

John 17:11b-19

“Holy Father, protect them by your name, which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While 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. 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.

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

Protected

I.

The world is a dangerous place, isn't it? Just walking around carries inherent dangers. Everyday objects we use and enjoy all the time have risk components—things you could step on and slip, things that could be damaged and shock you, things that could hit you and injure you.

Then you just want to go and have a little family fun, and you (or your parents) have to sign a waiver or consent form. The forms are long and ominous. Somewhere in there it says something like this:

ASSUMPTION OF INHERENT RISKS: I, the ADULT PARTICIPANT, or MINOR PARTICIPANT(S) and/or RESPONSIBLE ADULT, have read the above paragraphs (or had the risks explained to me) and know that these activities contain certain inherent risks. I understand the demands of those activities relative to my physical condition and skill level, and I understand the types of injuries that may occur as a result of these activities and their potential impact on my well-being, lifestyle, and both current and potential future careers. I hereby assert that my participation is voluntary and that I knowingly assume all inherent risks.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that if anyone is hurt or property is damaged during my participation in this activity, I may be found by a court of law to have waived my right to maintain a Lawsuit against the sponsoring organization on the basis of any claim from which I have released them herein.

Danger. Apparently it's lurking everywhere. Hermits and eccentrics sequester themselves, thinking they will avoid the dangers of the world, but one way or another, danger always finds them. Risk can't be avoided.

II.

Besides the physical dangers of life, Jesus in his High Priestly prayer intimates that there are dangers associated with being a Christian. “The world hated them, because they are not of the world” (John 17:14, EHV).

As much as it *seems* that society demands tolerance of nearly every behavior and system of religious belief, it is still acceptable to have a lack of tolerance for certain things. Among them is Christianity. The world continues to hate Christians. They hate you because you are not of the world. They hate you because you recognize the fact that there is absolute truth—given by God. They hate you because you believe things just because God says they are so in the Bible.

Part of the human psyche is to avoid being hated. Those who claim discrimination want to be liked, or at least, tolerated. The more they scream and shout and demand change, the likelier they are to get satisfaction. Sometimes they're right, sometimes they're wrong, but whether right or

wrong, they want acceptance.

People like to be liked. People *long* to be liked. If it isn't in your personal character to be in-your-face and *demand* acceptance and tolerance, you will probably do whatever it takes to be liked—to blend in—to go along to get along. It can be dangerous to go along to get along.

There was spiritual danger for Judas. I wonder if he was just tired of always being with Jesus, who was the butt of jokes from the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Perhaps he just wanted to be one of them—to be liked, to blend in. Certainly Judas loved money, but a part of his decision to accept 30 pieces of silver in exchange for betraying Jesus might have been simply to get on the right side of all the leading voices in his community. Judas just wanted to blend in.

There was spiritual danger for Peter, too. After Jesus was arrested, Peter was concerned only about his own personal appearance and reputation. Who knows what would happen with the trial of his Master. If Peter was seen as a close friend and confidant of Jesus, he could face repercussions going forward. Peter just wanted to blend in.

There is spiritual danger for every Christian. The desire to just blend in can be intoxicating. Jealousy of others who don't face the same criticism you do. Self-centeredness, like Peter, about your own personal reputation and how it will be affected by your relationship to Jesus. Even beyond the denials of Jesus, and just going along to get along, spiritual danger rears its ugly head in pettiness, grudges, gossip, and more.

When you engage in such things, you can quickly find yourself compromising your Christianity. Jesus prayed: "Holy Father, protect them by your name, which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11, EHV). There is a danger to unity of faith. Some look at Jesus' prayer and say that Christians should all band together for the greater good of Christianity and the Kingdom. Jesus doesn't say that unity should be *created*, he says that unity *exists*—created by him and his Word. Unity is *broken* by false doctrine. Turning aside from the unity Jesus *gave* by agreeing to disagree on what the Bible says compromises Christianity and is fraught with spiritual danger.

III.

"Holy Father, protect them by your name, which you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While 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" (John 17:11-12, EHV).

Jesus gives us a lot to unpack in these verses. There is the unity he gave us, which was just mentioned—the unity of the Holy Christian Church, all true believers of every time and place. That unity is like a family.

A family is a place of protection and safety. Ideally, the family is a place where you will find support from the harshness of the world—physical support to keep you alive and well-fed and protected from physical harm are just the beginning. Emotional support is also important; and psychological support and social protection from all the things that bombard you from outside the family structure. To ensure such support, families use security systems, air bags, seat belts, immunizations, self-defense programs, neighborhood watch programs, and on and on. Good families go out of their way to provide the best protection they can for their families.

Jesus, while he walked the earth, protected his family—his disciples. The only one that was lost, says Jesus, was Judas, who willingly chose to walk away from the family protection. Even as he was about to leave them, Jesus wanted his disciples to hear this prayer to his Heavenly Father. As much as an earthly father might do his best to ensure the safety and security of his family, there is only so much he is able to do because of his own shortcomings.

Jesus called the Heavenly Father "*Holy* Father." God's holiness stands in stark contrast to everything we know about the world. The Holy Father of Jesus *has* no shortcomings, the way an earthly father does.

"Protect them by your name," says Jesus. God's name certainly implies many words that stand

for God. Some of them describe the characteristics of God—names like Almighty God, Everlasting Father. God has many other characteristics. He knows all things. He sees all things. He is present everywhere. In essence, beyond all the words that stand for God, his name includes everything we know about him from his Word, the Bible.

Jesus prays that God the Father would use all these characteristics in our defense and on our behalf. God has promised to be with us and to help us in every circumstance.

IV.

“I 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...¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world” (John 17:15-16, 18, EHV).

You are still here. That means that God still has plans for you in this world. *You* still have work for the Kingdom of God that needs to be done while you remain. Just as the Heavenly Father sent Jesus to accomplish the most important task in the history of the world, so also God has a task for you that remains to be done. If he didn't, you would already be in heaven with the Savior.

In various newsletter articles and sermons and Bible classes over the past year or two I have mentioned Luther's doctrine of vocation. You are to do the will of God in whatever station in life you find yourself in. Jesus has sent you into the world to accomplish his will. While you are busy doing that work which he has given you to do, Jesus asks that his Heavenly Father would take care of you—that you would be protected in your Christian life. You need that protection, because you are not part of the world, just as Jesus is not part of the world.

“Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17, EHV). To “sanctify” is to “set apart,” or to “make holy.” Jesus prays that you would be set apart by God to do this work which remains for you. As we go out into the world, he prays that we would present ourselves as redeemed children of God. He prays that we would go out with the true unity of the Church, which he has given us.

Jesus adds: “I sanctify myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:19, EHV). Jesus set himself apart to accomplish what was necessary for our salvation so that we would have the truth and know the truth. He prays that we would be continually strengthened and protected and consecrated in connection with the truth as we carry out the work God has given us to do.

Notice that Jesus didn't pray that the dangers of this world would be taken away. He doesn't give us waiver forms to sign to accept all kinds of risks associated with being his followers, but gives us this prayer as our High Priest—interceding with the Father for us that we would always be protected from the dangers of the world—especially those spiritual dangers that would threaten our eternal existence. As you remain in this world, be an example and an encourager to others who may be filled with fear. Let them know that Jesus has prayed that they, too, would be protected. Amen.