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Sanctified in the Truth

John 17.17-19

Series: Signs of Life

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I. **The Christian Life is Not Magic**

- A. Everybody loves a good magic show
 - 1. We have always been fascinated by the likes of Harry Houdini
 - a. Whose sensational escape acts seem to defy explanation
 - 2. Or the showmanship of David Copperfield
 - a. The most commercially successful illusionist of all time
 - 3. Or the amazing David Blaine
 - a. Whose television show “Street Magic” brought magic into living rooms around the world
 - 4. We love to be amazed by people pulling rabbits out of a hat, people disappearing and reappearing, people being sawn in two and somehow surviving
 - 5. Even though we know that all that is done by slight of hand, misdirection, and deception, it still fascinates us
 - a. Anytime people do things that we can’t explain, we’re fascinated by it
 - b. And the temptation is to chalk it up the magician’s special powers
- B. One might get the impression that the Christian life is one grand magic trick
 - 1. That somehow, without explanation, sinful human beings are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ
 - a. And we become holy and righteous
 - b. Just by believing
 - 2. That somehow, without explanation, almost magically, those who believe are sprinkled with pixy dust, the magic wand is waved, and abracadabra – and holy person is created!
- C. Perhaps you’ve got that impression as we have begun to explore Jesus prayer to the Father in John 17
- D. Remember where we’ve been
 - 1. We saw in the first message – **Saved From the World** – salvation from God’s perspective
 - a. That takes a people out of the world for Himself
 - b. Then He gives those people to Christ
 - c. Then God the Father gives Christ authority over all people
 - d. So that Christ can give eternal life to those whom the Father has given to Jesus
 - e. And not only that, Jesus defines eternal life as knowing the Father

- and the Son – an intimacy of relationship
- f. It's all there in the first six verses of John 17
- g. Yet how all that happens is very much a mystery
- h. The “how” is not explained
- i. How the Father takes a people out of the world
- j. How the Father gives those people to Christ
- k. How the Father gives Christ authority
- l. How Christ gives eternal life
- m. That's left unexplained – almost like magic
- 2. And then in the second message – **Safe in the World** – we learn that, even though we've been taken out of the world – this nasty, dysfunctional, deteriorating, morally disintegrating world
 - a. And then given to Jesus
 - b. That Jesus leaves us here – in this same nasty, dysfunctional, deteriorating, morally disintegrating world
 - c. But He prays – and fully expects the Father to answer this prayer – that we be kept, guarded, preserved in this world
 - d. And brought home to our heavenly destination
 - e. Because the Son of God has prayed to God the Father to so keep and preserve us
 - f. And it's there in John 17.6-16
 - g. And yet how that's to happen is still kind of mysterious
 - h. The “how” is left unexplained – almost like magic
- E. But I'm here to tell you, that's not the case
 - 1. Actually, it's not me that will tell you
 - a. It's Jesus – as He continues to pray to His Father
 - 2. That the “how” of it all –
 - a. How God takes a people out of the world
 - b. Gives them to Christ
 - c. Gives to Christ the authority to give them eternal life
 - d. How Christ gives eternal life
 - e. And how the Father keeps and protects and safeguards those who belong to Christ
 - f. Is not that mysterious
 - g. Is not without explanation
- F. But let's back up and see where we've been

II. **The First Petition: Glory**

- A. We've recognized that this chapter in the Gospel of John is the real Lord's Prayer
 - 1. That what we think of as the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6 and Luke 11 is really Jesus' instruction on prayer
 - a. And a wonderful framework as we seek to pray in the will of God
 - 2. But if we're looking for our Lord's actual prayer – that He prayed to the Father
 - a. We find very few recorded in the NT

- b. Most of the time Jesus prayed privately – spent nights alone with His Father in prayer
 - c. And that very few of His prayers to the Father were overheard and recorded by the disciples
 - d. But John 17 is an exception
 - e. Jesus prays to His heavenly Father
 - f. In the presence of the eleven disciples (for Judas Iscariot has left them by now)
 - g. After He has spent time with them teaching them in the Upper Room Discourse
 - h. This is Jesus’ most substantive prayer; the only prayer whose sum and substance was heard and remembered by the disciples
 - i. This is the real Lord’s Prayer
- B. We also recognized that **Jesus prays for His disciples**
- 1. He decidedly does not pray for everyone
 - a. He does not pray for the world
 - b. **John 17:9** (ESV) — 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.
 - 2. But not only does He pray for those disciples who are present with Him in the Upper Room
 - a. He also prays for us!
 - b. **John 17:20** (ESV) — 20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word...”
 - 3. He prays for all believers
 - a. Not only those who believe in Him and who are eye-witnesses of the Christ
 - b. But also for all those who will believe in Him through their message
 - c. And that’s all believers throughout the history of the Church
 - d. And that includes us!
 - e. Because we have come to faith in Jesus through the testimony of these disciples as recorded in the NT
- C. Jesus first petition – the first thing that He asks the Father to do – is to glory Himself
- 1. **John 17:1** (ESV) — 1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...
 - a. He has His eyes on his crucifixion and death as we saw in that message – His hour had come
 - b. Nothing displays the nature and character of God than the crucifixion and death of His Son
 - c. The love of God, the justice of God, the sovereignty of God – all glorify God as they show God for who He is
 - 2. But He also prays for His ultimate glorification

