**Safe**

John 17:6-12

Kristin sings “Jesus, Name above all Names” by herself. (We sing it together after the message.)

I wanted Kristin to sing “Jesus, Name above all Names,” because that was the song she would sing whenever she got scared as a child. Her dad was deployed to Iraq for four months during Desert Storm, when she was just 13 years old. That’s a tough age to have your father away in a war. Kristin’s Mom also had the kids memorize Psalm 91 during that time.

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” Psalm 91:1-2

**God’s Name is a refuge**; a stronghold; a place we can rest and be protected. Jesus is the name above all names, the name before which one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

***That is our creed; it is our confession:*** “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Look again at Psalm 91. “I will say to **the LORD**, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” When we declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, we are professing that He is the covenant God of Israel; the great I am who called Abraham and spoke to Moses. The L-O-R-D all capital letters of the Old Testament took on flesh in the New Testament along with the name Jesus, Yeshua, the Savior.

Today in this part of John 17 we will see **three victories** the Lord Jesus achieved for us. Here he is PRAYING, but the prayer is a summary of His work – done to that point and about to be done. Three wonderful victories of our glorious Lord Jesus. First.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Revealed** God’s Name

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.” John 17:6

The name of God is a special theme throughout the Bible. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He revealed ***His personal name, “I am,”*** that formalized His relationship with the Jews from then on. Yahweh is the Hebrew pronunciation of God’s personal, covenant name, and is a play on the phrase “I am” that sounds like “Yih-hih-yeh.” ***God is the God of all BEING***, the One who has always existed and who upholds the existence of all things.

So in what sense did JESUS manifest the name of God to the people of God? The Jews already knew God by His personal name as manifested through Moses. They already had the Torah, the Law of God and the prophets and the poets. But Jesus took God’s revelation to another level. Remember how John opened his gospel:

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Revealed** God’s Name
   * The manifestation of God’s nature and **Identity**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

Jesus - the eternal Son of God - is called the “word of God” in the opening verse of John’s gospel. Not only was Jesus WITH GOD, Jesus WAS GOD – one with God the Father in the unifying love of the Holy Spirit. Just a few verses later John wrote:

* + The manifestation of God’s nature and **Identity**

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth…For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.” John 1:14,17-18

The Word of God through whom all things were made **BECAME FLESH**. He was born as a fully human baby when the Holy Spirit united His eternal, divine DNA with Mary’s human DNA. The blinding glory of God that if you looked upon it you would die, was woven into a human body so the world could see God and live. The full glory of God but walking among us.

Moses gave the Law, which was an introduction to the nature and identity of God, but there was more to reveal, and ***Jesus came to complete that revelation.*** There was more truth and there was this key thing called GRACE.

Now, was there not grace in the Old Testament? No, from the dawn of creation and God’s first interaction with human beings, grace was necessary. As soon as Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s one command, grace entered the story. Really even before that they hadn’t earned anything, so all of creation, the whole world was God’s gift of grace to them, including the gift of each other! But after sin entered the world, the only reason Adam and Eve stayed alive was the mercy and grace of God.

The only reason anyone survived the flood was the mercy and grace of God. The only reason God chose Abraham and rescued his family from Egypt and gave the Law through Moses – the only reason for God’s work in history was His grace. If there is one truth in all of Scripture it is that people are sinners who ***deserve nothing from God but judgment***.

***But God’s grace hit a new level in the person of Jesus*** - it reached maximum reality in the death and resurrection of Jesus. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Not only the grace to pay for all of your sins and mine, but the TRUTH to show us the fullness of God’s nature, identity, purposes and plans.

Before Jesus came, we had a sketch, a faint outline – ***in Jesus we have the high res portrait***, the full and final revelation. “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son of God has now made Him known.” Or as we see in John 17, Jesus summed all of this up in the NAME He manifested.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Revealed** God’s Name
   * The manifestation of God’s nature and **Identity**

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.”

John 17:6

Think of this wonderful truth: ***we KNOW the personal name of the Almighty God.*** Jesus has shown us what God is like and how we can approach Him and be with Him in a personal way.

Now, ***I don’t know very many famous people.*** I met the great civil rights leader John Perkins at a conference a couple of years ago. I’ve met Alan Hirsch a few times in recent years, a great church strategist and consultant whose name probably doesn’t mean much to you all, but it was a fun, nerdy moment when he signed a book for me, “To my best friend, Darin.” Because I asked him to do that.

