

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
May 20, 2012
Confirmation Sunday**

John 17:11b-19

Jesus' Prayer for You Today

- 1. For your consecration**
- 2. For your protection**
- 3. For your joy**

**Hymns: 155 – 452 – Distribution: 596, 359, 355 –
Closing: 735 (class hymn)**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV 1984

John 17:11-19 –

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. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 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, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Look at the cover of our bulletin today. There you see a number of young, eager faces. Eight confirmands are pictured there, who are

prepared to take a vow of faithfulness to their God for life.

For those of you who have been around the block a few times, you know that an uncertain, and sometimes ominous, future lies ahead of these young people. What would your wishes and prayers for them be? What would you pray to God about these young people who are becoming communicant members of our church and embarking on a new phase of their life?

A pastor thinks about things like this as he confirms a class. I'm pretty sure that parents think about this too. And we as their fellow church members should think about this as well. What prayers should we offer for them today?

As you think about this, we can rejoice today that we have a model prayer from our Lord Jesus to consider on this special day. In our sermon text from John 17 he prayed for his disciples. We can offer many of the same thoughts for these young people today. So on this Confirmation Sunday, let's consider "**Jesus' Prayer for You Today.**" As we study his words today, let's recognize that he prays these thoughts not only for our new confirmation class, but also for all of us as confirmed members of his kingdom as well. We will learn three things that Jesus prays for from this reading.

1. For your consecration

Before going too far, it would be good for us to review the context in which Jesus said these words. The day was Maundy Thursday, the day before Jesus would be nailed to a cross to suffer and die. Jesus was in the Upper Room with his disciples. He had washed their feet as an example to them. He had instituted the Lord's Supper. And now he prayed.

You cannot miss the intimate tone of his prayer as he knows that he will soon be leaving them. No longer would he lead them around the countryside in his ministry of preaching and healing. He would be returning to his Father in heaven shortly. He had protected them from

his enemies while he was in the world, but he will no longer be visibly present with them to fight their battles in the same way that he had.

He prayed, *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”* You can’t miss the word “sanctify” in those verses! The Latin term for sanctification is “consecration.” The word “sanctify” or “consecrate” has two basic meanings:

1. To make holy (a saint) – to believe and be converted to faith
2. To set apart for a special service

Jesus is praying that they would be consecrated in the second sense. After all, the disciples are already believers and had been following Jesus for some time. Jesus is praying here that they would be “set apart” or dedicated for a special purpose

An illustration of this might be the communion elements we use: bread and wine. When they are set out for the service and the pastor speaks the Words of Institution over them, we are setting them apart for a specific, sacred use. They will not be part of the Coffee Hour food. We could say the same of the communion ware. The silver vessels were purchased for Holy Communion in our congregation. I think any of our members would be a bit offended if I came in on Monday, needed some tableware for my lunch, and I used the silver plate and cup for my meal. No, for they have been set apart for a different, more sacred use!

Jesus prayed that his disciples would be set apart for a special use. How would that take place? *“Sanctify them by the truth,”* he prayed. What made them different and set apart from the world? The truth! *“Your Word is truth.”* The Word of God did this consecrating.

What is the truth? The truth is what our Confirmation class has learned from the Word for the past few years in their instruction. It is also what is preached from this pulpit every

Sunday. The truth is that by nature we have a problem. We have committed sins that have placed us under the wrath of the holy God who made us. Our sin and guilt has put us in danger of hellfire. No one present here today can claim otherwise. You can try to deny it. You can try to soft-pedal it. But that won’t change the fact of your terminal condition of sin any more than you’re denying that your doctor is correct, when he has properly diagnosed that you are going to die from a certain disease.

However, the truth also is that God in grace has changed your situation. The Word of truth has told us that he sent his only Son, the perfect and holy Son of God, to live and die as your substitute, taking on your sin and paying the price of it in full on the cross. You have forgiveness through faith in him. That’s the truth! And faith in the truth of the Word is what consecrated Jesus’ disciples.

What were they consecrated to do? Jesus made it clear that they were being sent by him into the world for a purpose. He was not going to deliver them to heaven that day. They also were not to live in a monastery somewhere to hide themselves away. He was sending them into the world as his missionaries and spokesmen. That would be their service for him.

