

Sourced and Sent

John 17: 13-19

**First Presbyterian Church
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I was pretty excited to learn that next year British Airways will begin nonstop service from New Orleans to London. I was also amused at how many of you made sure I knew about it. It's obviously no secret that I'm a big fan of the land that gave us hobbits and Holmes, Herbert and Hogwarts. Well, while you're on your flight to England this spring, you'll have to fill out a landing card. It's a little information card that tells the British government where you're from, what you do and how long you'll be staying. For occupation, I put down things I do a little bit that I think would be fun full time jobs. So sometimes I put "author" and sometimes I put "theologian." I want the passport people to ask me about these hobbies of mine. They never do. The card also asks your country of origin. Sometimes I think about putting down countries it would be cool to be from, like Iceland or New Zealand. But I know the authorities are more serious about that question. My answer needs to match my passport. They want to know where I was born and where I'm a citizen. Because your nationality tells a lot about the story that shapes you. You are sourced by a particular national history, a particular kind of government, and you're part of a nation that has a particular relationship to the country you're visiting. And of course when you talk to the guards, they always ask, "Purpose of your visit?" They want to know why you're coming. I'm not sure anyone would actually admit, "To work illegally." Or "to disrupt the national transportation system." But the idea is that you give them a reasonable expectation of your purpose. There's lots to learn from a landing card.

As we listen in once more on the mighty prayer Jesus made for his disciples, we realize that Jesus is filling out their landing cards. He's naming before his Father his disciples' country of origin as well as their mission into the foreign land of this world. In prayer, Jesus considered how he had made his disciples citizens of a different country than all the other people in the world. He had called them out from the general pool of humanity to be citizens of heaven. He gathered these guys into the love which he and his Father have shared from eternity. And then, in prayer, he sent them back to the rest of humanity with the news about himself. He gave them the occupation of showing the world all he had shown them.

Jesus prayed, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world." They are not of

this world. Just as I am not of this world. That's such an odd thing to say. Surely he's not talking about space travel by aliens in flying saucers. And isn't anyone who's alive made from the stuff of this world? We're made of chemicals arranged in cells that multiply according to genetic information. But it's all pretty much stuff you find here, on the earth. More poetically, Scripture calls the first man Adam because his name means, "Of the earth." We're all from here.

So obviously Jesus is talking about some kind of spiritual reality. He's talking about having a different source. Jesus himself was the eternal Son of God who came to us as a man. The miracle of the incarnation is that God who is Spirit was joined to the flesh and blood of human existence in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus has a divine origin as well as an earthly one. He is an eternal being who stepped into time. In his prayers, Jesus seems to be saying that those who live from him also have a source from beyond this world. Earlier in John 3, he talked about people being born from above, being created anew by the Spirit. We get a new country of origin. We get joined to a deeper, higher, source of life than just this world.

The apostle Paul experienced this through a dramatic conversion. He got struck down by a blinding light. He heard the voice of Jesus. He got summoned to share the news of Jesus with the world. He was never the same. Paul experienced such a transformation that he talked about it often in many different ways in his writings. In one letter, he put it strikingly when he said, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That's so wild. We still look the same. We still eat, sleep, and breathe. But Scripture says something supernatural has happened to us. We have been made new by being sourced in the heavenly realm, not the earthly.

In another place, Paul explains that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3: 20). Our fatherland is now our heavenly Father. Our landing cards now read under "country of origin" not USA, not even earth, but the Triune God.

In still another letter, Paul wrote about the change of residency that occurs when someone believes in Christ and gets made new. We get transferred from an address in the "domain of darkness" to a street in the Kingdom of the Beloved Son" (Col. 1). We no longer live as helpless before our sinful impulses. We no longer live enthralled to the power of evil. We no longer live groping in the darkness of those who know nothing of God and his love. We now live as joyful citizens of the land where Christ Jesus the Beloved Son reigns. We live where he

makes all things new. We are sourced in a different way than ordinary citizens of the world.

Jesus is implying all of these things in his prayer when he says, “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” We’ve been made new creations. We’ve been given a new citizenship. We’ve been granted a new permanent address. There’s a new source code that directs the program of our daily lives. We are sourced from the eternal Son of God who stepped into the world as one of us to save us. We live from him. Even though we still reside here in this world, it is no longer our home.

It’s the greatest thing in the world to get connected to a source that is outside this world. To be lit up with heavenly light. To be born again from spiritual deadness to the vibrancy of life in Christ. To have your sins washed clean and your hope renewed.

But it’s also hard. You’re out of step with the world precisely because of the peace and freedom you have. You no longer fear what everyone else fears. You no longer strive for what everyone else strives. You no longer seek revenge like everyone else. You no longer pursue particular pleasures as an end in themselves. You’re no longer intimidated by earthly power. You’re no longer impressed by piles of money. You have a different homeland than all the things everyone else is looking to for ultimate fulfillment. And people can tell that difference. You become the odd man out. And they don’t always like that.

