

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
MINOCQUA, WI
SERMON FOR MAY 29-30, 2022

¹¹ *"I am no longer going to be in the world, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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. I protected them and not one of them was destroyed, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

¹³ *"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. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. The world hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the Evil One. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

¹⁷ *"Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹ I sanctify myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth.*

(John 17:11-19 EHV)

Ever tell someone that you'll pray for them and then not do it? Not on purpose, of course. Just forgot, got busy, got your own endless list of things to pray about and then you either see or hear from that person and it hits you. I promised to pray for this person but didn't do it. It happens.

This does not happen with Jesus. He doesn't say, "I got so wrapped up in keeping the universe in balance and the planets perfectly aligned and overseeing the spiritual warfare between the angels and demons and working for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world that I forgot to bring your requests to the Father. What was it you wanted again?"

In John 17, Jesus does an amazing thing. It's Maundy Thursday evening. In mere hours Christ will go to the cross with the sins of the world on his shoulders. And who's on his mind? You. Me. He prays for the Church/his disciples/us. The festival of Ascension, this past Thursday – 40 days after Easter – reminds us that even now he sits at the Father's right hand and constantly intercedes for us. Jesus Christ the Son of God our Savior prays/intercedes for us – we who are in this world not of this world. Not of this world. Makes it sound like we're Trekkies or starring in an episode of the Twilight Zone or participating in a meeting of Aliens Anonymous. What Jesus does here is provide RESURRECTION REASSURANCE.

What does Jesus pray for his church, for us? Success? Wealth? Power? Popularity? That the offerings cover expenses? Three things. #1 - He prays for the church's protection: ***"Holy Father, protect them by your name, which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."*** (v. 11b) God's name not only has meaning, it has power. Power to save/protect. And he revealed his saving name to the world in Jesus Christ. Remember what the angel told Joseph about Mary's unborn child, ***"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*** (Matthew 1:21b) Peter declared, ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** (Acts 4:12) Jesus himself said, ***"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14:6)

This name has been given to us – stamped on us at our Baptism, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The saving faith planted in our hearts by Christ's saving name is nourished and strengthened though the Word, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We worship in his name. We call upon his name in every trouble. We pray, praise, and give thanks in his name.

We need the protection God's powerful, saving name provides. It's his fault, really. Speaking about his disciples, both the ones sitting around the table with him and those sitting here today in his presence: ***"I have given them your word. The world hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."*** (v. 14) The world hates us. We're here, we're in the world, but Jesus gave his Word and the Word changed us and now we are not of this world. We don't fit in, we don't belong here. And the world hates us.

You get that, don't you? You see it, feel it, know it. The world expresses this hatred in so many ways both obvious and subtle. Jesus adds, **"I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the Evil One."** (v. 15) Satan gets special mention here. We need, and receive protection from him – the name of Jesus, the Word of Jesus, Jesus himself who says, **"While I was with them, I kept those you gave me safe in your name. I protected them."** (v. 12a) Who protects? Who keeps us safe? Jesus says, "I protected them...I kept them safe." And he does it by the power of his holy name.

Secondly, Jesus prays that his people would have joy. Do you have joy? Not talking about happiness. Happiness is external, circumstantial. Happiness is smiley-face, my-favorite-team-won, I've-got-a-giftcard, the-weekend-is-finally-here, I'm-going-to-the-beach giddiness. Which means happiness depends on circumstances and, it is momentary. Because my team may lose next time, and the giftcard will get spent and the weekend will come to an end. Joy, on the other hand – true joy - is something very different. Joy is internal, deep, long-lasting, independent of circumstances.

Maybe you're not happy because your job drains you, and the government takes advantage of you, and big corporations don't care about you, and your wife complains about you, or your husband ignores you, and your boss doesn't appreciate you, and terrorists want to kill you, and kids these days offend you. And if you hear all that and think, "You know what, that's true," then you've just identified why there's not as much joy in you. And it's not because of any of those other people. What's the common denominator? It's you/me, looking for joy in all the wrong places.

Jesus didn't pray that you would be full of joy. He prayed that you would be full of his joy. In verse 13, he prayed that all believers would have **"so that they may be filled with my joy."** (v. 13b) The NIV says, **the full measure of my joy.** Was Jesus full of joy? He was and, guess what, his job drained him, his government took advantage of him, the big organizations of his day didn't appreciate him. He wasn't married, but his church complains about him and ignores him, and there are plenty of people who did and still today would like to kill him. His joy didn't come from what others did to him. It came from what he could do for them. **"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

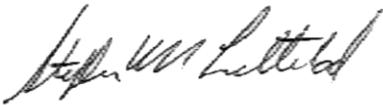
His joy came from sweating drops of blood, and feeling the crack of a whip on his back, and sitting still while he was pierced with nails, and suffering hell so that our sins would be forgiven and we would have a prepared home in heaven. You can't control what a single other person does to you. But you can control what, by faith, you use your life to do. And because there will always be people who need you, Jesus prayed that you would find joy in serving them just as he found his greatest joy in serving you. Joy is internal, deep, long-lasting, independent of circumstances – true joy is found in Jesus.

Finally, Jesus prays that his people be sanctified, that we grow in faith. Why bother with this? I mean, we need so much protection, and joy is so hard to find and hold on to. We're not of this world, so we might as well not be in the world anymore. With all the dangers to body and soul, with enemies like our own sinful nature, a world that hates us, and the devil himself, why leave us here? Jesus says, **"I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them."** (v. 15) For this purpose: **"As you sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world."** (v. 18) Jesus was about to complete his great commission from the Father, the plan to bring life out of death. He would then send this little rag tag band of disciples on a Great Commission to go into all the world and make more disciples by baptizing and teaching. He sends us to do the same. He sends us with divine protection and hearts filled with his joy. And he prays, **"Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth."** (v. 17)

To sanctify means to set apart for sacred use. To consecrate, to make holy. You are a tool in the hands of the Master Craftsman. You and I – along with the entire invisible Church on earth/believers everywhere – are set apart for a purpose. To be salt and light. To be a royal priesthood, a chosen people, a holy nation. To tell of Jesus and his love and forgiveness. What sets you apart/sanctifies you/enables you to be sent into the world yet not be of the world? Not just truth, as you see it or as cable news sees it, or anyone else. The truth, the Word of God.

Let's be brutally honest here. The less time we spend in the Word of God, the less sanctified we will be, and the more we will have in common with the world; and we won't have much to share with the world, not anything that matters. But the more we hear and read and study the Word of God and apply it to our own lives, the less we will have in common with the world, even as we take to the world the one message it needs to hear. We are not of this world, but we are here to enable others in the world to also be sanctified by the word of truth, so they too may ultimately be not of this world, but safe in the arms of Jesus.

Not only do we sometimes forget to pray for others, we forget to pray for ourselves – busy, overwhelmed, trying to be self-sufficient. Not so Jesus. He is always praying for us, interceding for us, intervening on our behalf, acting for our good. He promises protection, he assures us of forgiveness. He fills us with his joy, and he sanctifies us. And he will do so as long as we remain in this world, but not of it. He will do so until he comes again, because we have work to do, for him in this world. Then when he comes, we will not only be not of this world, but out of it, forever, home in heaven.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen W. Luchterhand". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "S".

Pastor Stephen Luchterhand
Minocqua, WI