- a. **John 17:5** (ESV) — 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
- b. Ultimately the person and work of the Son of God will be vindicated by Jesus receiving the effulgent glory He had with the Father before He became incarnate
- c. Before His glory was hidden behind the cloak of His humanity
- 3. And His glory is seen as well as the Triune God's plan of redemption for a lost humanity is realized
 - a. As the Father takes a people out of the world
 - b. Gives them to Christ
 - c. Give Christ authority over all people
 - d. And as Christ gives eternal life to all the Father gives Him

III. **The Second Petition: Safety**

- A. Then in the last message we explored the second petition
 - 1. **John 17:11** (ESV) — 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.
 - 2. Jesus prays that all those whom the Father has given to Jesus would be kept even while they continue to live in this dangerous world
 - a. Kept in the name of the Father
 - b. Kept spiritually
 - c. That their gift of eternal life would never be lost
 - d. Because God the Son has kept the present disciples
 - e. He asks God to keep all disciples – including you and me – in His name
 - f. That we would never be lost
 - 3. And so, we would be preserved under the Lordship of Jesus, in the name of God, because Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, has prayed for us
 - 4. That's the only way we can be safe in this world
- B. But maybe all that sounds like so much magic
 - 1. How will the Father keep the disciples, and us, in His name?
 - a. How will we be kept from all the false teaching, all the heresy, all the worldly philosophies that seek to draw us away from God?
 - b. How will be protected from the temptations of this world? The enticements to sin, whether to pursue pleasure, power, or possessions?
 - 2. Does the Father wave a magic wand?
 - a. Does He pull a spiritual rabbit out of a hat?
 - 3. Is it really that mysterious?

IV. **The Third Petition: Sanctify**

- A. Actually, it isn't all that mysterious
 - 1. The way it all happens is called sanctification

- a. It's what Jesus prays for next in this prayer
- B. **John 17:17** (ESV) — 17 “Sanctify them...”
 - 1. Let's put this petition in context
 - 2. Jesus prays that the Father will glorify the Son
 - a. Glorify Him through the crucifixion
 - b. Glorify Him with the full glory in heaven
 - 3. Then Jesus prays that these whom the Father gives Him out of the world
 - a. Whom Jesus is leaving in the world
 - b. Will be kept in His name
 - c. Kept, guarded, preserved spiritually under the Lordship of Christ
 - d. Saved eternally
 - e. In spite of all the antagonistic world wants to do to believers
 - 4. That in spite of our weaknesses, in spite of our propensity to sin, in spite of our inclination to fall to temptation
 - a. That we would be kept from evil
 - 5. How does Jesus expect that the Father will do the keeping, the preservation, enabling every believer to persevere?
 - a. He prays that the Father would sanctify them
- C. **The Meaning of Sanctification**
 - 1. Now I know I've made a big deal about one particular theological word in the last several years
 - a. Starts with a 'p'
 - b. Propitiation – wrath removing sacrifice
 - c. It's important because many English translations render the Gk hilasterion as sacrifice of atonement
 - d. It's a little easier to swallow for us weak-stomached Christians in the 21st Century
 - e. That's because don't want to think about God being angry with sin, being a God of wrath
 - f. But the scriptures are clear – God is a God of wrath, against sin
 - g. So hilasterion, which refers to the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant, is the place where God's wrath against the sin of His people is removed
 - h. So we need to know about propitiation
 - i. Without the sacrifice of Christ being our propitiation, God is still in a posture of wrath toward us
 - j. But Jesus takes upon Himself the wrath of God for us
 - k. That's why propitiation is such an important biblical word
 - 2. But if there is any theological word that is more important than propitiation it is sanctification
 - 3. Sanctification really has two distinct meanings
 - a. They are distinguishable, but not unrelated
 - 4. The first meaning is **to set apart**
 - a. Articles in the Old Covenant worship in the temple or tabernacle were sanctified, set apart for holy use