In Scripture, the world is defined in at least two ways. On the one hand, the world is the earth God created and which he cherishes. The world is all the people God so loved that he gave his only begotten son. The world is the object of his affection and saving grace. On the other hand, the world is also the whole system of resistance to the rule and reign of God. The world is humanity’s self-assertion of independence from anything higher than itself. It is our attempt to organize life in such a way that we control it and shape it without need for God. This is the world that hates the disciples of Jesus. And the world that will be judged by its savior.

When we get joined to Jesus we are no longer of this world. We become new creations, citizens of heaven, and residents of the kingdom of the Beloved Son. We have a new, higher Source. But, and here’s the kicker: we still have to live here. We still have to reside in the world which killed Jesus. Scripture describes this state with lots of terms: we are exiles. We are resident aliens. We are

sojourners. We live here but we can't get settled here. It can't ever again totally feel like home, because home is elsewhere. That's hard. And Jesus knew it would be hard.

He gives us the gift of worship. The gathering of the community that gives us a reminder of our homeland. We get a taste, in the bread and the cup, of the heavenly banquet that is to come. We hear the Word of God and it's like the relief of hearing your native tongue spoken after you've heard nothing but a foreign tongue all week. We get to draw apart for this Sabbath rest. To get re-sourced from our heavenly home. We get nourished. We get fueled.

But we don't get to stay here. Because we are not only called out of the world. We are sent back to the world. The world which put Jesus to death is the very same world for which Jesus gave his life. They didn't so much take it as he gave it. So Jesus also prays, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." I am not from the world, but I am sent into the world. I am sent to the spiritually dying with the gospel of new life in Christ. I am sent to the lost with the map that gets them home. I am sent to the broken with the love of Christ that mends. For we are not only exiles, we are also ambassadors. We are diplomats from the heavenly realm sent to the world with news from our king. We are not only pilgrims, we are heralds. We have proclamation to make. The God who made the world entered the world to save the world, and even though we first rejected him, we may yet receive him, for he took our rejection to the cross and returned with resurrected life. It is not too late. This is the time to become sourced in Jesus, too.

It's quite a task that is given to Christ's disciples. We are called to maintain our identity amidst the world that clamors that it is all there is. There are what Tim Keller calls the delusional fields that radiate from all the idols in the world. The things we substitute for God insist that they are reality. If we don't pierce the delusion, we believe it too. We believe in pursuits of pleasure, status, power, security or approval, all good things, as if they were final ends in themselves. And they will always disappoint. But without great effort, they will hook us again and again back into the world's delusions.

So Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." Sanctify means to set apart. To consecrate. To dedicate. Father, dedicate them to the truth that is in your Word so they don't get confused by the games of the world. Devote them to learn and live your Word so they don't confuse where their home is. Father fill them with your Word so they can live from the one Source that is true. Give

them discipline to pursue truth so they don't believe lies. Your word is truth. Make them go for it with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

In essence, Jesus says:

I'm setting you apart to be sourced not from the world but from me.
I am setting you apart from the world to be sent back into the world:

To be clear amidst the fog of idol delusions.
To be truth amidst the tangle of lies.
To be pure amidst filth.
To be kind amidst harshness.
To be joyful amidst despair.
To be faithful amidst betrayal.
To be full of faith amidst unbelief.
To be filled with hope amidst cynicism.
To be loving amidst a sea of hate

You are not from this world anymore. You are sourced from above.
Yet I have not taken you out from this world.
I have sent you back to this world.
Back right in the midst of your daily life.

I've put you on the mission field of your business:
To do it well. To bless others by the prosperity you create. By the service you render. By the excellence you display. By the beauty you render.

I have put you on the mission field of this community:
To uphold the law. To support the authorities. To work for justice. To remember the forgotten. To make the plight of the poor your passion.

I've put you on the mission field of your relationships:
To fill them with love. To return blessing when you are cursed. To seek peace and pursue. To speak, at the right time, of the truth that makes for life, to share my story and proclaim my salvation.

Your life is in this world, even though your heart and soul now comes from above. You have been called to undergo both the awkwardness of being a foreigner and the thrill of being an ambassador.

Sometimes the world will hate you. Sometimes the world will be grateful for you. Sometimes you will be rejected. Sometimes you will be embraced for bringing my life.

The only way you can make it is to consecrate yourself to my truth. Dedicate yourself to staying sourced from above, from my Word, from this community so that you can be part of my mission wherever you go and whatever you do.

Father, they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Yet as you sent me in to the world to save it, so I am sending them into the world to bring my gospel.

That's the news on your landing card as you go back into the world today. Country of Origin: The Triune God. Occupation: Ambassador for heaven. Purpose of Visit: the salvation of the world.