

Session 14: John 17

by Joseph Carroll

Joseph Carroll's sermon on John 17 emphasizes the importance of selflessness, the necessity of dying to self for true life, and the high calling of discipleship in Christ.

Duration: 40:54

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:18

Topics: "Christian Life", "Discipleship", "Selflessness"

Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the significance of Christ's sacrifice in John 17, highlighting that Jesus sanctified Himself for our sake, demonstrating selflessness over selfishness. He urges believers to embrace humility and to live for others, reflecting on the eternal impact of our decisions. Carroll draws parallels between the necessity of death for the corn of wheat to produce life and the call for disciples to die to self for the sake of others. He challenges the congregation to build a magnificent life in Christ, forsaking all for the sake of discipleship, and to maintain their savor as salt in the world. The sermon concludes with a prayer for grace to build a character that reflects Christ and impacts eternity.

Transcript

Holy Father, we want to thank Thee that we are redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. We thank Thee that though silver and gold will perish, the sacrifice of Thy Son upon that cross effected a salvation which is eternal for all who have been redeemed by that infinitely precious blood. And we rejoice tonight in those who have been truly redeemed and set free, because one died a sinful, shameful death, though he knew no sin, for sinners.

Give us grace, we beseech Thee, to take our place as less than the least of all men, so that in all humility, we might trust Thee and glorify Thee in our bodies and spirits which are Thine, that we might become what Thou wouldst have us to be, because of what Thy Son became for us. And this we pray in His precious name. Amen.

We turn again to John 17, John chapter 17, reading from verse 17. Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, I consecrate myself, I set myself apart, for their sakes. And here he was speaking primarily about the cross, about the coming cross.

And he was not only in obedience to the Father, accepting the implications of the cross, but it was for our sakes. It was for my sake. It was for your sake, for the sake of others.

Not for his own sake, but for our sake. For their sakes I sanctify myself. The basic sin is selfishness, self-centeredness.

The great quality, the great manifestation of Christlikeness is love. On the one hand you have selfishness, on the other hand you have selflessness. Love.

Selfishness, decisions made on the basis of self-interest. Selflessness, decisions made on the basis of what it will mean to others. Our Lord's decision was made on the basis of what it will mean for others.

Never for a moment did he think of himself. Selflessness as opposed to selfishness. But when he made that decision, he had eternity in view.

To sanctify himself for our sake meant that redemption would be possible for us. And what did that mean? That meant that ultimately throughout the eternal ages our Lord would have for himself his bride, his church, to share his glory and to behold his glory. It was a good decision.

Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. He is setting himself apart for our sakes. But in order that we might become what he desired us to be throughout all the eternal ages, to him he must make this decision.

For our sakes. It was a decision made in time which affected eternity. Do we make our decisions on the basis of selflessness because they are going to affect eternity for others? That's the issue.

Eternity. We may live here 70 years, we may not. And then eternity.

Eons rolling into eons. Age following age. Endlessly eternity.

And the Lord Jesus knew that sanctifying himself, setting himself apart, meant a completed church, a completed bride, which would be his throughout all eternity. But first there must be the cross before the crown. The suffering before the glory.

But when we see suffering in the light of eternity, then we can grasp it with all our heart. Because we have a true appreciation of values. For their sakes I sanctify myself.

To what end? That they also may be sanctified. And why are they to be sanctified? They are to be sanctified for the sake of others. So that his example of setting himself apart for the sake of others is to be emulated by those for whom he is setting himself apart.

And so it goes on and on and on. And then we saw in John chapter 12 last week this principle. In verse 24, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. What is he saying? He's saying the important thing about this corn of wheat is that it must die.

Now, we make a great deal of what we can do to the corn of wheat. How we can polish it. Polish it a little bit more.

And a little bit more, and hang another degree round its neck. And give it a little higher social standing. That's not what the scripture says.

It's what happens to it that counts. Not what you can do in polishing a little bit more. It must die.

It must die. And you see, the more you polish it, the more it is apt to not want to die. And if it does not die, it does not matter how highly polished it is, its potential will never be realized.

Now, that's an important point to note. The only way the potential of a true disciple can be realized is through death. Because death unlocks the potential which is locked up within it.

And it's not going to be unlocked any other way. So you don't polish it, you bury it. We don't like to be buried.

We like to be seen. Here I am. Look at me.

Have you heard about me? Don't you think I'm nice? This is what people tell you by their attitude. The way they dress. The way they speak.

The nice thing I like about this gift is nobody is going to get any praise but the Lord. As I said when I said to that man, I began to thank him, forget it. I did it for the Lord.

Isn't that beautiful? I took one look at him and I saw a dead man. A dead man. Ever seen a dead man? A dead man is the only man that's really alive.

When you see a dead Christian, there's a vibrancy, there's a vitality. You can feel it. There's a throng about his life.

