

Sermon John 17:1-19 *“Armed for the World”*

Today is a day of remembrance, and whether we choose to remember a relationship that honors God influences our thoughts, words, and actions. On the two tablets of stone given to Moses, we find the fifth commandment, which says: “Honor your Father and Mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” If your mother has passed on from this life, we should keep the memories of her alive, and if you still have a mother, give thanks to God for her presence and make Mother’s Day a grace-filled day of letting go of life’s little issues. One day, memories will be all you have, and then your memories will be sufficient to bring you comfort and peace.

Five quick facts about Mother’s Day. Credit is given to Anna Reeves Jarvis, a movement that began in 1905 in West Virginia. It was Jarvis who set out to create a day that would honor mothers as a group. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed a bill recognizing Jarvis’ idea as a national holiday. Second, before Jarvis, the idea of honoring mothers came along from poet Julia Ward Howe to promote “Mother’s Peace Day” to spread unity across the world in the wake of the following war in America and Europe. Third, according to a 2019 publication, consumers spent an estimated \$25 billion on Mother’s Day. Last year, consumers spent a record \$35.7 billion on gifts and celebrations. Interestingly, Jarvis, who initially promoted Mother’s Day, went after the florist’s aggressive marketing, eventually facing arrests for public disturbances because of her difficulty with the efforts of profiting off the holiday. Jarvis believed Mother’s Day became a wasteful and expensive gift day, saying, “If the American people are not willing to protect Mother’s Day from the hordes of money schemers that would overwhelm it with their schemes, then we shall cease having a Mother’s Day as we know it.” Finally, on May 10, 1908, the white carnation became the official Mother’s Day flower. So, remember, it’s not about flowers, cards, gift cards, or jewelry; it is all about love. Let’s pray.

Lord, you have something to teach every one of us because you said when we gather together that you are with us. We pray that as you are present with us as the body of Christ, we might function in a way that glorifies you, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Today, we delve into the 17th chapter in the gospel of John, where Jesus offers his most intimate prayer in the Bible as he intercedes for his disciples. Jesus, the Son of God, is with his disciples at the Passover meal. After he washes their feet and the meal is over, and now walking through Jerusalem, in this passage, we see Jesus lifting his eyes, praying that the glory of His Father is restored before the world once was where Jesus is standing at the right hand of God the Father. In the big picture of this prayer, he prays for his followers then and the eventual future followers of the Church—all those who will believe in the Word of the original followers.

There are four marks of a true church. But for today, I will lay out two of these characteristics. I shouldn’t have to tell you that all gatherings fall into this category. Some assemblies are called the synagogue of Satan. These followers are opposed to Jesus, and Jesus called them children of the devil. If Jesus sits at the head of the church, then He gets to say what is essential, and he doesn’t say plentiful parking is at the top of the list. So, here is the first mark of a true church- Every true Church should demonstrate God’s glory.

If we were to follow the entire passage to the end of Chapter 17, there is one word in one form or another that is repeated more than any other word: “glorify.” We see this word eight times. We must ask ourselves, what does the word mean exactly? What does it mean to glorify God? First, it is something we see visibly, a visible expression of God. An outward expression bringing an inward expression of Woe! In the book of Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah gets a vision of God’s glory when the glory of the Lord appeared, high and exalted, seated on a throne, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. Woe to me!” God showed up, and Isaiah shook in his sandals—the visible expression of God.

Second, to glorify means something we do to make renown or to make famous. In verse 4, Jesus says, “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.” In verse 6, “I have revealed (manifested) you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word.” In other words, I have put the spotlight on you and passed that goal onward. So, what is our purpose as the Church? To put the spotlight on glorifying God. Friends, the primary purpose of the Church is not fellowship or evangelism. Evangelizing and fellowship are essential, and we exist as a secondary purpose for that reason. It is not going or growing but glorifying God in all we do. To make renown by paying attention to God and, while doing so, enjoying Him forever. Friends, the first point and the reason we exist is to glorify God by giving Him our attention. How do we do that? We do that by what we say and what we do. Worship is the one exercise that we do where God gets all the attention, so we should not chuckle when difficulty arises following the melody of a song that falls short. When that happens, we do not glorify God. True worship focuses on God.