Back in 2014, I got to work with **Stephen Baldwin**. I’m sure you know his older brother Alec from back when he was the conductor in the Thomas the Tank Engine show. Stephen’s big show was Young Riders about the pony express back in 1989, so it was aimed right at my 13-year-old demographic.

We wanted to do a stage play for Pastor Colin Smith’s new book about the thief on the cross. It’s a great little book called ***Heaven, How I Got Here***; a great tool for reaching out to people with a religious background who think good works and spiritual activities help get you to heaven. Our team called Stephen Baldwin’s agent to see if he’d be up for doing this stage play. Stephen right away said No because he had never done any live theater. But then his agent said, “You’d get to be the thief on the cross.” And without further thought or discussion Stephen said, “Tell them I’ll do it.”

He was perfect for the role of the thief – gritty, honest, direct, a little funny. It was a fascinating experience to work with a Hollywood actor on a 45-minute stage monologue. Very memorable and an impactful event.

The point is that it was a big deal for me to meet Stephen personally, and in the process, I learned that ***he actually goes by the nickname Stevie B***. So, if I ran into him on the street somewhere I would say, “Hey, Stevie B!” and he wouldn’t remember me, but would know, “That’s a person who knows my name.” He would certainly remember the project because it absolutely freaked him out to memorize a live monologue. He couldn’t sleep in the run up to the show he was so stressed about it.

That’s a small, silly example. **But think of the reality with GOD**. Jesus has made the introduction and the connection – He has manifested the personal NAME of God so we can have eternal life NOW, meaning we can know the everlasting God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Revealed** God’s Name
   * The manifestation of God’s nature and **Identity**

“Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.” John 17:6

We are some of the people who belonged to God from eternity past, He gave us to Jesus and now it is our privilege and joy to believe and obey the word of Jesus. Think about **your obedience to the teachings of Jesus** – how you love God, love His people, serve others and make disciples. That is part of God the Father’s gift to Jesus and the Lord Jesus’ gift back to the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus revealed the Name of God, making known God’s nature and identity.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Revealed** God’s Name
   * The manifestation of God’s nature and **Identity**

“Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.” John 17:7

Everything Jesus made manifest was given to Him by the Father. Everything Jesus did, He did in submission to the Father’s will, only because He already saw the Father doing it. Jesus joined in the work of the Father through the discernment, leading and power of the Holy Spirit.

And the disciples were ***blessed to KNOW this incredible truth*** – that Jesus himself was from the Father, and all Jesus had, all Jesus said, all Jesus did, was from the Father. “Everything that you have given me is from you.”

And WE are part of that everything. Amazing. This is the victory of King Jesus. He revealed God’s Name. Second:

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Proclaimed** God’s Word
   * The explanation of God’s **Purposes** and plans

“For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them.”

John 17:8

You can talk about ***God’s Word or God’s words in the singular or the plural*** – it refers to the same reality: God’s spoken will, His purposes, desires and plans. In verse 6 it is God’s WORD that God’s people have kept. Here in verse 8 it is the words God the Father gave to God the Son. In verse 6 it was about OBEYING God’s Word. Here it is about RECEIVING those words.

This should remind us of **the parable of the Sower**. The good soil RECEIVES the seed of God’s Word and bears fruit 30, 60, 100 times what was sown. The bad soil, whether it is a hard path, rocky, shallow or thorny soil does not receive the word and does not bear fruit.

The people who belonged to God from eternity past, whom He gave to Jesus the Son, ***those people are the GOOD SOIL***. They received the words of Jesus and kept them, they bear fruit for His glory. They are connected to the vine and produce fruit through His power.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Proclaimed** God’s Word
   * The explanation of God’s **Purposes** and plans

“They have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.” John 17:8

This is a chiasm or a **“truth sandwich”** which is very common in the Bible. It’s a form of verbal framing where you have two synonymous phrases that surround a central point, drawing attention to what is in the middle. To receive the words of Jesus and to believe that God sent Him are synonymous – so look at the meat of the sandwich that those phrases surround: “and have come to know in truth that I came from you.”

***KNOWING the truth is the RESULT of receiving Jesus’ words*** and believing that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the World. You don’t KNOW first and then believe. You believe first and then come to know. Faith must come first, understanding comes later. That’s what makes faith FAITH - the fact that you don’t completely understand. But as you walk by faith, as you get to know God, whose Name you know personally, then you increasingly do know the truth of what you have already believed.

