

## John 17:11b-19

I don't know if you read People magazine and follow current events in the world of entertainment, and even if you do, you may not care that Bruce Jenner now claims to be a woman. Years ago he won the Olympic decathlon as a male. His face was seen on boxes of Wheaties. It seemed like he had carved out his niche in society; that he was sure about who he was. I'm not poking fun at him this morning, but this illustrates where many people are at. They're searching for their identity. They're not sure who they are. I don't mean they are unsure of their name, who their parents are, what street they live on, or even their place in society. They are unclear, perhaps even totally lost, about who they are with regard to their Creator, where they come from, and where they are going.

You need not struggle with this. You know to whom you belong. You are not just baptized; you are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Your identity has everything to do with who claimed you in these sacred waters. It's important to keep our baptism always before us because life here on earth is very confusing. Even for us Christians, remaining certain of our identity is a bit of a challenge at times.

Jesus knows this. In His High Priestly prayer in John 17, He says about you and me, "*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*" So you and I do not belong here. We are like fish out of water. And yet Jesus does not ask His heavenly Father to throw us back in the water where we belong. "*I do not ask,*" He prays, "*that You take them out of the world.*" Instead He says, "*I have sent them into the world.*"

Jesus knows how difficult it is living in this world. He Himself faced all of its challenges, all of its temptations. Satan tried to confuse Him about His own identity. "*If you are the Son of God...*" he said to Jesus three times. But Jesus knew where He had come from and where He was going. "*You sent Me into the world,*" He prays in our text, "*but now,*" He continues, "*I am coming to You.*"

I'm pretty sure that all of us have been on a trip in which it was necessary to stay over in a motel. When this happens, even if we have to stay in the same motel room for a number of days, we, nonetheless, realize that our stay is temporary. We do not bring our bed from home. We sleep in the bed provided for us. We don't bring our Lazy-Boy chairs and our big-screen television, along with all of our kitchen items. We're not moving in. We're simply staying there for a time before moving on. And so even though we are given a key to our motel room, we are aware of the fact that we don't own the room. We will have to give the key back. We make use of our room while on vacation, but in no way do we call that motel our permanent home.

In the same way of thinking, life here on earth is a motel stay. We are "*not of the world,*" says Jesus. We are just here temporarily. We're just passing through. Your identity, therefore, is in no way connected to this world. If Joe Schmoe is vacationing down in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and someone there asks him where he is from, he does not reply, "Hi, I'm Joe from the Ft. Lauderdale Motel 6." He says, "I'm Joe from St. Louis." "I'm Al from Augusta." "I'm Bill from Marthasville." You're at the Motel 6 for a few days, but that motel is not your identity.

Jesus does not pray to His heavenly Father that He take us out of the world, but that while we live here in our motel room, He keeps us safe from the evil one. Now maybe you're thinking, "There ain't no way

that I'm staying in a Motel 6!" But this world isn't even that nice compared to our true home above. In a dingy motel room, you try to protect yourself from bed bugs and who knows what all. But here we need protection from the evil one.

You see, Satan tempts us to believe that this motel is indeed our permanent home. He takes our eyes off our true home above. He causes us to worry about every little thing that goes wrong here in the motel, as if we are staying put here forever. He causes us to argue with the other motel guests--our spouse and children, our brothers and sisters, our congregations members--our neighbors down the hall in the motel. He tries to turn these arguments into drag-out fights so that grudges are held, families are divided, and congregations are weakened.

And when the devil can trick us into taking our eyes off our permanent home to come, he can cause us to lose our true identity. The more Satan fixes our eyes on our life here, the more our identity is shaped, not by our baptism and life in Christ, but by this world in which we are just passing through.

But this ain't no luxury inn, I don't care how much we fix up our homes and beautify our lawns and gardens. It doesn't matter how good we think we have it here; this is still nothing but a motel, and one day we're turning in our key and moving on because we are not of this world; we're travelers, foreigners, strangers here.

Do not let the devil blind you to the truth. Your life is not about what happens here, but who you are in Christ Jesus. He is your life, your identity. He was a stranger here, too, and now He has gone on ahead of us to prepare our mansion in heaven. He has the authority to prepare your mansion there because He laid down His life for you.

Jesus prayed the prayer in our text the very night He was arrested and condemned to die on a cross. Though He is not of the world, He allowed the evil of this world to take Him away, to assault Him, to do its very worst to Him. He did this for your sake, because at one time in our life, you and I were of this world, and we were destined to perish along with the world. But not anymore. Jesus "perished" for you. He took your place in hell so that your place now is with Him in heaven.

And I know it's true that so often, far too often, we act like our place is here in this evil and dying world. Not only do we take our eyes off of heaven; we live like the people who are of the world. But you are not of the world. Your identity is not connected to how you live here, but to Christ in whom you are baptized.

Friend, God forgives you for taking your eyes off of your home above. He forgives you for living like you are of the world. He forgives all your sins because Jesus died on a cross for you. And so He gives you food here on the altar that is "otherworldly." This food is Christ Himself. And this food sustains you through this world into the life that is to come.

If you ever doubt your place with God; if you ever are uncertain of your true identity--look to your baptism. You are God's child. You belong to Jesus. Those sins in your past that bother you--they are not who you are. They are forgiven in Christ. You are not of this world, this motel. You're but a stranger here; heaven is your home. Amen.