There's a thrill about his life. He's different. He's dead.

And because he's dead, he's being released. He's being released. But I dealt with a man yesterday afternoon, anything but dead, but he was dying.

He really had himself in a mess. And so another brother and I, we dealt with him and the hole got bigger and bigger in which he was in and told us something about it, seemed to be about six foot deep to him. By the time we finished, he was 50 feet under.

And he was in this horrible mess because he wanted people to think that he was somebody. That he was somebody, a big man. Well, the Lord really cut him down to size.

Thank God. He was in trouble, deep trouble. It's not what you can do to it, it's what happens to it.

That unlocks the potential. Now, the potential in the corn of wheat is to be unlocked and released for the sake of others. If the life is not laid down, there cannot be life for others.

There is nothing in God's creation that has life, but that didn't get it through death. Every blade of grass out there owes its life to death. Those trees owe their life to death.

Everything you have that has life, has life because of death. You can't see a plant, but death took place before the plant could grow. The little acorn fell into the ground and it disintegrated, it died.

And you have the mighty oak. That's God's principle. He speaks to us on every hand concerning this principle.

Death in order to life, but not life for the one that dies, life for others because that one dies. A true disciple is going to say this to the Lord. Lord Jesus, at any cost, make me die.

Now, don't be afraid to say that. I'd be afraid not to say it. Lord Jesus, I want to die.

Now, you know what's going to happen? Your whole life, or what you want your life to be, is going to disintegrate. And that can be painful. Because when our Lord is speaking here about a corn of wheat, He is not speaking about sin.

He is not speaking about something that is corrupt. It's a perfectly good corn of wheat. What He is speaking about is the life that He has given you.

What are you going to do with that life? That's what He is speaking about. Now, you can live that life for yourself, or you can live it for others. It's as simple as that.

If you make your plans for yourself, what they will mean to you, and the self-satisfaction they will give you, you lose it. The potential cannot be realized. But if you are willing to be lost sight of, to be placed in the ground, and lost sight of, and become a nothing, become a nobody, and to let everything that you ever wanted to be, or do, disintegrate before your very eyes, then, through that death, there is going to be life for others.

There is going to be life for others. That's what our Lord is speaking about here. He'll shatter your plans.

And in place of your plans, He'll give you Himself. And you'll know what it is to live. But not till then.

And then He says, If any man serve Me, we want to underline that again, verse 26. The Lord Jesus does not call you to serve a denomination. The Lord Jesus is not calling you to serve the Evangelical Institute of Greenville.

He's not doing that. He never does. He chose twelve that they might be what? Be with Him.

It's the first we're going to speak on in the Bible School in September. Why does the Lord call young people to hear His Word? He chooses them that they might be with Him. They won't come here merely to be told biblical facts.

They will come to be taught of Him. To be with Him. Why did He choose them? That they might go out and be witnesses? No.

That they might be with Him. Isn't it wonderful to be with the Lord? Now? Hallelujah. If any man serve Me, serve Me.

Why are we involved in the Evangelical Institute of Greenville? We're serving Jesus. What an honor that is. Wouldn't it be terrible if we couldn't do that? What would we do if we couldn't serve the Lord? Gee, what would we do? I think I'd get John to dig a big hole and I'd jump into the thing.

What would life be without serving the Lord Jesus? What would it be? It would be totally empty. Where could the motivation come from? Now if He says, if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor. There's

going to come a day when His Father will say, well done, good and faithful, what? Servant.

You were the servant of My Son. What does it mean to serve Jesus Christ? Well, obviously to become His slave. To become His servant.

That's what it means. And He says, if you serve Me, My Father will honor you. Now the Father isn't going to honor anybody else.

Nobody else. If you've given money to a worker, or if you've given money to a denomination, you know where it went? Down the hole. That's where it went.

But if you gave it to the Lord Jesus, in order that He might be glorified in the denomination, and if you gave it to the Lord Jesus, in order that He might be glorified in the Institute, then you'll have a reward. But of course, Jesus told you to do it, otherwise you would not have done it, because you are His servant and nobody else's. You see, this is the principle here.

So that a man must die to his life in this world. He no longer lives for his life in this world, he lives for the life which is to come. His feet are in the earth, in the world, but his spirit is in heaven.

And our Lord is very, very clear about this. And He speaks about it again and again in His Word. In Luke chapter 9. Well, let's turn firstly to Luke 14.

We may run out of time. Luke chapter 14. Reading from verse 25.

And there went great multitudes with Him, and He turned and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Strong words. Now, what does our Lord mean by hate? He means hate.

But what is the Spirit of God trying to convey to us? He's trying to convey intensity. That's what He's after. Intensity.

I tell you, Jesus Christ has nothing to do with a lukewarm person. That person is spewed out of his mouth. Hate.