Conversely, ***if you refuse to believe in Jesus, your understanding of him may not progress.*** Many people get stuck in the position of unbelief BECAUSE they think the world has too much evil and suffering in it or because THEY have been through too much pain and loss or because the Trinity is confusing, and the Bible is a big, complicated book.

I had ***a friend in NC named Paul*** who I played soccer with. He was the guy who took me to the ER when I ruptured my first Achilles tendon. Yes, I ruptured the other one two years later and didn’t bother going to the ER because I had an ortho doc and knew what was coming. Paul knew a lot about Jesus and the Bible. His wife was an avid churchgoer, and he had done his homework. For the four years we were in Charlotte I spent time with Paul, trying to answer his questions and help him move across that line of faith and commitment to Jesus.

He never budged. I like to tell myself that I helped him clarify some things. But after four years I could not see any tangible movement in him. He was stuck on the same questions as when I first met him.

But then his wife was diagnosed with ALS - Lou Gehrig’s disease. It was a tough battle, and she passed away in her early 40s.

[reaching out to Paul - I hope his story progressed after Vivian died…]

Understanding came AFTER faith.

***This is also true for us in suffering.*** If you demand answers from God, read how that worked out for Job. Jump to the end of the book in chapters 38 to the end. Job shows us it’s ok to express your sadness and anger and to shout at God. But when you start to question His wisdom or goodness or power to justify yourself, that’s when you need to step back and watch for the lightning.

**When we don’t understand** what God is doing; when life doesn’t make sense to us; when the pain feels overwhelming and fear threatens to overwhelm us – that is the opportunity to exercise faith. That is when trust must kick in. And trusting in the Lord in those moments gives such glory and honor to Him.

***Have YOU received the words of Jesus?*** Have you believed that Jesus did, in fact, come from God as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth?

Then increasingly you WILL understand God’s purposes and plans. Increasingly you will JOIN in those plans. When we pray “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” God moves us to join in His work. And that is what Jesus prays for in verse 9.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Proclaimed** God’s Word
   * The explanation of God’s **Purposes** and plans

“I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” John 17:9

This is an interesting line in Jesus’ prayers. ***He is praying for BELIEVERS.*** And overtly says he is NOT praying for the world. This doesn’t mean that Jesus NEVER prayed for the world. It just means in this moment, as he prepared to go to the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross, the main burden of his heart was US.

Think of that. Before the cross, **Jesus was praying for YOU**. For those given to him by the Father. You belonged to God the Father and through Jesus prayers, through His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection Jesus paid the price for your adoption into His family.

This is God’s great work in salvation history - redeeming a people to be with Him forever.

The only reason we understand these purposes and plans of God is because Jesus announced them to his followers. Trust me, no one would have figured all of this out without the direct, clear explanation of the Lord Jesus. This is the main reason he hung out for 40 days after the resurrection – ***to speak about the KINGDOM.***

Jesus didn’t come at that point to fix the entire world. The Jews mainly wanted him to fix the situation with Rome for Israel. But Jesus didn’t come to do that either. ***He came to inaugurate his SPIRITUAL KINGDOM***, through which He reigns in the hearts and lives of His followers.

This is what Jesus prays for in John 17: the establishment of that kingdom in the hearts of his people – in your heart, in mine. And that’s the third victory of the Lord Jesus we celebrate today.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Accomplished** God’s Mission
   * The salvation and **Union** of all who believe in Him

“All mine are yours and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.” John 17:10

Jesus started this prayer ***praying that the Father would GLORIFY HIM***. How was Jesus glorified? By being lifted up on a cross, a gruesome instrument of public, shameful execution. It was a symbol of judgment, punishment and the power of Rome.

But when Jesus triumphed over sin and death by dying on the cross and rising on the third day, ***the cross became a symbol for life after death***, for victory through sacrifice, for joy through suffering, for endurance through all opposition.

The primary way Jesus was glorified and still is glorified is through people like you and me. As we gather to sing His praises, as we bow our heads to pray, as we open the Bible to learn, as we talk about Him, as we love and serve others in His name, we honor the great King of all kings. We extend His kingdom one more step. One more person.

