In Jesus' name. **Amen**.
People Loved by God,
In today's text for our meditation, we get to hear the Son of God speak, that is pray to His Father.
It's only a portion of His prayer on the night that He was betrayed,
but listen to His concern for His disciples…
and listen for the two things that make His disciples distinct from "**the world**" as He calls it.

As follows in Jesus' name:

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given Me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have 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. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.** (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; ***sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth****. Amen.* (John 17:17)

Isn't if fascinating that on the night before He is brutally beaten, mocked, tortured and crucified,
Jesus spends this time in prayer concerned about… His disciples, His people?
But, in a way, it shouldn't be surprising, because His love for them is so great that He is going to be brutally beaten, mocked, tortured and crucified and die *for* them… in their place.
And going through all that for them, He desires that they would be preserved and protected,
that they would keep their faith in Him regardless of the evil they will see.

But did you note that there was another group that Jesus spoke about? … He called it "**the world**."
Jesus makes a distinction between His disciples and "**the world**,"
that His disciples, are "**in the world**" but not "**of the world.**"
By "**the world**" here, He does not just mean the earth, the orb rotating around the sun.
Instead, when He speaks about **the world**, He means the collective evil will of our sinful human nature under the power and possession of **the evil one**, the devil.
Just like we call those who follow Jesus, the Church,
so we call those who are under the devil's tyranny, **the world**.

So when Jesus says that His disciples are "**in the world**" but not "**of the world,**"
He is saying that His disciples, His Church, live "in" amongst the world,
but that they do not belong to, are not possessed by, **the world** or **the evil one**.
…
So what is it that separates the Church (Jesus' disciples) apart from "**the world**"?

Maybe it would be helpful first to consider what doesn't set us apart.
Jesus doesn't say that His disciples are more holy or less sinful than the world.

His disciples have the same sinful flesh, the same original sin, the same inherited corruption
from our first father, Adam, as the world does.
When we are converted, sin and its corruption still clings to us, still lives in us.
Sin and its corruption won't leave us until we die.
So it isn't that the Church, that Jesus' disciples are more perfect than anyone else, than the world.

Instead, what separates us from the world are these 2 things… His Father's name & the word of God.
Listen to what Jesus said in His prayer,
Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me,
that they may be one, even as We are one.
And then, at the very end, **Sanctify them in the truth, Your Word is truth**.
These two things then (God's name & word) are very important, even though the world mocks both.

The name of the Lord is given to you in Baptism.
As the water is applied to you, so is His name, as you are baptized "in the name of" the Triune God.
In Baptism, you go from being "**of the world**,"
to "**<u>of</u> the Father and <u>of</u> the Son and <u>of</u> the Holy Spirit.**"
In Baptism, you go from being ruled by your own sinful passions and inclinations
and being a possession of **the evil one**, to being a child of God.
Your baptism sets you apart from **the world**, not as an act that you perform,
but as an act of salvation that God performs upon you as you are united to Him and He to you.
Through Baptism you become an adopted child of your heavenly Father.

And just like children learn to communicate and speak in their earthly families,
hearing and learning from their parents and siblings speaking,
so the Church learns to speak and communicate in spiritual things from the Word of God,
which is the other thing that separates us from "**the world**."

Did you hear Jesus say at the end of our text, **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth?**
That word "**sanctify**" means to "set apart" from other things.
You can think of sanctified things as things set apart from common and profane things,
…or in this case, Jesus is praying that His Church would be sanctified, set apart from the world
by God's holy Word.

Here again, we see that Jesus' disciples are not separated from the world by anything that they do.
Instead, it is God's Word acting upon them, sanctifying them, making them holy… set apart.
St. Paul tells us that the Gospel **is the power <u>of God</u> for salvation to everyone who believes**. Romans 1:16
It is God's word, His power.
He cleanses… He sets apart… He gives faith and trust through it.

But when we forget or neglect His Word, when we do not cherish His name given us in our baptism…
in other words, when we ignore the very things by which God sets His Church apart from the world,
then do not be surprised when the priorities of the world, the temptations of the devil,
and even your own sinful desires take over and become your priorities and desires?
When marriage is no longer a sacred institution of God, joining man and woman together,
but a human contract to be made or broken or ignored…

When children are no longer considered blessings and a heritage of the Lord,
but are financial liabilities, drains on your social life, or merely a feature of a successful marriage…
Consider your situation
if you know more about the lives of the Kardashians than you do about the life of your Savior…
if you know what your favorite political pundit would say, but don't know what Jesus did say…
if you are more excited about hearing the newest juicy gossip about a movie star,
than you delight in hearing about your Savior's love and forgiveness…
if you would rather spend 2-3 hours at a sporting event or in a bar or pub,
than 1 hour in the house of the Lord, being set apart by His name and word…
if we can easily spend 2 hours scrolling through your Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat feeds
or watch 1.5 hours of Fox News, CNN, MS-NBC, or News Max,
or read our favorite Substack articles for 10-30 minutes,
but can't set apart any time to hear or read or mark or inwardly digest God's Holy Word…
Then aren't you flirting with the world, and in danger of separating yourself from God?

