

May 17, 2026
Seventh Sunday of Easter
John 17:1-11

The entire seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel is Jesus praying a prayer, apparently in front of the eleven disciples, just before they depart to head to Gethsemane where Jesus will be betrayed, arrested and led to His suffering and crucifixion. It's a wonderful prayer in which He asks the Father's blessings upon His disciples and, toward the end upon we who "*will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*"

This wonderful unity between God and man of which Jesus speaks reminds us of our Holy Baptism into Christ where we stand miraculously and undeservedly joined to Him in His death to sin and resurrection to eternal life. It's an uplifting prayer full of hope and promise for the future. Jesus even speaks about how He is glorified in those who receive the Word by faith. The entire prayer is almost all Gospel good news. Almost.

Jesus prays, "*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.*" Later He prays, "*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.*" Okay, it's still all Gospel good news. But notice the separation Jesus has made note of: There are those of the world and there are those who are blessed to be separated from the world. This is not a distinction we should take lightly.

The world was created by God and it was very good. Yet when sin entered the world, it was then cursed by God. It remains cursed. Scripture tells us that in the judgment the heavens and the earth will be burned and in paradise there will be a new heaven and a new earth, this is true. But the world we know is fallen, tainted, unacceptable to a holy God.

The Gospel clear in Christ's prayer is that by grace, through faith, the Father has saved us out of the world.

Resist the temptation to return. That's the long and short of today's message. Resist the temptation to return to the world from which the Father has taken you in order to give you to Christ Jesus.

Way too many Christians today think they can have their cake and eat it too; cling to Christ while also clinging to the world. We have entire church bodies proclaiming that it's perfectly fine to wallow in corrupt, worldly behaviors outside of God's design yet somehow remain in Christ. Clearly that is incorrect. Jesus Himself calls sinners to repentance, the turning away from the world and its sinful brokenness, and to follow His example in faith. To be saved is to be joined to the Christ who put an end to sin's power. To join with sin is to reject Christ in favor of the world.

I think we get that; we don't practice gross sin. Yet I think many of us still kind of slide into an easy equilibrium where we more or less follow Christ, yet we find "creative" ways to make allowances for worldly behaviors. It wouldn't surprise me at all if just this moment as I spoke the words your mind went somewhere where you in your heart of hearts know you struggle in this way. And I truly hope there is a struggle going on. If not, you truly need to know you can't have the world and still be separated from the world for Christ.

Of maybe we don't even recognize this is happening. A subtle place this worldliness takes root in our culture is in a thing like discontentment. We think we deserve better; better whatever; a better place to live, a better car, a better spouse or family, a better paycheck, even a better experience of God. The Gospel is life and light, but we're full of grumbling because of a perceived lack of the worldly. The Gospel is proclaimed to us and fed to us, but we desire

something more flamboyant from God to bedazzle our faith. Be it material or spiritual, one thinks God has failed to deliver; I should have more.

Jesus Christ has delivered to you the eternal kingdom of heaven! Pardon of your many sins, resurrection from the dead, a perfect eternity sharing in the very glory of God in paradise. And as if that weren't enough also bacon, coffee, Chantilly cake, temperature controlled dwellings, various armed organizations to protect your life and liberty, one of my recent personal favorites—emergency rooms and critical care units to care for you when things get really nasty. He gives you everything you need to support this body and life, and then He sprinkles it with all sorts of lagniappe.

Yet we need to continually be reminding ourselves to see it all as grace, pure grace of God. Most believers clearly perceive the salvation work of Christ as gift of grace—Jesus has gained for us the forgiveness and righteousness that is clearly beyond our capability attain. Yet still, Christians sometimes try to inject some work of ourselves into that mix.

When it comes to the world, obviously we are doing a lot of stuff in the world. We live, work, interact, believe and serve God here. Oh, how much more easy it is for us to believe we have some agency here, some power, some ownership, some authority, some “deserving” of the world's blessing. Once we step in that direction, the worldly gifts of God aren't quite grace anymore. They're our due. They're ours. Ours to hold on to. Ours to revel in. Ours to keep and trust in.

In that mindset, we place ourselves as anchored to the world. But Jesus isn't praying for the world, is He? That's not a great place to be anchored, is it? God the Father has freed you from the world and given you to Christ Jesus for eternity. You stand baptized and called, joined

by grace through faith to the eternal and divine ever-reigning and glorious Son of God, parted from the fallen and cursed world. Do not seek to return to it.

In the Epistle lesson St. Peter is urging Christian under suffering and persecution to not only hold onto their Savior, but to humbly live a life reflecting His love. He closes the thought writing: *“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Our situation today is the opposite of those Christians. But the temptation is the same, to love the world more than Christ and in that, choose to leave the arms of Christ. St. Peter included the key to avoiding that—remembering that He has dominion—power, control, authority—over all of it. You do not.

So do not fall for the temptation to return to the world. Remember that your blessings in the world are undeserved gifts of God, icing added to the eternal gift of salvation in Christ. Your paycheck or retirement account—it’s all God’s grace. Your home and family—all by God’s grace. Your camp, boat, vacation all by God’s grace. The very fact that you have any wealth and blessing whatsoever to struggle with to get by amid all these rising prices—all by God’s grace. That this broken fallen world still exists though God could have, perhaps should have, judged and destroyed it long ago, but that He has preserved it that He might create you as His beloved child and then redeem you from the world forever by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ—all God’s grace.

Guard yourself from loving the world. Love the God who blesses you in it in all sorts of ways, but chiefly in saving you from its fate in Christ crucified and risen. Love this Savior who prays for you, not for the world. Amen.