

Jesus prays for us

Rev Dan Balsdon | May 2021 | read online at www.revdanbalsdon.com

Read: John 17:6-19

As a parent of two young girls, I have a duty of care to them. Before they were born my wife and I would fairly often both be out of the house in an evening; we were both in a choir, my wife did some amateur dramatics, I would sometime have church meetings, most months we would head out for a meal or to the cinema, or have an evening out with friends.

But having children means we can no longer choose to head off on our own paths without considering others, because we now have a duty and responsibility to care for these small people we have the privilege to call ours.

The combination of moving away from friends in Cornwall, my becoming a minister, as well as the more recent pandemic means that;

- A) only one of us can be out in an evening unless we make arrangements for someone else to look after them for us, and
- B) that most evenings now involve Louise and I binge-watching the latest series we've take a fancy to on Netflix.

Our commitment to, and love for, our children leads us to ensure at least one of us is present to care for them.

Here in these words from John 17, we find part of a long and winding prayer the gospels records Jesus prays to his father for his friends. For his band of disciples, and for all those who call Jesus friend. Because Jesus knows he is about to be taken from them. These people, his friends, who he loves and has been committed to are soon going to be without him.

Jesus is painfully and heart wrenchingly praying to the father for his friends who he will soon depart from. That they will be entrusted to God's care, that they will belong to God and God will protect them as they seek to live out Christ's example to them in the world.

I firmly believe in this moment of heart-outpouring prayer of Jesus 2000 years ago, Jesus prayed a prayer that was prayed beyond the confines of time and history – that in that moment Jesus prayed for each of us too.

That each of us who call Jesus friend was held in his mind, his heart, his voice, his prayer. Jesus prays for us, for me, for you.

Jesus prays that just as he belongs to the father, just as he has a close relationship with father – so too might his friends have such a relationship.

So too might his friends belong to God, and all that is light and truth and freedom, while living and serving in the world.

Jesus makes a distinction between those who belong to the world, who seek and serve the earthly kingdom of materiality, individualism, greed and selfishness, and those who belong to God, people who seek God's kingdom. Those who recognise, affirm and respond to the stirrings of God's Spirit abiding within them.

Jesus' prayer for his friends and for us, and asks that we may be in the world, in the thick of human life and activity, yet belonging not to the world, but to God. That we may be distinctive in the world – *'sanctify them in truth'* he prays – which means make them holy. (17:17)

What does it mean to be Holy?

We'll, let's be honest, perhaps it will take a lifetime of living as friends of Jesus, and experiencing for ourselves what it means to belong to God to know what it means to be holy.

But I suggest to you, that to be holy, as a distinctive of God's people, is about a heart for seeking God and God's kingdom. Responding to God's reaching for us, by reaching for God, and allowing God to inhabiting within ourselves, and bear the fruit of the very goodness and graciousness of God as we live and walk in the world.

And that goodness, that fruitfulness, that abiding connectedness between us and God is what Jesus prays over us.