Secondly, when we gather together as a community, we reorient our lives in a demonstration. Don Whitney writes in his book on Spiritual Disciplines that “There is an element of worship and Christianity that cannot be experienced in private worship or by watching worship. There are some graces and blessings that God gives only in the ‘meeting together’ with other believers.” Those of you who are here today must believe that because you are here. Martin Luther wrote something similar, saying, “At home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart, and it breaks its way through.” Friends, these words have only brought on my struggle with reigniting Livestream worship for the same reasons. I get so weary when people ask – “When are you going back to live streaming?” My answer? When are you coming to Church to put focus on God and not yourself? In Psalm 73, the psalm of Asaph, Asaph came to the understanding that where God is worshipped, he became reoriented. He says, “But for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold, For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.”

Let’s look at verse 4 again. “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you have me to do.” So, how do we glorify God? By finishing the work, he has given us to do? Do you know that God has given each of us an assignment that only you can fulfill? The goal of life is not only heaven, for if that is the only goal, you will miss out on why God put you here on earth. The day you discover what you were born for is the day your joy will be complete. If you

live to glorify God, you will die having no regrets. The words of God in the New Testament are for you and me as true believers, and the business of the Church is to communicate God's truth. The most important parts of communicating God's truth are worship and the word. I find it a hard pill to swallow when people grade churches. On what they like or dislike based on what they do for me. Do they make me feel good and have programs for me, etcetera? But God grades churches on two questions. Do they glorify me and preach My word? Matthew 28 says in the last half, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

At the beginning of the early church, in Acts chapter 2, we read, "They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. In Paul's last letter to Timothy, he said, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, I give you this charge: Preach the Word, for the time will come when people do not put up with sound doctrine, instead, to suit their selfish desires." Friends, in these moments of glorifying God through the preaching of the word, something should happen to us in that truth produces joy. In verses 13-14, Jesus says, "I say these things so that they may have the full measure of my joy fulfilled in themselves. 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."

As you are all well aware, many people in the world hate Christians. There is no joy in a world that is falling apart. Friends, I am preaching to the world who hates us right now to say that God's word produces joy! God's word will sustain us in the worst of times, and that, my friends, is what makes us "*Armed for the World.*"

Last week, during joys and concerns, I mentioned a past co-worker who recently died and who I believed suffered from a mental health problem, most likely some form of depression. There are many studies out there on the issue of mental health, but one I would like to share with you today shows that going to church on a regular basis is good for one's mental health. A poll shows that although mental health has tanked, there is one exception within one group. Guess who that group is?

In December of 2022, the Gallup news organization reported that the mental health of Americans is worse than it has been at any point in the last two decades; 'those who seldom or never attend religious services have the lowest ratings.' Frequent attenders rank highest in excellent mental health." A post from the Harvard School of Public Health article last week highlighted that weekly religious service attendance (more than three times per month) is associated with "lower mortality risk, lower depression, less suicide, and greater happiness and purpose in life."

As I near the close of today's message, we have two groups—on one side, the people of the world, and on the other side, the people of the Word—people of the world who do not have the Word of God and people who have the truth and promises of God's Word. People of the world are happy when nice things happen to them. But life to them is like a yo-yo, up and down. People of God's Word have a fixed point, shaped by the word of God and joy in both life's ups and downs. Psalm 119 says this, "Blessed (or happy) are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do not do wrong but follow his ways. Direct me in the path of your

commands, for there I find delight.” In the end, truth produces happiness, and my friends, now you can leave here today knowing that you are separate from the world, sanctified holy by God’s word, and “*Armed for the World.*” Amen.