- b. They couldn't be used for normal, everyday washing
 - c. Or for normal, everyday cooking
 - d. Or for normal, everyday whatever
 - e. They could only be used for holy things on holy occasions
 - f. They could only be used for worship
5. The meaning applied to human beings is the same
- a. As believers in Jesus we are to be set apart for God's use
 - b. We can't any longer use up our lives without regard for God's desires
 - c. We are to be set apart for Him
6. At the same time, the second meaning is **to be holy**
- a. We are called to be a holy people
 - b. Holy in our character
 - c. Holy in our thoughts
 - d. Holy in our wills
 - e. Holy in our emotions
 - f. Holy – conformed to the nature and character of God
 - g. **1 Peter 1:15–16** (ESV) — 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
7. So when Jesus prays, “Sanctify them,” what kind of sanctification does He have in mind?
- a. Well, both!
 - b. He wants us to be set apart
 - c. And He wants us to be holy, to be transformed in our character, to be made like Jesus Christ in our attitudes, dispositions, and conduct
8. How will the Father keep us?
- a. It's not magic
 - b. He will keep us by sanctifying us
 - c. By setting us apart
 - d. We can't continue to be the people we once were
 - e. Like joining the military; you set the everyday secular concerns aside, join forces with a new body, salute to your new commander
 - f. When you become a Christian, you no longer salute to the world's pretentious authorities; you have a new commander, a new Lord
 - g. Everyday secular concerns are now set aside in favor of the things of God
 - h. And when we are set apart, we are protected, secured, kept safe in an unsafe world
 - i. But He also does that, not just by setting us apart, but by transforming our character
 - j. By making us holy
 - k. **2 Corinthians 3:18** (ESV) — 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the

same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- l. So when Jesus prays, “Sanctify them” He asks the Father to set us apart
- m. And to transform us into the nature and character of Jesus

D. **The Method of Sanctification**

1. But how will that happen?
 - a. Ah! Again, it’s not magic
 - b. Jesus prays in a very practical way
2. **John 17:17** (ESV) — 17 “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”
 - a. It is the truth that sanctifies us
 - b. And it is the word of God that does the heavy lifting
3. **The Truth about God**
 - a. The nature and character of God
 - b. His Triune nature – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - c. His attributes – His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence
 - d. His sovereignty
 - e. His covenant love for His people
 - f. His wrath – genuine aversion to the cosmic rebellion that is sin
 - g. His holiness, His otherness
 - h. His mercy and compassion
 - i. His grace and kindness
4. And how do we learn the truth about God?
 - a. We learn it from His word
 - b. His word which in propositional terms defines His nature and character
 - c. His word which as His redemptive history unfolds, we see demonstrated as He engages with His people
5. **The Truth about Ourselves**
 - a. Our origin as being made in the image of God; capable of a loving relationship with God; made in such a way that God Himself declares humanity, and all of creation, good
 - b. Our sin, how from Adam and Eve onward we have strayed like lost sheep in desperate need of a shepherd
 - c. Our sinful condition, sinful nature, in which our propensity to sin rears its ugly head in every dimension of our lives, even our minds, wills and emotions
 - d. Our need of salvation, of a redeemer, who can save us from our sin and wickedness
6. And how do we learn about the truth about ourselves?
 - a. We might get some idea of it by examining our conduct and attitude
 - b. But we really understand it by the Word of God
 - c. The word of God which declares without apology our true nature

and character

7. **The Truth about Our Savior**

- a. The truth about Jesus
- b. God the Son
- c. God come in the flesh; the incarnate Son
- d. Who lives a life we could not live
- e. Who died a death in our place; taking upon Himself the just punishment for our sin
- f. Who was raised for our justification
- g. Who ascended into heaven and sits at the seat of authority over all people and over all creation
- h. And where do we learn about the truth about our Savior?
- i. We learn it from the Word of God

E. Sanctification is not magic

1. We are to be sanctified by the truth
 - a. And the Word of God is truth
 - b. The Bible is the truth that sanctifies
2. Do you want to know why we preach the Word of God every week?
 - a. So that we might be sanctified
3. Do you want to know why we do Study with the Pastor, studying the Bible together systematically every day?
 - a. So that we might be sanctified
4. Do you want to know why we encourage people to get involved in group Bible studies, of which there are many in our community?
 - a. So that we might be sanctified?
5. Do you want to know why we have two services on Sunday, as well as CLS classes on Sunday morning?
 - a. So that the Word of God will sanctify us

