

Introductory

This material is exclusive to John. The TLH one-year lectionary spends three weeks in a row in the sixteenth chapter of John but appoints nothing to be read from the fifteenth or seventeenth chapters of John's Gospel. The LW and LSB three-year lectionaries appoint readings from chapter seventeen in all three years and from fifteen in Series A and B.

On a very basic level, chapter seventeen of John, where the Son is heard praying to the Father, can be seen as somewhat of an extension of the Lord's Prayer in the sense that by it, Jesus teaches us how to pray. If Jesus is praying in a certain way and about certain things, then that may be a clue to Christians as to how they should pray, and about what.

The thing that strikes us about this prayer is that He prays for the important, the significant, the lasting, which is unlike the subject matter of a lot of our personal prayers. Praying how we pray in church is a good guideline for people as they pray outside of church, and we have never prayed in church that anybody would win the lottery.

John talks about "the world" early, and he talks about "the world" often. You may recognize that term as describing one of three things (along with Satan and the flesh) that will attack the Christian. The Catechism would be a good starting point to learn more about those three things and about what Luther has to say about them on a basic level.

As usual, it is not only permitted, but it is encouraged that the preacher should quote from the catechism and from memory if at all possible. It's a good review for the people in the pew, and if the pastor is going to require the children to memorize it, shouldn't he? But I'm no fan of adding the Catechism every Sunday as if it were Scripture or something.

When talking about "the world" in the context of theology, I will often use the term "everybody else is doing it." That term, used by my generation, used by my children, and I suspect universally used by all children of all times and all places, best describes what Jesus means when He talks about "the world." But if your friend jumped in the lake...

The argument for doing what everybody else is doing is really an argument for not being different, because being different can have dire social consequences for starters, and there be others as well. For the people to whom Jesus first spoke of "the world," the upshot of being different would have brought more than just unpopularity and sometimes death.

Truly, the world vented their hatred for the early Christians up to and including making even adherence to their religion, not to mention propagating it, a crime punishable by death. Even today, Christians around the world are persecuted in ways unthinkable – so far – to Americans, and even we are hated with a hatred that seems to know no bounds.

I avoid like the Covid talking about “the good old days.” There’s some truth to those days being better, and I never correct old people for talking about them – how can you argue with the obvious – but there’s no going back, and in some ways these days are better than those. Back then, you had three choices, off the antenna, in real time.

But the Dish and TIVO are only two things that make life today better than then, and the Internet is both the best thing and the worst thing ever. Looking at the first time I preached this text – on May 15, 1988 – I start out with “It’s a jungle out there,” and then say pretty much the same thing I’m going to say this Sunday, only I’ll say it better.

The preposition “ἐν” makes several appearances in these verses, and the attempt to make sense of the nuance of meaning that little word brings with it challenges the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture. The base meaning is “in” or “with,” and that’s how it’s often and often lazily translated, but it can mean a lot of other things too and often does.

Prepositions are about relationships, and sometimes it’s not quite clear what sort of a relationship is referenced when “ἐν” is used. *A Shorter Lexicon of the Greek Testament*, says that the word is the “most common prep(osition) In the N.T., used with (the) greatest variety of meanings, of which the following are typical,” Then a laundry list of uses.

BAG says that “the uses of this prep(osition) are so many-sided, and oft(en) so easily confused, that a strictly systematic treatment is impossible.” He continues; “It must suffice to list the main categories...” and then gives us nearly four pages – double columned – of those main categories. Often, we ought to translate it “with.”

Textual Notes

At the beginning of this chapter, we are told that Jesus “lifted up his eyes to heaven,” the normal posture for prayer, and He began to talk to His Father in prayer. He prays a little bit for Himself. He prays *about*, but not at all *for* “the world.” He prays a lot for His followers, who are going to need it. Then in verse ten, He shifts gears.

He declares that those disciples are the common property of both Him and the Father, and makes the rather profound statement that He is “glorified” in us, a glory that comes in His saving of us. In the first part of verse eleven He acknowledges to the Father that He is coming home, but that the Christians will be left behind – for now – in “the world.”

It is clear from what He has just said and from what He will say that Jesus is aware that His time on the planet is drawing to a close. When He speaks in the present tense as if He is no longer in the world, when clearly, He is, He may well be speaking of a future event, like the OT prophets often did, referring to a future event using the present tense.

11b. The Son addresses the Father, calling Him “Πάτερ ἅγιε – Holy Father,” meaning that the Father is sinless, and that Jesus is His Son. The request from the Son to the Father is that He would “τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι – Keep them in your name, which you have given me,” and He’s talking about all Christians.