All of that was based on Jesus’ own consecration. *“I sanctify myself, that they truly may be sanctified also.”* They could only be consecrated for their purpose in the world because Jesus had set himself apart to do his work of living our life and dying our death in our place. Without that, they had no reason to be consecrated!

Dear confirmands, this is the first thing we recognize for you in Jesus’ prayer today. **He prays for your consecration.**

Your consecration began when you were baptized in the name of the true God and made a member of his kingdom. It has continued through the years as you have lived for him and learned about him. And today, we all pray for your continued consecration. You are entering a new phase of your life in which you will be living in this world in new and different places.

You are to be salt and light, as Jesus said in the gospel of Matthew.

A pastor I know once said that this concept reminded him of the lures that he had in his tackle box. Every spring he would sort through them. If there were some old bait or line on it, he'd cut it off. He'd sharpen the hooks and shine the spinners. Why? So he could put the lure back in the box for another year? No! Rather, he'd get them out in the water to do what he would send them to do – catch fish.

Isn't the same thing true for you and me? Jesus has bought us with his blood, and he has consecrated us for a purpose. The purpose is not simply to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die." Our purpose is not to live as comfortably as possible. Our purpose is to reflect his love in our lives. We are to fill our lives with good works to honor him. We are to fill our speech with godly words. We are to witness to others who don't yet believe that Christ is their Savior from sin. We are to be salt and light in the world!

And where? Wherever you will go; to high school and college; into the military; into the workforce eventually; into a new family someday; into a new neighborhood; into one of our WELS churches in the city where you someday land; and for some of you, perhaps as a pastor or teacher, consecrated for direct service in God's kingdom publicly.

Wherever you go, you are consecrated for God's service in the world!

2. For your protection

This can be a scary thought for parents, can't it be? And a scary thought for those of you adults who know what the future can hold. I saw a commercial recently where a little daughter is growing up right before her father's eyes, until the commercial ends with her taking the car keys and heading out with his car as he watches her from the driveway. She looked about as old as you confirmands do! Scary! Also kind of scary, thinking that next year you can be taking Drivers Ed. to begin your driving career.

In praying for his disciples that evening, Jesus said, *"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. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled... I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."*

Jesus knew that danger lay ahead in the disciples' lives (if only they knew of the things that lay ahead!). Conflict from a hostile world would cross their paths. Jesus said, they were not of the world and they would be hated by the world because they had been consecrated by Christ's message. Persecution from the Roman Empire and from Jesus' enemies in the Jewish leadership would be very real.

Conflict also lay ahead from the Evil One himself. The devil would not want the truth of God's Word preached and spread, and would instigate whatever obstacles and persecution he could to stop them. Sadly, we hear many stories in the Book of Acts about such opposition, and history has legends and traditions about the martyrdom of most of the apostles.

They needed protection, and it would come only in the Father's "name," as Jesus said. What does that mean? Confirmands, you should remember what the "name of God" is. Not only is it the titles that have been placed on God: Lord, Jehovah, Holy Spirit, Jesus, and so on. His good "name" is all that he is about and all that he does. It is his reputation and his story of grace and salvation. All of this is found in his holy Word. God's Word is his good "name!"

As we consider this part of Jesus's prayer where he prayed for their protection, we could call them "marked men." That term usually means that a person has a target on them by the enemy. They are marked for persecution. Yet we could also say that they were marked by

God. They were stamped with a seal, as Revelation puts it, which identified them as God's. They had the sign of the cross on them as God's soldiers and spokesmen to protect them. **Nothing would happen to them unless God allowed it, and even through their sufferings he would choose to take them to heaven to be with him forever.**

This is Jesus' second prayer for you confirmands today. He prays for your protection. There are two false thoughts that you should be aware of when it comes to your life in the world as a Christian. The first is the false notion that we can get along well with the world, that we should try to fit in and that conflict won't come. The second false thought is that a Christian who is strong enough in faith will always have prosperity: good weather, good health, riches, attractiveness, energy, a perfect marriage, and social prosperity. Here Jesus tells us clearly that the world will hate you while you're here.

I heard an illustration of this once, where this concept was compared to how a mother might pray for her son who is on the football team. She may be concerned about him getting hurt. But she can't very well pray, "Lord, please don't let my son get in the game." That wouldn't be right. Instead, that mother will pray, "When he is in the game, please protect him from harm."

