as you dwell on the reality that you belong to him.
- Your love for God will grow as you dwell on the keeping power of God from evil
- Your love for God will grow as you dwell on the sanctifying power of His Word.

Let's close our time this morning praying along the same lines as what Jesus prayed.
- Keep us in your name
- Keep us from evil
- Sanctify us in your truth