



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
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JOHN 17:11-19

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, I want to ask that you would give us all the glimpse of your power. We know that in the Bible you're called El Shaddai or God Almighty. We know that you can open up the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross over, you can conquer Jericho, and you can do all these miracles that we see in your word. Lord, I ask that you'd help us to make that cross over to our own lives. I pray that young people here today would experience your power and how personal it is. Thank you that you are a chain-breaker and you're also a way-maker and someone who opens the door for us to follow you. I just ask, Lord, that you would reveal yourself this morning as we look at your word. Teach us more about your power and how it affects us each personally. In Jesus' name, amen.

In God's word we see quite a bit of passages that talk about safety, protection, care. Our world has a priority on safety. Much of it we appreciate. Safety if you're driving a vehicle that you're careful about how you drive. Safety about in the workplace. Personal safety. Safety on the internet. Childproofing your home for safety for kids. Safety's important. So if you are working in a machine shop, it's important to have all the protective gear so you don't get hurt. That's safety. That's important.

If you do have children in the home, you want to make sure you have safety set up. Not only so they can't get in cupboards where poisons are, but get on the internet where there's poisons as well. There needs to be safety.

Safety is an important part of our lives and we all need to be keeping that in mind. But there is a statement out there that says safety first or safety is my goal. I think that's valid. I think it's very important to make safety a high priority in our lives. But there's one place where safety I think is dangerous and that is when we make safety our goal in our spiritual and personal lives. Because God has given us truth and He's given us a mission and He says go out and share this. And frankly, it takes us into rather dangerous places sometimes. Dangerous places, not only like Egypt where people are being persecuted for their faith, but also dangerous places in our homes when we take a stand for Jesus Christ.

So I want to look at this idea of safety because Jesus is talking about it today in our passage. We're going through the Bible verse by verse and we happen to be in John 17. In John 17 Jesus is praying and He prays for safety. So I want to look at His words first of all and then I want to talk more about what does safety mean for us and how do we apply this in our lives. So this is potentially a lifechanging message for you today. I ask you to just open your heart and ask God

to speak to you in this area of safety. What does He want to say to you about this in your own heart?

Would you stand with me as we read these first two verses from the passage? We're going to go all the way through verse 19 today, but these first two verses are where I want to zero in at first.

As Jesus continues His prayer, it says – *I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

You may be seated.

As Jesus comes before the Father and He's bringing this final prayer before He Himself is crucified, before He enters the most dangerous part of His life, He's praying for something for His disciples. A prayer that we can accept and receive for ourselves. I think it's pretty important for us to understand what God wants to communicate to us here in this passage and in His word. So I'm putting the first part of a statement up here on the screen, which says: God wants you to feel safe.

We'll get to the rest of the statement a little bit later, but I want to meditate on this for a moment. Because there are literally hundreds of verses in the Bible that talk about safety and how God wants you to feel safe. He wants you to feel protected, He wants you to feel cared for. I'm going to take you through some of those verses just so God's word can impact your heart in addressing your own personal safety needs. If you have struggles in your life with various issues and challenges and so you don't feel safe, you need to understand what God wants for you because God wants you to feel safe.

Let me show you some examples of scriptures. He says in Psalm 127 – *The Lord is my light and my salvation* (if you're afraid of the dark, this is a great verse)—*whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?* Now feeling safe is on one side, fears are on the other. If you're plagued by fears in your life or fears are bothering you, then you need this message today. You need the message from God's word today about safety. That God doesn't want you to feel afraid. He wants you to feel safe. Psalm 27 is an example of that. *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* The implication is nothing because I know God.

Another verse is in Proverbs 18:25. It says – *The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.* Now I chose this verse out of the hundreds that we could put here because our passage in John 17 uses the word *the name of the Lord*. Jesus prays – *Father, protect them by the power of your name.*

The name God, the name Yahweh, the name Lord, the name Savior, even the name Jesus represent something and it's in this fear of His name that we find this protection, we find this safety. It's like a tower that if you're being attacked by the enemy, you can run to the tower and you are safe. It's the name, the very presence of God, who He is. We need to get to know God.

Understand the name of God. Understand this fear of what God has for us because there is safety there, there's power in that name.

Another passage in Isaiah 41:10 says – *So do not fear, for I am with you* (now here we're emphasizing the very presence of God). Sometimes we feel alone and in our aloneness we feel unsafe. God says I want you to feel safe. *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* God wants us to feel safe.

