



## **“A Future with Hope: Sent”**

Seventh Sunday of Easter  
Saturday & Sunday, May 12–13, 2018

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1;  
1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

What does it feel like to hear someone pray for you? What does it feel like to know someone is praying for you? This week's story from John is centered around Jesus praying. Jesus is praying for his disciples. Prayer has had a powerful impact in my life in these last few weeks. In the midst of this exciting time of beginning a journey with all of you here at Trinity, I have also been ending my seminary journey – writing papers, giving presentations, saying goodbyes, and preparing to leave Chicago. As one journey ends, another journey begins. These two journeys have blessed me with people, experiences, and joy beyond my imagination.

But, if I'm being honest with all of you, it has been a little hectic at times. I've been a little stressed out. And in the midst of all of this, the people who have said, “How can I be praying for you?” have made such a difference. Pastor Sharron from the synod office has prayed with me over the phone. On the Thursday morning that I flew here a few weeks ago, my friend texted me to say, “We prayed for you this morning at the beginning of class.” And just this week, my advisor stopped me in the hallway and asked, “Liz, I want to be praying for you. What should I be praying for?”

So, what does it feel like to know that someone is praying for me? In each of these moments, I was reminded of God's love. I was reminded that someone cares about me. I was reminded that someone wants what is good for me. I was reminded that I am not alone.

I imagine this might be how the disciples are feeling as they sit with Jesus and listen to him pray for them. Across the four chapters of John that come before our story for today, Jesus sits with his disciples, washes their feet, teaches them about love and finally concludes his time with them in prayer.

We have caught a glimpse into this scene for the last few weeks in the lectionary. In last week's gospel reading, Jesus claims the disciples as his ‘friends.’ Now – with those words echoing in their ears – the disciples hear their teacher and their friend pray for them.

This story gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of Jesus. If you think about it, we are being given a glimpse into what Jesus is thinking and feeling in this very moment. Prayer is the place where we can be vulnerable because it is a moment when we open our hearts and minds to God. And this is exactly what Jesus is doing. Jesus is sharing his

most private, intimate thoughts with God. In this prayer, Jesus is bearing his heart and soul.

This prayer tells us just what Jesus thinks of the disciples. It tells us just what Jesus thinks of **us**. It tells us that **Jesus prays for us**.

In this prayer, Jesus says the disciples are God's children and he claims them as his own. Jesus prays: "They were yours, and you gave them to me." "All mine are yours, and yours are mine." In these words, Jesus is claiming **you**.

Jesus asks for the disciples' protection and prays: "Protect them in your name." In these words, Jesus is praying for God's presence with **you** and for **your protection**.

And Jesus prays that the disciples be sanctified in the truth. Ones who are sanctified are ones who have been set apart.

In the Old Testament, those who were sanctified were priests and prophets and ordinary people God set apart to do extraordinary things. People like **Abraham and Sarah** – the parents who gave birth many nations, **Noah** – the one who built the ark and made a covenant with God, **Samuel** – who proclaimed, 'Here I am!' when God called him, **Esther** – the brave woman who saved the lives of many people, **Deborah** – the one called to judge righteously, and **Jeremiah** – the prophet who spoke truth to God's people. Just to name a few. All of these people were sanctified – set apart by God to do God's work. Jesus is praying that the disciples – **and us!** – be set apart to do God's work. We are a part of a long line of God's people set apart to do extraordinary things.

But, if we dig a little deeper, the word *sanctify* in Greek comes from the same word that means *holy*. To be sanctified means to be **made holy and set apart** for God's work. In these words, Jesus is praying for **you** to be made holy.

But, maybe in this moment, you're feeling like me? I'll be honest with you this language of being set apart and being made holy makes me a little uncomfortable sometimes. Because sometimes I don't feel like I'm making the mark. Sometimes I feel like I'm falling short. Sometimes I don't think I deserve to be called holy. Sometimes I am a human, capable of messing things up and I don't feel like I'm good enough. Maybe you feel like that sometimes too?

But hear me out... because we must hear these words about being sanctified in light of what Jesus says next: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself so they also may be sanctified in truth."

We are sanctified because Jesus is sanctified. We are made holy because Jesus is holy. This prayer – this act of love – is said because Jesus loves **us!** This prayer is spoken just before Jesus' most radical act of love – his death on the cross.

On the cross, Jesus is sanctified. On the cross, Jesus is made holy and set apart. On the cross, Jesus dies for the ones he loves. The cross is where **we are** claimed by Jesus. The

cross is where **we are** sanctified - made holy and set apart. The cross is where **we** know Jesus' love for us.

No matter who we are or where we come from, when Jesus looks at us and prays this prayer, we have been claimed. We have been made holy. We are loved. No ifs, ands or buts about it. **This prayer is for us.**

I imagine this prayer is something Jesus prays all the time. I imagine this is a prayer that Jesus **never** stops praying. I imagine Jesus is saying this prayer **right now. This prayer is for us.** Because...

We hear the echoes of this prayer every time a child of God is baptized. In baptism, we hear God's promise, we are claimed as Jesus' own, we are sanctified and made holy, we experience Jesus' love. **This prayer is for us.** Because...

We hear the echoes of this prayer every time we gather in Jesus' name. We hear the echoes of this prayer every time we gather around the table and share the meal of communion. In communion, we hear God's promise, we are claimed as Jesus' own, we are sanctified and made holy, we experience Jesus' love.

But, we know this isn't it. Once we have been baptized or have taken communion, there is more. There is a call – a call from Jesus. Because Jesus finishes this prayer with these words: **“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”** Jesus is sending **us** out. This prayer is for us.

We are the disciples Jesus is praying for right now. We are the disciples Jesus claims as his own. We are the disciples that Jesus prays protection upon. We are the disciples Jesus sanctifies. **This prayer is for us.**

This is a pretty cool story to be preaching about today. In this moment, we are gathered for worship together, but also for a time of discernment. You and I, we are discerning together, discerning a journey we might take together. Perhaps Jesus is praying for us like he prayed for the disciples that night so many years ago. Jesus is praying for the journey that might be ahead of us. A journey for which Jesus is setting us apart – you and I, together. A journey for which Jesus is calling us to do God's work – you and I, together.

And yet, no matter what happens, **this is a prayer for us.** Jesus is praying for all of us. Jesus is claiming all of us. Jesus has made all of us holy. And Jesus is sending all of us out to do God's work in the world.

We have been **claimed** and **called**, we have been **made holy** and **set apart**, and now we are **being sent out** into the world.

Go, share the good news, do God's work! Amen!

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