What does it mean to hate? That's intense. When you're hating something, your attitude is one of intensity. And you just can't sit back and casually consider this business of becoming a disciple.

Maybe I will, maybe I won't. You never will. It demands intensity.

So the only way you could compare your love for the ones that are nearest to you with your love for Jesus Christ, could be hatred in comparison with love. Both are strong words. Your love for Jesus Christ is so great that your love for others could only be called hatred, and intense hatred.

Quite a demand. Don't try to diminish this word. It's a very important word.

You see, we've forgotten this matter of loving Jesus Christ with all our hearts. What is Jesus Christ? You know what He is to most Christians? He's a fireman who's got to be on call when there's a need. What are you? I tell you, He's Lord.

He's no fireman. When there's a little bit of trouble, Lord, Lord, Lord, help me. There's intensity then.

And when the fireman puts out the fire, you go back to bed and go to sleep. That's not what it's all about at all. Jesus Christ is no fireman.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is God. And He takes those who are nearest to us, those who mean the most to us in this life, and He says, alright, if this is not your attitude to them when compared with your attitude to me, you can never be my disciple.

Why? Because you will permit those with whom you are most deeply involved emotionally to turn you aside from my will for your life. You don't want to die for them because they can give you the most of what you want in this life in the way of self-satisfaction. And then He goes on to give us some very important words.

If any man and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Lest happily, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand. Or else while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Salt is good. But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Now what is he revealing to us here? You might say, well, he is telling me to be on guard before I take this step.

I have got to count the cost. Negatively, now that is true. He's saying now, think carefully, you sit down and you think.

About a building and about a warfare, two things. But positively, he is challenging us to something glorious. Now I want you to notice it here.

You know, I am convinced that most of us who call ourselves sons of God live like worms. Live like worms. There is not that greatness.

There is not that bigness. I'm not talking about the size of a man. Some little men are big men and some big men are little men.

I met two men yesterday and as I looked at them I thought they are big men. A big man inspires you. Not a little man.

A big man with a great Lord, inspiring. And if this passage were read superficially, the superficial reader says, well now, I've got to be careful here. Yes, you do have to be careful.

But he is challenging us to something magnificent and I want you to notice it here. For which of you intending to build a tower? He doesn't say, which of you intending to build a shed? Or which of you intending to build a small house? No, he says, which of you intending to build a magnificent tower? Something that soars into the air. Something that can be seen by all.

A magnificent tower. Not something little. Not something mean.

Not a little shed. I tell you, the meanness of the Lord's people when it comes to doing the Lord's work is overwhelming. You let the devil build something and he will build a magnificent thing.

You let the Lord's people build something and I tell you, if they can get away with a shed, if it can be done with a shed, they'll want to build a dog house. It's true. It's true.

I heard of a preacher in this city who got a decent raise by his people and some were amazed. Why should we give him that amount of money? And the characters themselves were making twice as much. But you see the man of Ghana, well we'll just give him the nickels and dimes.

Listen my friend, the man who is called by God to preach the gospel is the most important man on the face of this earth. He's the most important man on the face of this earth because he has the greatest responsibility. What he does affects eternity.

What another man does has only to do with time. And so little men try to harass the big man, if he is a big man of course. But he says being a disciple is like building a tower.

It's building something. You see a young person who commits themselves to Jesus Christ absolutely without reserve. And what do you see? You see the beginning of a magnificent structure.

Don't you? You don't. And as that one increases in his walk of fellowship with his Lord, what do you see? A beautiful character emerging. A magnificent tower that people look at and they thank God for it.

They thank God for it. He's not telling us now it's going to cost you something. He's inspiring us to something great.

That if you become my disciple you're going to build a tower. Other people will live in their dog houses and their sheds and you'll live in a tower. And then he speaks of a warfare.

And he doesn't speak of a peasant going out against a king. Verse 31. Or what king going to make war against another king? What is he saying? The disciple is a king.

Do you see it? He's a king. This man that's building a tower, he is a king. And he is.

He's a king. And he's fighting another king. And he only has half the forces of the other king.

So what is it to be a disciple? It is to build something that is magnificent out of your life. Something that's beautiful. Something that's enduring.

Something that all can see. And what does it mean? It means a constant warfare with a powerful king who has tremendous forces at his disposal. The devil himself.

But how do you become skilled in warfare? Simply by engaging in warfare. By engaging in it. That king out there doesn't want you to build that tower.

But you will build it if you meet the conditions. What a wonderful thing it is to be a disciple. People dwell on the negative, oh I'll have to give up this and I'll have to give up that and I won't be able to, forget it.

That's little, that's a little way of thinking. Selfish. Think of the magnificence of a life that is truly lost in Jesus Christ.