That an aorist imperative. It’s a request to the Father “that they be both marked with the name of God and rest under the Divine protection of the same (Barclay).” They are marked, and they do rest under that protection. To put that another way; either you are a Christian, and you enjoy the favor of God, or you are not a Christian, and you don’t.

The second verb (to give) is in the perfect tense, action in the past with enduring results. This could refer to the time when the angel said that His name would be “Jesus,” or to the several times when the Father called Him “my son,” or it could refer to all the references in John of Jesus to Himself as “I am,” The Father’s personal name applied to the Son.

The subordinate clause is “ἵνα clause,” and it can mean several things, depending on context, and here it’s a purpose clause; “ἵνα ὥσιν ἐν καθῶς ἡμεῖς – so that they might be one, as we (are one).” His prayer is that all Christians should be united in one mind, just as He and His Father are united in one mind, and most Christians would pray for that.

Having said that, this is a prayer, not a statement of fact. It’s something for which all Christians ought to yearn, and I do, but that unity does not currently exist. It’s important to note that oneness comes with keeping the “name” of God, and we keep the name of God “holy” by teaching His Word rightly and believing correctly. See the First Petition.

Excursus on Oneness

There was a time when the Christian Church was one church, and it covered the continent of Europe, and the center of that church came to be Rome, Italy. To be sure, there were from the beginning doctrinal disagreements, and there were heretics; people and groups who believed and taught differently from the teachings of the one Christian Church.

Beginning with the Judaizers in NT times, the false teachers of whom Jesus warned were surprisingly frequent and numerous and very early on. But they were recognized for what they were; heretics, and not part of the Church. They were dealt with by the Church using words, and often they were dealt with by the State using the means available.

The Great Schism occurred in 1054, the Eastern Church and the Western Church splitting up for reasons that included the liturgical calendar, the “filioque” in the Nicene Creed –

or not, geography and culture. The issues were actually somewhat more complex. You can read about the reasons for the split at WIK, or in a good church history book.

The Eastern “Orthodox” Church has remained remarkably the same, even in the United States, and they do seem to have a high degree of unity in doctrine and in practice with one another, and they don’t seem to much care what the rest of Christendom is doing. I admire that in them. I don’t admire the problems in their understanding of Justification.

The West, meanwhile, continued on its merry way, with authority increasingly centralizing in Rome. Then along came Martin Luther, and since then things have not been the same. It was a big deal to Luther personally and to Christendom when he was booted from the only Church that he, or anybody else for that matter, had ever known.

It’s an important point; Luther did leave the Roman Church, the Roman Church excommunicated him. When he and his followers started what came to be known as the Lutheran church, it was against their natural inclination against schism. But when you are given the boot, you either have to stop doing church or start doing it the proper way.

And then came Zwingli, and Calvin, and Henry VIII, the beginning of a long line of theologians who broke with Rome but were not Lutheran. Christian state fought against Christian state in the Thirty Years War – it was not pretty – so as to promote their own brand of Christianity. The English Reformation was ugly, but in its own special way.

When people began to move to North America – they moved to here for a lot of reasons, and their moving motives were often mixed – many came for religious freedom. But that did not necessarily mean those settlers were tolerant of other religions. They were not, but neither did states fight wars with other states over their understanding of Christianity.

As was the case in Europe, most colonies had, or at least favored, one brand or the other of Christianity; Anglicans in Virginia, Roman Catholic in Maryland, and Lutherans in New Jersey, for example. Some colonies took intolerance to the extreme; Massachusetts hanged Mary Dyer for being a Quaker. Well, they told her not to come around here.

And then, after we ran off the Brits, the Founding Fathers, a collection of agnostics, Rationalists, and Christians, and at least one Atheist – but secretly – amended the United States Constitution to include “the free exercise” of religion, and religion has been freely exercised here like no place and no time ever. It’s a Christian thing; religious freedom.

It was also a pragmatic thing. What else to do about the religion question? Establish an American Church? Add increasing Rationalism – the exaltation of reason and the debasing of Divine Revelation; the Bible – to that constitutional invitation for a religious free-for-all, and the door has been opened to religious chaos, the opposite of oneness.

If *Table Talk* can be believed, and sometimes it can, then it was Luther who first uttered, “Where God builds a church, the Devil builds a chapel.” The Oxford bunch think that

Daniel Defoe was the first to say it, but then they have yet to credit even one good, pithy quote to a non-Englishman. And they call American Cheese “processed” cheese.