F. Do you know how God keeps us? How God preserves us? How God keeps us in His name? How He keeps us from the Evil One?

1. He sanctifies us
 - a. By the truth
 - b. His Word is truth

V. **Sanctification and Mission**

A. Now that's a sermon

1. But I can't stop
2. There are three more sermons in this text

B. **John 17:18** (ESV) — 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

1. Sanctification keeps us
 - a. But sanctification also sends us
2. It's why Jesus, even though the Father takes us out of the world, and gives us to Jesus
 - a. That Jesus leaves us in the world

3. Because the Father sends us into the world
 - a. He sends us on mission
 - b. It's called the Great Commission
- C. The way the Great Commission is fulfilled is by the people of God
 1. Believers
 - a. Being set apart for God
 - b. And being transformed into the image of Christ
 2. Evangelism – how we reach people around us
 - a. And mission – how we reach people across cultures from us
 3. Takes place through sanctification
- D. And that's because when the world sees truly sanctified people
 1. People devoted to God
 - a. People whose character is more and more like Jesus
 2. That gets the world's attention
 - a. Because the world's not like that
- E. Example
 1. **Acts 2:42–47** (ESV) — 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people....
 2. Those are sanctified people
 - a. Devoted – set apart
 - b. Devoted to the apostles' teaching – the Word of God
 - c. Acting like Jesus – sharing their possessions
 - d. Loving one another
 3. Who are those people?
 - a. The world wants to know?
 - b. They are people who are being transformed by Jesus Christ
 4. And then what does the text say at the end of that passage in v 47
 - a. **“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”**
- F. We want to make evangelism into a program
 1. We want to make missions into projects
 2. But the fact is, when you put sanctified people into the world
 - a. It gets the world's attention – who are these people?
 - b. Who is this Jesus?
 3. And when we share the Word of God with them, people come to faith in Jesus
- G. Sanctification is God's method of missions

VI. **The Sanctifier**

- A. **John 17:19** (ESV) — 19 “And for their sake I consecrate myself...”
- B. Consecrate = sanctify (haliazo)
 - 1. Jesus is the sanctified One
 - a. He has sanctified Himself
- C. This doesn't mean that, like us, He wasn't holy in character, and then He became holy
 - 1. No – He always was holy in character; sinless
- D. But it does mean that He was set apart for holy use, for redemptive use
- E. He was set apart, sanctified, in the incarnation
 - 1. He set aside His divine glory
 - 2. Set aside His divine prerogatives
 - 3. So He might take upon Himself our humanity
 - 4. Because only a sinless human can atone for the sins of fallen humanity
- F. He was set apart, sanctified, in His life and ministry
 - 1. He was devoted, consecrated, to life without sin
 - 2. He was set apart for teaching His disciples about the things of God
 - 3. He was set apart for calling men and women to faith in Him
- G. He was set apart, sanctified, in His passion
 - 1. In His suffering
 - 2. In His beatings
 - 3. In His rejection
 - 4. In His crucifixion
 - 5. In taking upon Himself our just punishment
 - 6. All part of His consecration, His sanctification
- H. He was set apart, sanctified, in His resurrection
 - 1. Raised up, vindicated as the Son of God incarnate
- I. He was set apart, sanctified, in His ascension
 - 1. Lifted into the heavenlies, seated on the throne of authority
- J. All that Jesus has done is because He consecrated Himself, He sanctified Himself
- K. That's why our denomination makes a big deal about sanctification
 - 1. Jesus is our Savior
 - a. Our Sanctifier
 - b. Our Healer
 - c. Our Coming King
 - 2. This is the passage that affirms that He is our Sanctifier

VII. **The Sanctifier and the Sanctified**

- A. **John 17:19** (ESV) — 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.
- B. Why did Jesus do all this?
 - 1. Why did He sanctify Himself?
 - a. In His incarnation?
 - b. In His life and ministry?
 - c. In His passion and death?

- d. In His resurrection?
 - e. In His ascension?
 - 2. He did it all for us!
 - a. So that we might be sanctified
 - 3. It's not magic
 - a. It's Jesus!
 - 4. **Romans 6:5–11** (ESV) — 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
- C. “For their sake I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified...”
- 1. How?
 - a. “...In truth”
 - 2. And you already know what the truth is
 - a. “Your Word is truth”
 - b. The Word of God is truth

VIII. Conclusion

- A. He takes us out of the world – the Father’s gift to the Son
- B. He gives authority to the Son
- C. The Son gives eternal life to all those whom the Father gives to the Son
- D. The Father keeps those given in His name, from the Evil One
- E. How?
 - 1. He sanctifies us
 - a. By the truth
 - b. By the Word of God
- F. He’s able to do that because Jesus sanctified Himself
 - 1. For our sake
- G. Our union with Jesus Christ, our sanctifier
 - 1. Enables us to be sanctified
 - a. By the truth
 - b. By the Word of God