Here's another one. Psalm 46:1 – *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.* I don't think that's enough, so we're going to get to another page of verses. Get this idea. Let's get this idea that God wants us to feel safe and understand that's a message from the Bible that God wants for us. He wants us to feel safe.

Here's another verse. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

We obviously live in a world that's confused by sin, as Tim said. And there's pressures around us continually. But there's a place that we can experience the protection and the safety of God, even in the midst of challenges. So I don't want you to perceive here, as we're going to see as we go through the passage, that safety means absence of harm. Because even in the midst of the pressure, we can experience something for God, and this safety can exist even when dangers and confusion and harm are all around us, or even affecting us.

In 2 Samuel 22:3, we have – *My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—from violent people you save me.*

Another one. Psalm 23, a passage of scripture we all know and love because it says – *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death* (or the NIV says *the darkest valley*), *I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* We like that verse because of the protection that's mentioned in that passage.

Probably the greatest psalm in the Bible that has to do with protection and safety is Psalm 121. Psalm 120 to Psalm 134, those are the Psalms of Ascent. Those are the psalms that the Israelites would sing on their way marching up, or on their way to the holy days or the feast days in Jerusalem. As they would make their pilgrimage up the mountains, they would sing the songs. They were in groups, so this group of people would be walking along and there's another group, and they would be singing the songs as they were going up. What a beautiful experience that must have been as the celebrations that would take place in Jerusalem began in the Psalms of Ascent.

Psalm 121 (I'm sure you've heard this), but look at the whole passage. It says this: *I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not*

slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Wow. That’s a pretty strong statement of God’s protection and God’s safety.

So the first part of the sentence is a very important one for us to grasp. If you find yourself worried a lot, you probably ought to memorize passages that talk about God’s safety and His protection and His care. But let’s move to another point that I think is very interesting. These are the words in the passage: *Protect them by the power of your name. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.*

But look at the last phrase because this brings us to another part of the prayer that illustrates another piece of the puzzle that we must understand if we’re going to talk about this safety. Because one of the twelve didn’t make it. Jesus says – *None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.* There’s one who made a choice and he wasn’t kept safe. Which tells me then that safety is conditional.

Satan wants to attack, he wants to destroy us. He’s looking for ways to do that. And he wants to destroy homes, he wants to destroy your personal vitality, he wants to create anger in you, he wants to get you sucked into materialism. So many ways he can destroy us. Satan is trying to attack us. How can we experience the protection of God? Well there’s this umbrella of protection that we experience and we experience through obedience. When we’re obedient to God, then you’re protected from the attacks of Satan. This protection and safety is conditional. It’s conditioned upon our obedience and following what God has for us.

If God says to you, “You need to go to Nineveh and you need to preach the word to these people that I want to bring to myself,” and Jonah says, “I don’t think so. One, they don’t deserve your grace. And I don’t want to go there.” So he decides to disobey God and he decides to run the other way. He gets on a boat, gets out, and there’s a huge storm. A very big storm. A storm that threatens his very life.

It reminds me of another storm – a storm on the Sea of Galilee when the disciples were afraid, but Jesus was right there in the boat with them sleeping. Now I would suggest the disciples in the boat with Jesus with them was the safest place that they could be. The safest place in our lives is to be right where God wants us to be. Even though it might be challenging, the safest place that we can be is to be in the storm in the presence of Jesus, obeying Him. That’s the safest place we could be.

I would also suggest that the most dangerous place we could be is to be in disobedience, running from God, not doing what God wants. Because not only do we have the attacks of Satan coming after us, but we also have God lovingly disciplining us. Jonah, I’m not going to let you do this. I’m going to discipline you. That’s a very dangerous place to be. I don’t want to have to be in a place where God has to send a violent storm to change... Lord, just whisper in my ear if I’m off track. I want to change with that. I don’t want you to send some big thing to change me. The safety of God and the protection of God is conditional.

Let me show you some verses that just illustrate this. Psalm 191 says – *If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,” and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you.* Here’s another passage about safety, but there’s an *if* there. There’s a sense of coming into God’s presence that I’m going to obey God, I’m going to obey you, I’m going to trust you. And when you’re doing the right thing (that is you’re obeying God, following His direction), then you’re in this safety place.