We must, however, give Defoe full credit for noting, correctly, that the Devil will generally have the larger congregation. Just spend an hour or two on any of the legion of religious TV programming, most of them self-glossing as “Christian” productions, to see the state of religion in America. Twenty plus religious channels on the dish, all 24/7...

And then there’s the whole Internet thing. Yet we have the prayer and clear desire of the One who we all claim to follow to be one, and what do we do with that? Rome would have all of us come back home, and we would happily do that, but they would have to make some changes first. ELCA and other liberals once seemed more open to Rome.

As they progressively caved to Rome on points of theology, they progressively moved from one moral perversion to the next, so that now – I see where they just got their first transgender bishop. My wife told me that, and I said, “2030, the ELCA has their first dog bishop, and hope to find a cat...” and then I stopped and thought about it, and...

The fundamentalists seem to burrow their heads deeply into sand, occasionally popping up to hurl stones at each other. See Christian radio for some of the most passionate anti – you name it, somebody’s anti. Mainline Protestants seek oneness in the one principle to which they all hold; none of us really know anything for sure about God, do we?

Our LCMS approach is to us incredibly simple and to everybody else very annoying. We believe and teach the truth, as revealed in the Bible, so why don’t the rest of you just acknowledge this and come on over? It’s that simple, and I can see how others would find it annoying. Sometimes you do what you can, and we do, and that’s all you can do.

12. Using the same words that He had used in the previous verse, He again speaks of the name that the Father has given Him. He talks about the time “ὅτε ἤμην μετ’ αὐτῶν, ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι – when I was with them, with your name I was guarding them, the name you have given me,” His own name, “I am.”

To talk to the Father about the time “when I was (ἤμην – imperfect) with them,” He implies that He is no longer with them, and He isn’t. They, and we, are still in the world until death or the Second Coming, but He is no longer in the world, or at least that will soon be the case. In talking that way, He is speaking like OT Prophets sometimes spoke.

While He was with them, He says, He “ἐφύλαξα, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπώλετο εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ – guarded them, and none of them has died, except the Son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Indeed, through danger, toils, and snares they had already come. Except for Judas. Judas didn’t make it.

13. He continues speaking to the Father, “νῦν δὲ πρὸς σὲ ἔρχομαι – Now I come to you,” the “now” the Son returning home to the Father, the “now” serving to distinguish between what has happened in the past – things that He has just been talking about – and the present. The word is there also to indicate that His not being here is to happen soon.

He continues, “ταῦτα λαλῶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἵνα ἔχωσιν τὴν χαρὰν τὴν ἐμὴν πεπληρωμένην ἐν ἑαυτοῖς – these things I speak in the world, so that they might have my joy fulfilled in them.” The fulfilling is a perfect participle, indicating past action with enduring results. That means the joy has been given, and currently remains with them, and will remain.

He prays that these men have His joy, and says it has already been given them, and that it remains with them. That may seem odd, but we pray like that all the time. We pray for the blessing of God even as we live in the midst of it. We pray God would continue to give us food as we consume our food, and we pray for vocation even as we practice them.

It’s a similar idea to the one expressed in the Catechism, where we say that God’s name is holy, His Kingdom will come, and His will done et al regardless of whether or not we pray for those things, and indeed they surely do. But we also pray in that petition that His name would be Holy, His Kingdom would come, and His will be done et al in our midst.

14. The Son now proclaims to the Father that “ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου – I have given them your Word,” and indeed how many times, mostly in John’s Gospel, did the Son insist that His words and His authority did not lie in Himself. Those things – and the name – He asserts constantly, have been given to the Son by the Father. He

The verb is in the perfect tense, with the usual meaning, and this is another reminder of the flow of information; from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the Apostles, from the Apostles to the NT, finally from those who follow in the prophetic/apostolic office of Pastor, who preaches biblical sermons, from the Bible to the people in the pew hearing it.

Speaking still of His followers, particularly the Apostles, “καὶ ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς – and the world hated them,” and that’s what the Christian gets for his troubles, and it’s consistent. Why does the World hate us “ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου – because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

People tell me that people “give me crap” all the time at work because I’m a Christian. I also have experienced hatred for being a Christian. It’s a lot worse in most parts of the world and has been for most of Christian history. Like the parable says, there are weeds among the good seeds, we have to live with that, and those weeds did not just get there.

Those weeds were planted by Satan. Even in our country which is heavily influenced by the teachings of the Bible, a lot of people just don’t know any better. They are largely pawns spawned by Satan, who uses them to wage war with the good seed. There are also people who know exactly what they’re doing, and their hatred of us is well thought out.

