

## “Lent in the Upper Room (Part 11): Whose Are We?” John 17:6-19

Almost everyone in our church has learned at least a second language. Even the *Americans*! Isn't it interesting, when you are learning the grammar of a new language, you actually also start learning the grammar of your mother tongue, maybe for the first time, really? (Because of course, when you learned it as a kid in school, you weren't really paying attention.) “What in the world is a *participle*?” “What do you *mean* “second-person plural familiar pronouns?” And then, it turns out, you've been using these things, without really understanding them, all your life.

Speaking of grammar: Usually, when we pray together in a group, we use the first-person plural. “Give *us* this day our daily bread.” “*We* need your help, Father.” We, us, our. It's kind of weird, isn't it, when you're with other people, and someone starts praying in the first person singular. “God, give me growth in grace.” “Lord, I just want to lift up my heart to you.” It kind of feels like you are going through someone else's diary and reading their private thoughts. Maybe it's just me. It feels more natural, when you're praying as a group, to pray *with* one another: “We lift up our hearts to you.” “Help *us*.”

But then Jesus comes along, and he starts praying, in a group, in the first person *singular*. And there's the disciples. Sitting there at the table. Overhearing Jesus' intimate, personal prayers with his Father.

But Jesus knows what he's doing, doesn't he? He's not being awkward. He's revealing his heart, and the Father's heart, to his beloved disciples. And the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” as John refers to himself (in the third person singular) in his gospel, is making sure that Jesus' heart is on the page for us to see and know and trust, too.

John knows that to be a real disciple of Jesus means to fasten the core of your identity, the center of who you are, to Jesus. And John knows that to identify with Jesus exclusively means that we have to detach our identities from everything in this world. When John first heard Jesus pray this prayer, he probably didn't realize what it meant. It probably didn't capture his heart. But later, after Jesus was raised from the dead, this prayer meant the world to him. Actually, it meant much, much more than the world to him. This prayer enabled John and the rest of the disciples to let go of every claim that the world might make on them, in order to embrace reality: that they belonged to the Father in Jesus Christ the Son.

And we need this prayer of Jesus to grab us by the heart and hold us firm today, don't we? Because it is tempting for us to define ourselves apart from Jesus. You are not fundamentally a foreigner living in Switzerland, or a Swiss person. You are not, at your core, a citizen of any earthly nation. You are not defined by introversion or extroversion. By what happened to you as a child. By the things people say about you. You are not

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what you do for a living. You are not even, at your center, a person living in 2020 during the Coronavirus pandemic. Those might be true things about you. But these facts must never be the center of your identity.

Jesus prays this prayer, and lets us over-hear him praying it, to remind us of what is at the absolute core of his heart and identity, and what must also grip our hearts and form our identities through and through.

What does Jesus reveal as he prays, that lets us release the grip of our hearts on the things of this world?

First, he reveals his own heart, his own identity. Then, he reveals our identities, and what our hearts should know and treasure.

#### **Whose is Jesus?**

Look with me at verse 7. Jesus says “everything you have given me, Father, comes from you.” Verse 10. “All I have is yours, and all you have is mine.”

So, the first thing Jesus reveals is: He is so loved that he has all the Father’s **inheritance**. I’m not going to say anything more about this right now, because I’ll come back to it in a minute. Yes, it means wealth and riches. But it means much more than that.

But there’s something else Jesus means when he says to the Father “All that’s mine comes from you. All you have is mine.” He means his **inheritance**. But he also means his **authority**. What is it Jesus has (7) that has come from his Father? Verse 8: words.

Words were what kept getting Jesus in trouble. “By whose authority do you say these things!?” the religious authorities kept asking him, angrily. Jesus would say, “My authority comes from my Father.” And that didn’t help. It just made the religious authorities *more* upset.

But Jesus kept on speaking the words the Father gave him to say. Jesus *was* and *is* the Word of the Father in flesh. How could he *not* speak his Father’s words?

Jesus is so treasured that he’s given all his Father’s inheritance.

Jesus is so trusted that he’s given all the Father’s authority.

And because Jesus is so treasured and trusted, what does he do?

Verse 18 and 19: he sets himself apart exclusively for the Father.

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You see, the Father sanctified him (that’s what “set apart” means) to be sent into the world with authority, and sanctified, set apart, for him a rich inheritance. So Jesus sanctifies himself. He sets himself apart for the Father alone. There is nothing about Jesus that is more fundamental than this fact: he belongs to his heavenly Father. **Whose is Jesus? He’s the Father’s.**

### **Whose are We?**

What about us? Whose are we?

Since I’ve been running every day, I’ve owned a few pairs of bluetooth headphones to help me think about things other than the fact that my legs hurt and my lungs hurt.

For Xmas, I bought Ellie the new AirPods Pro. They’re amazing. In the last month, though, I kept borrowing them. Finally, she decided that for my birthday she needed to get me my own pair. And she had my initials ARS printed on the case. Why? So that I would stop using hers! But my name on my AirPods also indicates that they are exclusively reserved for me!