In Psalm 91 – *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

Psalm 37 – *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.* There’s this condition upon which we trust in the Lord, we do the right thing, we do what He’s called us to do. And I just would suggest today, if you know what God has told you to do and you’re not doing it, you’re in danger. Or if you’re doing something you know is wrong, then you’re in danger and you want to correct that so you can experience the very safety that God wants for you in your life.

In Exodus 14:14 it says – *The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.* I think sometimes we want control in what we feel to be an unsafe environment. So we’re yelling at people or we’re criticizing them or we’re making a lot of drama. Sometimes what we need to do is be quiet, be still, and let the Lord fight for us. Safety that God wants for us in our lives.

So he says – *None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.* Safety of God is present for us, it’s available to us.

So I would suggest the message for today is this: God wants you to feel safe, He wants you to be motivated to follow Him so you can boldly serve Him. God wants you to feel safe so you can live boldly for Him. I would suggest this is what God wants for us in our lives. That yes, He wants us to feel safe, even in the midst of challenges that we experience so that we can live boldly. We can go out and serve Him in a way...well it’s going to do two things.

So let me take you to the rest of the passage that we’re looking at today in John 17. It continues on with these words and it says – *“I am coming to you now (these are Jesus’ words), but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.”*

You’ve got to think in terms of when Jesus is saying, “Lord, protect them,” what is He saying? He’s not saying, “Lord, Father, would you please have them sublimate on hammocks under the sun.” It’s not just all about safety. It’s safety in the midst of something that He’s calling them to.

Just watch what He says here in these words because the world will hate them. The world is a dangerous place is what He’s saying to them. *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of*

it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Notice we have the *truth* and we're *sent*. Do you see the words there? That we have the truth. He's given us the truth. *As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* So we have the truth and we have a message. A message that we have an opportunity, and really a responsibility to share with others, people who are hurting, people who are in pain. People who are suffering. We have something that we can offer them. So God has given us that truth and He's given us a message and we need to boldly proclaim that. Which means we step outside of our comfort zones many times. So it's not about just finding a safe place because safety isn't my goal. My goal is to serve Jesus Christ and to boldly share about Him, to boldly live for Him.

It's going to do two things. One is it's going to sanctify. Sanctify means to make me more holy of a person. To grow me. What that means is I'm going to make some mistakes when I step out and try to do something for the Lord. I'm likely to make a mistake. Yet that mistake can result in further growth inside of my own heart. So there's the sanctification process that's taking place, but also I have something. I have the truth and if I really believe I have the truth then I must go share it even though there's the dangers all around me that may appear to be unsafe.

Sanctify them by the truth, He's saying to His Father. He's saying grow us. That when you take risks, you're going to fail. When you take risks, you're going to make mistakes. But when you're doing that in Jesus' name, even though you make mistakes, there's growth that's taking place in your heart. Then you have this message; you're going out to share this truth with the world that's deeply in need. So God wants you to feel safe, yes. But He wants you to feel safe so that you can boldly share the message of the gospel. Sometimes that means talking to people about Jesus. Sometimes it means living it out. Sometimes it means going somewhere and doing that.

You remember Abraham. God said, "Abraham, I want you to leave your country and I want you to go to another place." Man, that's a lot of courage. He would never see those people back there again. When Abraham leaves that land and goes to the Promised Land, he will never see... What risks that is. What challenge that is. God calls us to take risks. God calls us to be bold. And in that case, He says, "I want you to go to another place. I want you to do something different." Maybe for you I want to take a new change, I want you to change your living situation, I want you... Whatever it is, I'm going to be bold and I'm going to do what God is calling me to do.

But then I quickly in my mind go to the passage in Mark 6 where there was a man who had been healed. He was plagued by demons and he was just violent inside. It just ruined his life. I know that some of you experience just the plague of drug addiction or pornography addiction, those kinds of demons that can damage a person. Here's a guy Jesus cast out the demons out of this guy. Now he's whole. Now he's no longer suffering under the torment of these demons. And he says to Jesus, "Jesus, I want to go with you. I want to serve you with my whole life. I'm coming with you." And Jesus says to him, "No. You need to stay here and serve me here in your home among the people that you know." It takes boldness to serve Christ in our homes. It takes boldness to stay in a place unsafe sometimes because we have a message that we're communicating about the gospel.

We're trying to live that life in boldness. So we live this bold life because we represent God and who He is. We speak openly about God. Even though we know that some people won't like it. We listen gently to people, even when we'd rather listen very aggressively. We give generously in life because we are very interested in representing Christ. We step out courageously. We give freely. We love unconditionally. We have this confidence to do these things because we love God and God has called us to this.

