

**Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will obey what I command. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” **This is God’s Word**

**Dear Followers of Christ,**

The joke in our family is that we have to say “Goodbye” at least three times before we actually leave. Saying “Goodbye” isn’t easy and sometimes it takes a while because in the process you have to talk to certain people, convey some last piece of information and usually it involves hugs and letting them know you love them.

In the portion of scripture before us this morning Jesus is saying “Goodbye” to his disciples. He knows that he will be arrested very soon and will be leaving them. Oh, he’ll return for a short while but then will leave them again. It’s not what the disciples wanted, but it was part of his Father’s plan and so he was conveying some of that last minute information to encourage them as he gets ready for what is ahead of him.

This information is for us too. It’s here to encourage us and to let us know that we are not alone as we live our lives on this earth.

**Jesus knows that we have faith in our hearts and that we love him. Because we love Jesus:**

- I. he encourages us to keep his commands,**
- II. he blesses us with the Holy Spirit and**
- III. he assures us that we are one with his Father.**

**I.** Jesus spoke these words on the evening of Maundy Thursday. It was turning out to be quite the day. Jesus and his disciples were in this upper room to eat the Passover meal but before the meal, Jesus washed his disciple’s feet – a lesson in serving and humility. Then, at the end of the meal, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper – a special meal for Christians. As Jesus talked about going away Peter vowed that he would never leave Jesus – that he would even give his life, if necessary, for his Lord and Jesus informed Peter that he would deny him later that evening. Do you think maybe the disciples were getting overwhelmed by everything going on that evening and then Jesus says, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”** And **“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”**

He wasn't questioning their love for him – he knew they loved him; that's why they were having such a hard time with what he was telling them. But with these words he was encouraging them to remember what he had commanded them throughout his ministry and to follow those commands. Our first thought might be, "Oh, the 10 Commandments," but the commands Jesus was thinking of were probably more like:

1. **repent of your sins and turn from them;**
2. **believe and trust the Gospel;**
3. **Forgive as you have been forgiven;**
4. **Take up your cross and follow him;**
5. **and Preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments.**

Obedience to these commands shows love for our God and Savior.

This isn't the obedience of the Pharisees who obeyed only to try and work their way to heaven. No, this is the obedience of a follower of Christ who recognizes his love for us and wants to follow him as a way of saying, "Thank You."

And so to have and follow his commands is more than just having a Bible somewhere in your house collecting dust. To know them is to actually know what the scriptures say – and that's really a lifelong endeavor – to read and understand God's Word. And then to make God's Word part of your life and part of who you are guiding you in every aspect of your life.

That's what being a disciple of Christ or a Christian is all about – having Christ in you and as an important part of your life.

But, like the disciples, it's not always so easy to do. We want to live for Christ but sometimes we are overwhelmed by the circumstances or we don't always understand what God's saying to us in his Word. There are times when we promise in our own minds to do the right thing, and then what we do is not what we want to do. Christ recognizes our weakness – he sees the faith in our hearts and yet knows we will sin. That's why he went to the cross for us and as we turn to him when we fall short, he brings us forgiveness, picks us up and gets us going in the right direction again.

The disciples were worried because Jesus was leaving them, but he assured them and he assures us, that we are not alone as he tells us, **"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."**

**II.** The disciples felt safe when they were in the physical presence of Jesus. They need a counselor to help them, encourage them and comfort them and Jesus is going to make sure they continue to have that counselor. He promises to send the Holy Spirit and we know that is exactly what happened on Pentecost. The Spirit came to them in a most visible way and was with them throughout the rest of their lives.

The world always wants visible evidence. When Jesus was on the earth they could see him and see the miracles he performed and the people he healed but when the Holy Spirit came it would be different than when Jesus was walking with them. The unbelieving world can't see the Spirit because they don't know Jesus and they have no interest in God's Word but you, as a follower of Christ know the Holy Spirit because he has filled your heart with faith and he continues to bring Jesus – God's Word – to you. one of God's people. Thus, the disciples would not be orphans – left all alone to fend for themselves. Jesus would continue to come to them through his Word by the power of the Spirit.

So it is with us too. We have never seen Jesus physically but John reminds us at the beginning of his gospel, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** (John 1:1). We have Jesus right here in front of us as we read “The Word.” And the Holy Spirit is our Counselor helping us to see Jesus, bringing us strength through the Word and guiding us. We are not spiritual orphans because we are brothers and sisters with Christ and with one another.

At times we might feel we are all alone – that no one cares but remember the promise of Jesus that we are not alone in this world. He continues to come to us and talks to us and walks with us through his Word.

As a final assurance he tells his disciples, **“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”**

**III.** Jesus was crucified and died and was buried. The world didn't see him after that. He rose and appeared to many people but if we take a close look at what scripture says we will discover that all the people Jesus appeared to after he rose were believers – those chosen to be his witnesses in the world.

And because he is our living Savior, we have a rich spiritual life too. People chase after many false gods but those false gods can't bring the lasting peace and comfort that we have through faith in Jesus. And how many people, who chase after a false god, can say that because Jesus is in my heart, I am loved by God the Father. I don't have to fear my God or worry about doing enough good works to gain heaven because Jesus has done all that for me.

Because he lives, I too will live here on this earth and forever with him in heaven.

I hate goodbyes. You try and say everything that needs to be said and many times they take a while because you don't want to be separated from your friends and/or family. When Jesus spoke to his disciples and to us through this portion of scripture he was reminding us that, even though he was saying goodbye, we are not alone.

We have the Holy Spirit who keeps Jesus in our hearts and because Jesus is in our hearts we are loved by Him and by the Father. May this love of our Savior continue to bring us the peace of forgiveness, comfort and strength that can only come from God. Amen.