And that’s what we find out, through Jesus’ prayer, that he’s done for us.

Just like Jesus is so treasured that he’s given an inheritance, we are so treasured in Jesus that we are given (11-12) a name— an identity in Jesus. Whose are we? Verse 6: we were the Father’s. And the Father gave us exclusively to his Son, Jesus.

You see: Jesus is so treasured by his Father that the Father gives Jesus the Father’s greatest treasure. What is that treasure? YOU. AND ME. AND EVERYONE WHO BELONGS, WITH US, TO JESUS. Friends, you are so treasured that you have become the chosen, selected love-gift, given from the Father to the Son!

Nobody else can claim my AirPods. They’ve got my name on them. Nobody else can claim you. You’ve got the Son’s name on you. We are the best gift the Father could ever give the Son!

There will be plenty of “stuff” for us to enjoy in our resurrection glory. But the most enjoyable thing of all for us will be knowing— and realizing more and more with each passing day of eternity— that the Son is utterly delighted to have *us* as his inheritance, the reward for his suffering, and the crown on his head.

Whose are we? We’re the Father’s, given to the Son.

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And secondly, just like Jesus, we are so trusted that we are given all of Jesus’ authority, under his lordship. Verse 8: Jesus says that the very words the Father gave *him* to say, Jesus has now given *us* to say.

We can’t *not* say them. And no one can tell us not to say them. No one has the authority to shut us up as we speak Jesus, full of grace and truth, to the world. Sometimes the world will hate us for doing it (14). But that’s not because we’re being arrogant idiots, speaking disrespectfully or with intolerance. (Don’t be stupid. If people hate you for being a jerk, that’s got nothing to do with Jesus and everything to do with you being a jerk.) If people hate our words of grace and truth, put into action in deeds of love and mercy, it’s just because they realize how exclusively reserved we are for Jesus, and how no other worldly identity has any similar claim on us.

But it becomes our delight to speak Jesus to the world. Because we’re honored by how much he’s trusted us, by how much authority he’s given us.

The last thing to say is this: Because we’re so treasured and trusted, the Father sets us apart, and we must set ourselves apart, for the one to whom we belong (17). We’ll be protected (12), not from trouble, but from every claim that evil might make upon us.

You know, I’ve been saying that no aspect of a disciple’s identity is fundamental the way that our identity in Christ is fundamental.

That means even my marriage. Nothing in my experience, apart from Jesus, defines who I am quite like my marriage to Ellie.

What’s cool about a good marriage is this: My wife knows me better than anyone else apart from Jesus. Everyone else could misunderstand me. I could disappoint everyone else. But you know what? Because she and I share a life and a name and a home and a bed and a handful of kids ... for me, if *she* knows me completely, and she still treasures me enough to give herself to me; and she still trusts me enough to authorize me to do things for our family ... If everyone else thinks I’m an idiot and Ellie treasures and trusts me, my heart is going to be ok. And I’m going to reserve myself exclusively for her and for what she cares about.

How much more is this true for every one of us in Jesus? Nobody else knows us like Jesus. And he treasures us as his own rich inheritance. And he trusts us so much that he gives us his own authority to do his work.

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And that means we must set ourselves apart exclusively, from our hearts to our words to our actions, for our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we do, we must never forget that it was our Lord Jesus Christ who set himself apart first for us—to live for us, to die for us, to rise for us, and to come again for us.

Nothing else has that kind of a claim on you. Nothing else should thrill your heart like this reality does.

No one loves like Jesus.

1. We are so loved and valued that we are the chosen love-gift of the Father to the Son; his inheritance (6)
  - a. There will be plenty of “stuff” for us to enjoy in glory. But The most enjoyable thing of all is knowing that the Son is delighted to have *us* as *his* inheritance. Illustrate with my marriage.
2. We are so trusted that we are given all Jesus’ authority (words) under his lordship (8)
3. Because we’re so treasured and trusted, Jesus sets us apart, and we must set ourselves apart, for the one to whom we belong (17). We’ll be protected (12), not from trouble, but from every claim that evil might make upon us.

We belong to

We were the Father’s (6)

Father has given us to Jesus (6)

Now we know that all the Son has is given by the Father (7)

The words of the Father were given to the Son and then to us (8)

Jesus was given a name by his Father (11)

Father will protect us (12)

Father sanctified the Son and will sanctify us (17)

We, Jesus’ disciples, are one— the gift of the Father to the Son. We’re set apart for Jesus, and set apart *to* bring the name and words of Jesus to a world that often won’t receive us.

The world should never hate us because we’re idiots. Because we refuse to wash our hands or pay our taxes or obey the law. If the world hates us it must only be because they see how completely reserved we are for Jesus’ heart and for Jesus’ purposes to glorify his Father. Sometimes the world will sense that we’re not attached to it, desperately dependent on it, but completely happy and secure in the love of someone who has called us out *from* the world to be his treasured possession and his peculiar people.