Now if you understand the idea here that Jesus is praying, "Lord, protect them," while He's sending them on a dangerous mission, you might have a little bit uncomfortable feeling of how can He do this? How can He put safety and protection together with risk-taking and serving God in dangerous conditions? I think it's because what God does here is He redefines safety. He says here's what I'm going to do. Of all the fears that you have that prevent you from serving boldly, I'm going to take some things off the table.

Let's start with death, the ultimate challenge. I'm going to take death off the table for you so you don't have to be afraid of it. Now you can continue to go to church, you can continue to serve me, you can continue to spread the message of the gospel even under fear of death. That's pretty big. And God says I'm going to take it off the table so you don't have to worry about death.

So Paul was able to say – *For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*. He feels very safe sharing the gospel even though He's beat up so many times and thought he was going to die a number of times. Death isn't on the table for him. It's not a fear that he is because God has protected him. Might he die? Yes. God is redefining safety for us in our understanding of how we're going to live in our world. One of the things he does is He removes from the table the challenge of death. This is so important for us. Whether you're afraid of dying of natural causes or you're afraid of dying because of the persecution of your faith, this doesn't have to be on the table because you have this relationship with God. That death isn't this huge thing to be feared.

How else does He redefine safety? It has to do with this idea of rejection. *The world will hate you*, He says in the passage. They're going to hate you. That doesn't sound like a very safe place to me. But He's saying I'm going to take that off the table too. Your belonging needs are now with me. You don't have to fear the rejection you're going to experience when you go to school and people laugh at you because you're a Christian. You don't have to fear the fact that you take a stand for Jesus and people are not going to like that. Because I'm going to take that off the table. You're going to expect that. That's going to happen. That's all part of the safety. Wow. Isn't that interesting that God has given us an alternative to belonging to the world. We don't belong to the world; we belong to Jesus. And those safety needs are met in him.

He redefines safety for us also by dealing with materialism. I would suggest that many times people today try to obtain their safety through the things around them. They purchase things, they try to have a big bank account. There's nothing wrong with big bank accounts or purchasing things. I'm not trying to criticize those things. All I'm saying is those can't be the basis for our safety. They are too temporal. They are easily taken away. If your faith is in the stock market, you've got a problem because your emotions will be going up and down, up and down every day. Your faith has to be in something bigger than that. So Jesus says I'm going to take materialism off the table too. So in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says – You know how God

cares for the flowers? Dresses them pretty nice, doesn't He? See how He takes care of the birds and He feeds that? How much more will your heavenly Father care for you. *Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.*

There's a message about safety that I think is important for us to hear. And that message is that safety is redefined in God's kingdom and it doesn't mean absence of harm. The world system has a lot to say about safety. In fact safety can be a goal of many people in the world system. So they kind of retract themselves and they don't step out and they continually define their actions based on is it safe for me to do this? I would suggest God has something much bigger for us. He wants to change the world. You don't change the world by being safe in the world's eyes. You recognize that your safety relies on God and what He's done for you. If you're obedient to Him, He's going to protect you in the midst of the struggle, even though you might die. In order to understand that statement, you must understand what God is teaching us in His word. Because He's taking these major fears that we have off the table so that we can live boldly for Him.

So in Romans 8 it says these words – *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Wow. It's big. You have to ask yourself this morning this question: What fears are preventing me from stepping out for the Lord? What are the things I worry about that prevent me from serving God whole-heartedly in my own heart and life? I trust God will speak to you about speaking out boldly for Him. Sometimes that's with your words, sometimes that's with your actions.

But the point is, taking a stand and taking a hurting world, know that there are answers out there. People are waiting for these answers. People are hurting. They need the message of Jesus Christ. They need the message that God offers and He wants them to experience. God has allowed us to be the vehicles, the people that come out and share the message of this gospel so that other people can hear it and they can receive the same kind of protection and safety that they desperately need in their lives. That comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Would you stand with me please?

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we want to come before you now and just thank you. Thank you for giving us truth in a message. Thank you for your protection that you provide. But Lord, help us to be able to work that out in the challenging relationships that exist in a home or at work or in the neighborhood. Lord, give us such a commitment to your mission. That we're willing to overcome the challenges that often prevent us from serving you. Lord, we ask that you would not allow us to use safety as an excuse for not serving you whole-heartedly in our lives. Thank you for what you've done for us and continue to do for us. In Jesus' name, amen.