

## John 17:14-19 Sermon Discussion Guide

### Passage Summary

In this portion of His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays specifically for the holiness of His people. As He prepares to go to the cross, He knows that His disciples will remain in the world; a world that often opposes God and His purposes. Yet, rather than asking the Father to remove them from the world, Jesus asks that they be protected and sanctified within it.

This raises an important question: What is holiness?

For many people, holiness sounds like moral perfection or simply "being good." But biblically, holiness is first about belonging to God and being set apart for His purposes. Through Christ, believers are justified, declared righteous before God because of Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection. From that foundation, God begins the lifelong work of sanctification, shaping us to become more like Christ. One day, that work will be completed in glorification, when we are fully restored and made perfect in His presence.

When Jesus prays, "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth,*" He is praying that His people would increasingly live as those who belong to God. Just as Jesus was set apart and sent into the world to accomplish redemption, believers are set apart and sent into the world to reflect God's glory and grace. Holiness is not withdrawal from life, but faithful engagement with it. It affects our homes, our work, our friendships, our marriages, our parenting, and every corner of ordinary life.

The motivation for this holiness is not guilt, fear, or religious pressure. It is grace. Jesus says, "*For their sake I consecrate myself.*" He willingly sets Himself apart for the cross. The Holy One becomes the sacrifice for the unholy. The sinless One bears the penalty for sinners so that they might be reconciled to the Father. This is the scandal and beauty of the gospel. We are not transformed because someone tells us to be holy. We are transformed because we are captivated by the love of a Savior who gave Himself for us.

Finally, Jesus points us to the means by which God grows us in holiness: His truth. God shapes His people through His Word, through prayer, through worship, through the sacraments, and through life together in community. The Christian life becomes a continual rhythm of repentance, faith, and obedience. We stumble, we repent, we believe the promises of the gospel again, and we learn to walk in obedience. Through this ongoing work, God forms His people into the likeness of Christ.

## **Theological Highlights**

### **1. Holiness Begins with Belonging**

Before holiness is something we do, it is something God declares. We belong to Him through Christ and are set apart for His purposes.

### **2. Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification**

The Christian life rests on the finished work of Christ. We have been justified, we are being sanctified, and we will one day be glorified.

### **3. Grace Is the Fuel for Transformation**

Rules alone cannot change the heart. Lasting transformation happens when we are captivated by the beauty of Christ and the grace He has shown us.

### **4. Jesus Was Set Apart for Our Salvation**

Christ consecrated Himself for His people. He willingly went to the cross so that sinners might be made holy.

### **5. God Uses Ordinary Means to Shape Extraordinary Lives**

Scripture, prayer, worship, community, and the sacraments are not mere religious activities. They are God's appointed means for growing His people in holiness.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Understanding Holiness**

1. When you hear the word "holiness," what thoughts or emotions immediately come to mind?
2. How does viewing holiness as being "set apart for God's purposes" differ from simply trying to maintain a particular behavior?
3. In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to believe that God cares about the details of your work, relationships, family life, or daily routines?

### **Captivated by Grace**

4. Jesus says, *"For their sake I consecrate myself."* How does Christ's willingness to go to the cross for you shape your view of God's love?
5. Have there been seasons when your motivation for obedience was primarily guilt, fear, or obligation? What fruit did that produce?
6. What aspects of Christ's grace and sacrifice most stir your affections and draw your heart toward Him?
7. The hymn *Amazing Grace* says, *"'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved."* What do you think that means? How have you experienced both realities?

### **The Practices of Holiness**

8. Which spiritual practices most consistently help you remember God's grace and stay connected to Christ?

9. When you fail spiritually, what is your typical response? Do you hide, strive harder, become discouraged, or return to the gospel?
10. How comfortable are you with the rhythm of repentance, faith, and obedience? Which of those comes most naturally to you? Which is most difficult?

### **Holiness in Everyday Life**

11. If holiness is about reflecting Christ in the world, how might that reshape the way you approach:
  - Your work?
  - Your family?
  - Your friendships?
  - Your use of time and resources?

### **Closing Prayer Points**

#### **1. Thank God for His Grace**

- Thank Jesus for willingly setting Himself apart for our salvation.
- Praise Him for bearing our sin and giving us His righteousness.
- Thank Him that our standing before God rests on His work, not our performance.

#### **2. Ask for a Greater Love for Christ**

- Pray that God would deepen your affection for Jesus.
- Ask Him to make the beauty of the gospel more precious to your heart.
- Pray that obedience would increasingly flow from love rather than obligation.

#### **3. Pray for Growth in Holiness**

- Ask God to continue His work of sanctification in your life.
- Bring specific struggles, temptations, or areas of weakness before Him.
- Pray for a growing desire to reflect Christ in every area of life.

#### **4. Pray for Faithfulness in the Means of Grace**

- Ask for consistency in Scripture reading, prayer, worship, and fellowship.
- Thank God for the church and the gift of Christian community.
- Pray that His Word would continue to shape your thoughts, desires, and actions.

#### **5. Pray the Gospel Waltz**

- Confess areas where you have failed or wandered.
- Receive again the forgiveness and grace of Christ.
- Ask for strength to walk in renewed obedience this week.
- Pray for a heart that continually returns to repentance, faith, and trust in Jesus.

### **Closing Reflection**

The same Savior who consecrated Himself for us now prays that we would be sanctified in the truth. And as we behold His beauty, trust His promises, and walk in His grace, He steadily forms us into the people He has redeemed us to be.

Holiness is not ultimately about trying harder. It is about belonging to Christ, being captivated by His grace, and allowing His love to shape every part of life.