15. Don't get Him wrong; Jesus is “οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου – not asking that you take them out of the World.” Christians will sometimes ask for that, but Jesus is not asking for that for you. What He is asking, “ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ - but that you should guard them from evil,” that is part and parcel of the world.

The Christian is to expect to be hated by the world due to the fact that we are not “ἐκ – out of the world,” i.e. *that we are still here*. For my entire life, I have memorized that verse as “you are not of the world,” in the sense that “you are not they,” and who hasn't heard the axiom about Christians being “in the world, but not of the world.”

Besides that, all the translations I'm looking at have it “of the world.” The problem with that is that the preposition is “ἐκ,” which indicates motion *from* one place *to* another place or out of, *never in or into*. What Jesus is saying here is that being hated by the world will be part and parcel of your life until you are “ἐκ - out of” that world.

Such condition could come at death or at the Second Coming. But until then, this is your lot in life until you leave it. Get used to it, make the best of it, and don't think it anything profound or surprising. It is for the same reason, *that He is still present here* – that He is not “ἐκ – out of the world” – that it hates Him, part and parcel also of His life.

This is not a new concept in John. In the beginning of his Gospel he talks about how Jesus, the true light, came into the darkness, how the Creator came to His own creation, and it knew Him not. Why? “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (3:19).

16. He asserts what He has asserted, that neither they nor He are yet “ἐκ – out of the world,” and are therefore still in danger from Satan, who is the ruler of this world. There is a decidedly either/or motif here. Either you are going to be loved by God and hated by the world, or loved by the world and an enemy of God, and there is no in between.

17. He now uses an aorist imperative verb to request that the Father “ἀγιάσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· ὁ λόγος ὁ σοὺς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν – make them holy with your truth. Your word is truth.” The preposition followed by a noun in the dative case has truth, which is identified as the Word, located right next to us, and it is, in Word and Sacrament.

The Protestant would prefer to focus on the “make” holy, as if Jesus is praying that these men, and by extension all Christians, would be better Christians; that's the Law. Jesus has nothing against people being better Christians, and neither do I, but the focus with “ἅγιον” should lean heavily towards the “declare holy;” the Gospel, rather than the Law.

Specifically, the petition is that the Father would declare or make them holy with the truth, and then He continues by speaking in no uncertain terms that truth is found in His Word. Have you gotten the idea lately that it is by means of the Word of God, which is to be identified with The Truth, that people become Christians, that they stay Christians?

And did we mention that God adds visible elements to certain of His Word, things that we can see with our eyes, for the visual learners. If you already talked about that last week or two weeks ago, go ahead and talk about it again. It's the kind of thing that makes people feel really good, and we want them to leave church feeling good. It's okay.

18. And here's the kicker; “καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ γὰρ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον – as you sent me into the World, so I send them into the world.” Not only are they not yet “ἐκ – out of” the world, but they are being sent “εἰς – into the world,” and into harm's way, the exact opposite of being taken *out* of the world.

The preposition “εἰς,” with the accusative, indicates motion into. “As you sent me into (εἰς) the world, so I sent them into (εἰς) the world.” The aorist verb for “sent” in both cases is “ἀποστέλλω,” from which comes the word Apostle; one who is sent. They are like the firemen on 911; while others flee the burning buildings, they are going into them.

You probably recall that in the tenth chapter of Matthew, these same men had been “sent out” by Jesus. Their going is made somewhat easier because they are being led by the one who has been sent to lead them to that place. One day, all will leave that place and go to another place, there to dwell together in peaceful bliss for eternity.

19. He now speaks of the coming crucifixion, talking about how “καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἁγιάζω ἑμαυτόν, ἵνα ὧσιν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἡγιασμένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ - for the sake of them I make holy myself, that they should be declared holy in truth.” In order to “be complete” He has to go to the cross, where He declares of His work “it is complete,” and it was.

Law/Gospel

Hatred/Love – Because of who and Whose we are, the world will always hate us. Because of who and Whose we are, God loves us.

Vulnerable/Guarded – Without Jesus our advocate we are vulnerable, like Judas was vulnerable, to the Evil One. Jesus guards us from that Evil One.

Sermon Titles

Stranger in a Strange World

The Christian and the World

Guarded from The Evil One

Hymns

Anything from the *Church Militant* section, or anything from the *Church Triumphant* section, and the Triumphant section selections should predominate. You may also want to look at hymns from the *Prayer* section, if you're going to talk about that.

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Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark..* The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House,
1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek
Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek
Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford
University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of
Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html