***“All mine are yours and yours are mine.”***

Think of a **friend or family member or neighbor** who does not yet know Jesus. The thing about God’s sovereign plans with election and predestination is that HE KNOWS who belongs to Him from eternity past, but WE DON’T. I can’t promise you that the person in your mind right now is one of God’s sheep. But the fact that the Holy Spirit is bringing them to mind is a very good sign. If you have been praying for someone for years and years and the Lord won’t let you stop praying for them, that is a good sign.

Some sheep are stubborn. Some of us were. They have to fall into the same pit 100 times, 1,000 times.

But keep praying. Keep asking Jesus to work in their hearts. I like to ***pray for people from head to toe.***

* Pray for their minds to be clear so they can understand who God is.
* Pray for their eyes to be opened to the truth of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.
* Pray for their ears to hear the good news as it truly is - wonderfully good news.
* Pray for their mouths to taste and see that the Lord is good.
* Pray for their hearts to become good soil to receive God’s Word.
* Pray for their lungs to breathe in the air of God’s love and breathe out the toxins of sin.
* Pray for their guts to turn at the reality of their sin, for conviction to come.
* Pray for their legs to bring them to places where they can learn more about Jesus - to church, to Bible study, to those who know and love the Lord.
* Pray for their feet to run from evil and for the Holy Spirit to guide them to green pastures and quiet waters.

Jesus is the wonderful Savior, the glorious Lord – pray that your friend would have the chance, soon, to meet Him and experience personally the joyful offer of salvation and eternal life that only Jesus can give.

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Accomplished** God’s Mission
   * The salvation and **Union** of all who believe in Him

“And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.” John 17:11

God’s plan of salvation is not that someone gets saved and then gets whooshed out of this dark and broken world. ***He leaves us here*** because there is work for all of us to do in this hurting, sad, difficult planet.

Jesus was so burdened by this change. Think what a blessing it was for the Lord Jesus to have walked on earth for those 33 years. What a unique experience it was for the timeless, eternal Creator of all things ***to feel what we feel***, to walk and get sore feet, to struggle with sore muscles, to weep and to laugh to enjoy elaborate meals and days of hunger.

Now that season was coming to an end and it was sad for Jesus. But He knew, in the plan of salvation, He had to finish the work on the cross and then it was ***time for the Holy Spirit to empower the church***, the body of Christ, to do the rest. Jesus’ work has been to sit at the Father’s right hand, to intercede for us and reign over all things from that position of glory.

And He continues to pray for us even now!

**Our Victorious Lord:**

1. Jesus **Accomplished** God’s Mission
   * The salvation and **Union** of all who believe in Him

“Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.” John 17:12

The name by which we can know God at all, the name by which we are saved, the precious name given to Jesus that is the name above all other names, is the name in which we are UNITED.

We are SAFE in His name. ***We are ONE in His name.***

There is only **ONE NAME**. Only one by which you can be saved. That means that there is only one body, only one church, only one family. Jesus Christ is not divided. If you have been united with Him through faith then in that same act by which you were united with God, you were united with this global family called the church.

We are one. But it is up to us to LIVE like those who are one. And it is very significant that **Jesus PRAYS for this unity**.

This tells us that ***unity will be hard fought***. It will not be automatic. What will happen naturally is DIVISION. What will only happen supernaturally is UNITY.

And, of course, that is the lesson of history. The church has been very good at dividing and consistently bad at unifying.

Many of you know that networking is my hobby and really my passion project. I have been gripped by John 17 for almost 15 years now – the heart of God for a church actually unified, actually working together.

***Back in 2018 a handful of churches came together*** for a week of evangelism. That little group planned a 2 day prayer summit in January of 2019 and in those days of praying and eating together the Lord forged something special at the heart of Tampa Bay – He united the hearts of a handful of pastors around His John 17 prayer.

COVID gave us time to dream and discuss what collaboration might look like. And over the years we have taken small, faltering baby steps like little Bambi on the ice. But our little network has grown. It feels like small trickles that unite into little streams; those little streams are fed by other little streams and now we have what I think you in the south call a “crick.” It’s not yet a creak and certainly not a river. But it will be.

Because it’s the heart of Jesus. It’s what HE is praying for. And increasingly it is what WE are praying for. ***That we would be ONE as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.*** Perfect unity. Loving harmony. Mutual service, glory and love.

This year we took a big step forward with the help of Blue Aspen and the National Christian Foundation. Keep praying for this kind of unity at Oakwood, in our part of north Tampa and throughout the Bay region.

Let’s pray.