

Seventh Sunday after Easter May 17, 2026
John 17:1–11: Kept by Grace, United in Christ
Final Words That Reveal the Heart

We are continuing our series: **From Farewell Address to Mission**

Imagine you have only hours left before the most painful moment of your life. What would you say? What would you pray?

Would you pray for yourself — for relief, for strength, for escape? Or would you pray for the people you're leaving behind?

In John 17, Jesus shows us exactly what mattered most to Him in His final hours.

Jesus is only hours from the cross. Yet He does not pray for Himself. He prays for His disciples — and for us.

Jesus Prays Before the Cross

This is the High Priestly Prayer. Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and intercedes for those the Father has given Him.

Listen to His heart: “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” (John 17:11)

Jesus did not pray success, comfort, power. He prays for **protection**, **faithfulness**, and **unity**.

Why? Because He knows what's coming. That matters because the disciples are about to enter a season not simply of following Jesus, but of continuing His work in His name. Jesus knew it would be a season of confusion, persecution, opposition, and uncertainty. He knew fear can divide people. Pressure can isolate people. Pain can weaken faith.

Kept by Grace, Not by Human Strength

Look at how Jesus prays. He does not say, “Help them try harder.” He says:

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world.” (John 17:6)

“While I was with them, I protected them in your name.” (John 17:12) Jesus is revealing the Grace of God in His Prayer:

Grace is Jesus choosing them before they understood everything.

Grace is Jesus protecting them while they were weak.

Grace is Jesus praying for them before they would fail Him.

We often think our relationship with God depends entirely on our own strength. But when we rely only on ourselves, frustration follows—because we will always fall short.

The good news is this: your relationship with God does not depend on how tightly you hold on to Christ. It depends on how tightly Christ holds on to you. That is grace.

Grace means God remains faithful even when we are weak. Grace keeps us when life feels uncertain. Grace carries us when faith is hard. Grace lifts us when we fail, forgives us when we stumble, and reminds us that we are loved not because we are perfect, but because Christ is merciful. Grace is not earned; it is received.

United in Christ

Then Jesus prays for unity. Jesus says: “So that they may be one, as we are one.” — John 17:11

Not uniformity. Not sameness. But spiritual unity rooted in Christ.

In a divided world filled with anger, suspicion, and isolation, the church becomes a witness when believers love one another, forgive one another, serve together, and remain together in Christ.

Jesus later says in John 13:35: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The world notices unity. The world notices grace. The world notices when Christians reflect the character of Jesus. And effectually, the world stops watching and starts believing.

Our Challenge for This Week

So what does this mean for us this week?

This week’s challenge: Be a keeper of grace and a builder of unity. Ask yourself:

- ☐ Who in my life needs grace from me instead of judgment?
- ☐ Who needs reconciliation instead of distance?
- ☐ Where am I contributing to division instead of unity?

This week, intentionally become a person who protects unity, extends grace, and strengthens faith in others. How?

- ☐ Listen before you speak or judge.
- ☐ Encourage someone instead of criticizing.
- ☐ Pray specifically for a person you find difficult.
- ☐ Be a bridge-builder in your family, workplace, or church.

Because the church is strongest when it remains united in Christ. Let’s live like it. Amen.