And the warfare in which you are engaged, how thrilling it is. I've often thought, well, when we get to heaven we won't be able to fight the devil any longer. There's something about fighting the devil that is really thrilling, I think.

I had to fight him last Saturday. I walked toward the plane that was going to fly from Atlanta to Florida. And for the first time I think in my life I looked at those tires and I thought, I hope they're alright.

Well they were not alright, one blew out on blow-off, on take-off. So the pilot said we're going to have to circle around. So we circled for about an hour and used up our gas and had to come in and land on three tires.

And I was sitting next to a fellow who said he knew the Lord but he had the face of an alcoholic. And he wasn't very happy but we were commissioned to look after the escape chute. So we went up the front of the plane, we were supposed to open the chute and slide down and help everybody out if something pretty grim happened.

And so I thought it was just like the devil. And I said to the Lord one thing, Lord I'm not going to let this devil rob me of my joy in you. Tire on another tire.

Because if when that plane landed the other tire burst, we'd really be in trouble. And everybody thought it was great until they saw all the fire engines lined up on the side of the runway. But anyway the pilot brought it in beautifully, landed on his two good tires, just brought it in on an angle, landed on two good tires.

And then very, very gently brought it over onto the one tire and we made it. We didn't have to use the chute. But you know it's wonderful to get a victory over the devil.

And then this fellow who said he really knew the Lord, the airline company to show their appreciation of having delayed us ultimately for three hours, said drinks on the house. He was drunk when he got off the plane. He knew the Lord.

Isn't it sad? And I went to speak to him again and the Lord said to me, don't speak to him, you're casting your pearls before swine. And I didn't say another word to him. But isn't that sad? Just a little man, because drinks were on the house, I think he grabbed about four little bottles of whiskey to start with.

I don't know how many he put in his pocket. All around me they're just grabbing all the whiskey the people would give them. Putting it in their pockets, in their bags, if wasn't this great.

Verse 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Now within the context, what does it mean? It means everything.

It means husband, it means wife, it means children, it means relatives, it means everything. It means your plan for your life in this world. It means conflict with the devil.

It means everything. You've got to forsake it all. All that you want to be, all that you have, you've got to forsake it.

Does he really mean it? He means it, and he uses the word hatred to underline it. He means it with intensity. Are you his disciple? Have you forsaken all? What does it mean to forsake all? It means simply to die to it.

The things that are nearest to you mean nothing in comparison with what Jesus Christ means to you. Very often this verse is taken and the emphasis is placed on money. I tell you, money is at the bottom of the ladder.

When I received that quarter of a million dollars, I thought, well, it's not so important after all. Money passes. The thing that's important is the eternal.

The souls of men, that's important because it's eternal. He says, if you don't forsake all, you cannot be my disciple. And then this terrible warning, salt is good, but if the salt hath lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the downhill, but men cast it out.

He that hath ear to hear, let him hear. He says, if you do not accept my conditions, you will profess to be something that you're not. What makes salt, salt? It's savour.

You lose your savour. Have you ever met a professing Christian who has lost his savour? What a sad sight it is. He's lost his savour.

He's dead. There's nothing vibrant about him, nothing attractive, nothing penetrating. He's lost his ability to preserve.

He's lost his savour. Why did he lose his savour? Because he would not become a disciple. I tell you, whenever you are confronted with a true disciple, there is that penetrating power in that person.

Isn't there? Yes, there is. You can feel it. You can feel it, and you know it.

But whenever you meet such a person, somewhere at some time, that person has died. And now there is life, life for others. Now there is salt, penetration, preservation.

Are you his disciple? Are you building a tower? Character, Christlike. Or are you just living in a little doghouse, counting your money? Counting what you've got and trying to hang on to it. God could take your life tonight.

Just a little old doghouse down with the worms and the bugs. Are most Christians? Christians, quotation marks, of course. Or are you building a tower? Fighting the devil, looking for Jesus.

Living for eternity. What a life. Shall we pray? Dear Lord Jesus, thy words are truth, for thou art truth.

We thank thee for thyself. O Lord, we remember the words of Judson, the love of God, what a study for eternity. The love of Christ, that thou shouldst sanctify thyself for us.

That we also might be sanctified for thee and for others. O Lord, just get us out of our little doghouses. And mean looking sheds.

And give us grace to build a tower. A magnificent thing, a character that speaks of Christ. And give us grace to be sufficient against tremendous overwhelming odds to win the victory.

Because we know that we are king in life, reigning through Jesus Christ. Father, may it never be said of any of thy true servants bowed in thy presence that they have lost their saviour. But may there be that penetrating, purifying, powerful effect on society.

Because one has accepted the cross and its implications. That one has accepted death for the corn of wheat for the sake of others. O Lord, hear us and by thy grace meet us where there most we have need.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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