

Sermon May 14, 2023 John 14:15-21

John 14:15-21

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we wind down the seven-week season of Easter, we can feel the transition taking place in the assigned readings from the resurrection to the ascension and on to Pentecost. Jesus has already spoken to us about going and preparing a dwelling place for us in his Father’s kingdom. Today he speaks to his disciples again about physically leaving this earth and taking the next preparatory steps toward the culmination of this age.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17)

I will not leave you as orphans (John 14:18)

Yet a little while and the world will see me no more (John 14:19)

Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure. Through the disciples’ testimony we, too, have walked with Jesus since his birth and now it is as if

we, too, are having to say goodbye to Jesus and wondering what to do now. We can put ourselves into the disciples' shoes as Jesus is preparing them for his departure. You enrolled for college, packed up your clothes and stereo, and headed off for college. Maybe you got back for one or two holidays, but you had to say goodbye to your former life. Maybe you joined the military and were off to boot camp. Maybe it was your brother or sister who went off to college or boot camp or married life and it was you having to say goodbye as they were leaving. We've also felt the big hole left inside us when a parent, favorite relative, brother, sister, or dearest friend departed this life for the next.

Well Jesus has some assurances for us as he leaves us and ascends into heaven.

... for he [the Holy Spirit] dwells with you and will be in you. John 14:17

Many of us take vitamins, supplements, pain relievers, and medicine. We buy the products. We put the bottles on the shelf. They are with us and ready to help us when we need them. When we put the pills in our mouth and swallow them, they are now in us. They are in our bodies and lower our blood pressure and arterial plaque. They help regulate our blood sugar. They reduce joint pain and tremors. They can make us feel better.

Jesus talks the same way about the Holy Spirit. He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us make the transition when we need to say goodbye to the ascended Jesus who now sits at the right hand of God the Father. The Holy Spirit is in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is in the bread and wine of communion. It is with us. It is in the bottle on the shelf. When we read and especially hear the Bible, the Holy Spirit enters us along with the words we read and hear. It is in us. When we receive the food from the table of eternal life, we receive the Holy Spirit together with the bread and wine. At that point it is in us. Jesus is Immanuel. Immanuel means God with us. Jesus promises to be with us until the end of the age. Through his word and his body and blood he is both with us and in us, just as he says.

*In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
John 14:20*

Jesus says “In that day” we will know Jesus is in us. What day is that? It means that when we obey his commandments, then we will know Jesus is in us. The next verse makes it much clearer.

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21

At this point there may be some doubt in our minds as to whether or not we actually have Jesus in our lives like he says. Have we kept the commandments of God? Probably not. And if we have not kept the commandments of God, how can Jesus be with us and dwell in our hearts? It is because there is only one who has actually kept the commandments of God.

And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Hebrews 5:9

Jesus is the one who offered a perfect life to God the Father. In our baptism and the meal that we eat from the table of eternal life, the perfect life of Jesus is credited to us as our very own.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

Jesus is the one who has the commandments of God and has kept them perfectly. The Holy Spirit covers us with the holiness of Christ, so it is with us and also in us. This is why the first and foremost command of God isn't to go out and be like Jesus. The first and foremost command of God is something else. The first and foremost command of God is to believe in the one whom he has sent.

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." John 6:29

We are not saved by what we do. We are saved by what we believe. Jesus has given us something to believe in. It is himself and the work he has done to save us. Vitamins can help keep us healthy. Medicines can relieve pain and reduce illness. When we receive Jesus and the Holy Spirit given to us in the Word and the fellowship of this altar we are never alone, we have a lifelong advocate and friend who leads us into the ways of the Lord, and he will raise us up on the last day to join in the everlasting song of heaven sung in the presence of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, saints, and angels! Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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