This is Jesus' prayer for you, and my prayer for you as well. After all, what dangers lie ahead?

Inner danger – Jesus mentioned Judas in his prayer. What inner dangers did Judas face? Guilt and despair. The devil can come to you and beat you down with feelings of guilt and shame over your sins. He leads us to believe that our lives here are hopeless. "How can you be accepted by God?" he whispers. "You're a hopeless case!"

The devil can lead us into an impenitent attitude, a haughty feeling of pride that says, "Who is God that he wants to dictate right and wrong in my life? I don't see anything wrong with this and I want to do what I feel is right!"

The devil can tempt us to completely lose our faith. He plants thoughts of doubt that a Savior who lived so long ago could affect your life, or that any of the Scriptures are true at all. Devoted Christians have turned into atheists, in some cases. Inner danger lurks!

Spiritual danger – With the abundance of false teaching that has been introduced into the world, there certainly is a danger of being misled and confused. Danger might even come from a church out there that we might even term "Christian," but has abandoned parts of the Bible's teachings.

Danger can lurk from religious groups that we wouldn't term "Christian," yet who claim to have enlightenment and the path to knowledge. Such world religions claim to find enlightenment from books other than God's Word in the Bible. Other religions claim that you must perfect yourself and earn your own way, even by following Jesus as example for your salvation. This devilish teaching has attracted many away from the path of the Scriptures.

Worldly danger – Jesus acknowledged that the world would hate his disciples. Will it hate you in an open, obvious way?

What will happen when you speak up for the truth? What will happen when you stand up for the rights of the unborn and call abortion what it is: murder. Will the world applaud you? Or hate you?

It's been popular in the world to think that there are "many paths" to God besides Jesus Christ. Will your testimony that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life – No one comes to the Father except through him" (John 14:6) be roundly applauded by the world? Or will you be hated?

In our day and age, Scriptural marriage is under attack. God's clear design from the book of Genesis to the end of the Bible describes marriage as only for a man and a woman. God clearly spells out that intimacy between those of the same gender is sinful and immoral. What will happen in your conversations you call homosexuality what it is? Do you think the world will applaud you? Or

hate you? The sad fact is that when Christian people - even Christian pastors – forsake truths like this from Scripture, the world praises them.

You go out as marked men. Yet do not despair, for you have been marked with the cross of Jesus at your baptism and every time you hear the absolution of sins here in church. His name will protect you as you go out, consecrated to serve!

3. For your joy

Jesus prayed one more verse for us to consider today. It contains the most beautiful blessing for you yet. He prayed: *“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”*

This may seem confusing at first. Jesus had joy that night? Wasn't that the night before he would suffer and die? Wouldn't he pray to his heavenly Father to take that cup away from him later that evening? Hebrews 12 says, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Jesus certainly had joy as the Son of God in eternity before he came to this world. But he chose to have more joy in winning your salvation for your eternity!

He now promises his disciples that they will have joy in believing this and in living their consecrated lives of service to him. One of the stories I remember along this vein is when Paul and Silas were arrested and imprisoned in stock in the city of Philippi, and what were they doing at midnight? Singing hymns! They had a joy in Christ that could not be diminished. I would imagine a great part of this was because of their memory of him that night praying for them.

All of us here today pray for your joy, dear confirmands. We can honestly say today that Christians are happy to take the place that the world assigns them, for they know the name for which they suffer.

In your life you can always have the peace of knowing your sins are forgiven. You can always know that Christ is with you in your troubles. You can know that he speaks through you to others. You can know that he has your best interests in mind. **You can have joy!**

As you hear about this regularly in God's house for the rest of your life, your joy will be renewed. You will look forward to the day when you will have unending joy in heaven, based on the merits and works of your Savior Jesus.

Finally, many Christians have been comforted by others telling them, “I'm praying for you.” We are comforted that they are bringing our problems and requests before God in heaven on our behalf.

Today, rest assured that we are praying for you. We are praying the same things that Christ prayed for his disciples in the Upper Room. **We pray:**

1. **For you consecration**
2. **For your protection**
3. **For your joy**

May God grant you all these things on this Confirmation Day and all your life! Amen.