Don't misunderstand me. This isn't to say that these things are inherently bad or evil.
But they easily become our idols when we devote our time to them, and give God the leftovers.
We need to be cleansed of this sin. We need the common and the profane removed from us.
If only there were One who could do this for us, who could cleanse our hearts from our idolatry,
and set us apart and declare us holy in the sight of God…
But wait! There is! That One is Jesus.

Where we struggle to be set apart from this world, He was set apart from His conception by the H. Spirit.
He was wholly devoted to His heavenly Father to perfectly know and do His will.
As a 12 year old boy in the temple, He was fascinated with learning more intimately of the work
of redemption that the Scriptures prophesied He was to accomplish 20 years later.
He cherished His baptism by which He sanctified the water to be a washing of rebirth for you,
that you thereby may be given His name and set apart as God's own child.
He willingly presented Himself on Palm Sunday, coming as the blessed One **in the name of the Lord**,
to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
And note that: He took away the sin of "**the world.**" Not just the Church, not just His disciples.
When He **became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross**,
He bore the world's sins… so that the world through Him, might be saved…
that the world might learn of Him, and thus be called to faith, and set apart from Himself.

But while His work of redemption was completed on the cross,
He continues still to work for your salvation as He continues to send out His Holy Spirit and Word.
Thus Jesus prayed to His Father that night, **I do not ask that You take them out of the world,**
but that You keep them from the evil one.
Through those 11 disciples that Jesus prayed for that night, and the many ministers that followed after,
God continues to set people apart, as they preach His Word & baptized into His holy name.
And so we have it even today, that you are **sanctified by the Truth** of your forgiveness in Christ,
set apart/separated from your sin and its consequences, separated from the evil one and the world,
and eternally united to Christ and your heavenly Father.

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.

But what do all those things do?
Do they give you joy? True joy?
Or do they make you more upset? Or do they cause you more fear?
Or do they only entertain your mind for a short moment, distracting you from the weightier things, the real things, your duties and responsibilities?

If the Bible is only a collection of ancient history books, then you're reading it incorrectly.
If the Bible history stories are simply expanded Aesops fables.
If it is a bunch of facts that cultured people should know in order to answer that column on Jeopardy.
If the Bible is simply a rule or guide book.
If Jesus is just an interesting figure,
Then you are reading or thinking about it wrong. > This is how the world reads it.
And oh how the world loves to discredit it > just watch the History channel on anything biblical.

Why don't we know this better?
While

That they may be one even as We are one.
Sin separates. Us from God and us from each other.

the world hates God's Word > **I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world**

Kept and guarded

God's Name - Given at baptism - kept by God's Holy Spirit

Jesus' Joy in themselves - by Jesus' prayer that He prayed in front of them. ??

Jesus prays for His disciples. He prays for you.
That none may be lost of all that have been given Him.
The Father gave them to Jesus. They are His.

I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one.
Joy

but strengthens and keeps us steadfast
in His Word and
in faith until our end.
This is His good and gracious will.

The Devil's temptations - Keep them from the evil one.

In Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, he used Jesus' thought regarding "**the world**"
as he explains the 3rd Petition, "***Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven***."
He speaks about the *evil counsel and will… of the devil, <u>the world</u> and our own flesh*."

In Jesus' name. **Amen**. *Soli Deo Gloria*Going to be crucified the next day, Jesus has no illusions about the evil of and in this world.
The evil one, the devil, wielded power in both the spiritual and secular authorities,
as Jesus was condemned by the Jewish Chief Priest and 70 elders,
and handed over to be crucified by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.
And not just in the authorities, but also the common people who went along with them, crying out,
"**Crucify Him, Crucify Him!**"

So don't think of God's Word as if it is a superstitious lucky charm,
as if it were something that we can manipulate whenever we want to do whatever we want…
as if just having picture frames of Scripture passages will ward off the devil and his temptations.
Nor should you think of God's Word as some magical incantation,
as if knowing a few verses will keep the world's allurements away from you.