

Grace and Peace to from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Dr. N. T. Wright, former Bishop of Durham [Anglican Church of England] relates this story:

Some years ago, a very senior person at another university invited Maggie and me to dinner. After the meal I asked if I could see the great man's study. (I always like visiting other people's studies.) He took me into a grand room surrounded by bookcases and oak paneling. It was splendid, but it was a bit too formal and neat. Everything was very tidy. I was suspicious. 'This isn't.' I asked, 'where you actually work, is it?' He smiled, and led me through a secret door in the paneling. I found myself in a room whose every inch said, This is where the man is truly himself. Books and papers everywhere, covering chairs and desks, an exercise bike. Family photographs and sporting trophies. There was even – I am still jealous of this, several years later – a golf hole in each corner, each with its own particular slant in the floor. There was also a prayer desk. I had a sense that you could write the man's biography simply by looking hard around the room and reporting what you found.

John's gospel is like that house. The first 12 chapters tell of Jesus' ministry among the people, the public part of the house. Then, in chapter 13 John invites us into the library to witness Jesus' last teaching with His disciples. [This is the upper room where Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper just hours before He went to the Cross on Good Friday.]

In this room Jesus first washes the disciple's feet [13.3-17], saying: *'I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you.'*

- The 'foot washing' set the disciples apart [sanctified them] for their works of service that began with Pentecost.
- The 'foot washing' reminds us that our baptism set us apart [sanctified us] for those works of service God performs through daily living every day. [Think of the normal things you do every day that touch other people's lives.]

In chapters 13-16 Jesus further instructs the disciples about their works of service.

1. Because I have set you apart for my service, you will be known by costly love:

- *A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so also you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, because you love one another.*" John 13.34-35
- *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends...You did not choose Me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will remain—so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you...This is My command to you: Love one another.* John 15.12-17

'love' = *works of service* [it is used 37 times in John, 25 times in chapters 13-16]. Love is "actively doing what the Lord *prefers*." "Love is Christ *living His life through us*." The only gospel most people will ever read is the gospel according to you/me.

2. Because I have sanctified you to serve me by serving others, the world will hate you:
 - "If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me first. If you were of the world, it would love you as its own. Instead, the world hates you, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. "
 - "... a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me." John 16.2-3
3. Because I have set you apart for service, you will never be alone.
 - "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth." John 14.16
 - "...when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." John 16.13
 - Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father...If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. John 14.12-14.
4. When Jesus had finished all his instruction, he concluded with this word: "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!" John 16.33.
 - Peace: 'wholeness, completeness accompanied with quietness and rest.'
 - Tribulation: 'internal pressure' – of the battle of the Spirit of God verses sinful flesh desires in our daily lives. There is another word for external pressure.
 - Courage: to radiate warm confidence...because warm-hearted.
 - Overcome: conquer, 'to carry off the victory, come off victorious.' The verb implies a battle".

And, then, in John 17 Jesus begins what we know as the High Priestly prayer: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."

Dr. Wright writes:

"The glory glimpsed by the prophets has at last returned. In the physical Temple there is one room into which only one person goes: the Holy of Holies, where the High Priest, once a year, makes atonement for the sins of the people. Now, with John 17, we follow Jesus into the equivalent place. This is the Holy of Holies of Holies, through the secret door into the hidden room. Up to now, Jesus has been talking to his friends about the Father. Now, he talks to the Father about his friends. And in this room, the only piece of furniture is the prayer desk."

Bishop Wright continues:

“Jesus is the one and only Priest. Jesus is the place of atonement, the place where heaven and earth meet. That is why, straight after this great prayer, he goes out to face the consequence of bringing together the utter holiness of heaven and the utter wickedness of earth, the utter joy of heaven and the utter misery of earth. That is what priesthood is all about: standing at the painful, holy place where the great fracture in creation is healed, the great gulf bridged, where the Word has become flesh and pitched his tent in our midst, revealing God’s glory as the Father’s only Son whose very nature is love.”

Jesus’ prayer continues: “...*this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” This is the ‘hour’. This is the moment of ‘glory’. The cross is the throne where God has put sin, eternal death, Satan, the evil powers of the universe, and judgment under Christ’s feet. In Christ’s death we died. In His burial our sinful life is buried. We can’t dig it up again. We are free to follow Him completely. In His resurrection we, with him, rise to the newness of life.

Jesus thanks the Father for giving the disciples to Him, and prays three specific petitions for them, and us who believe in the words of eternal life handed down through them.

1. 11 *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one”*. Jesus prays for the power of the Father’s name his disciples [us] to be known by love, live by faith, are voices of hope to a fallen world.
2. 15 *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world”*. Peter teaches on this petition in the epistle for today: *“Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in your faith and in the knowledge that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”* 1 Peter 2.9-10. This is daily saint/sinner combat...remembering our baptismal covenant daily. God’s Word is immersed in our daily hearing, reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting scripture, training our thinking, speaking and living for Christ to live His life through us.
3. 17 *“Sanctify [set them apart] by the truth; your word is truth”*.
 - Objectively, truth is the reality of God so loving the world that He gave His only Son, so that all who believe in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.
 - Subjectively, scripture sees truth as the integrity of personal character, and a style of life in harmony the divine truth...

Following these three petitions Jesus prays *“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world..”* Sent ones. ‘Sent’ implies a strong connection of the sender to the sent.

We can only imagine what was going through Peter’s mind as time unfolded in the ‘upper room’. But, he fully understood the significance of the upper room when he wrote to believers living in what is now modern day Turkey when he wrote: *1 Peter 2.9-12 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. Conduct yourselves with such honor among the Gentiles that, though they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.*

John 13-17 is not an invitation to sit life out until Christ returns. We are sent ones, engaging life daily. Yes, we say on the one hand “Come Lord Jesus, create the new heaven and earth where only righteousness and peace dwell, I’m so looking forward to it.” Yet, on the other hand we say, “but, not today Lord, not today. There’s this ‘ONE’ who is walking toward an eternity without you with whom I am building a personal relationship to share your good news. And, that ‘ONE’ is so close to receiving your grace and can use my encouragement. Until time for me is no more, keep me in your name, protect me from the evil one, set me apart to live life fully, seeing what you are up to every day, and how you would have me be a part of it. Then, after you’re done living your life through me...take me home.”

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