

John 14:15-21 6th Sunday after Easter May 12, 1996

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

"I think you gave me too much change."

That gets their attention. But that is not the reason I return the excess. Not to get someone's attention, not even because God is watching, but because of my mother. Maybe I saw her return excess change, maybe she taught me to do so, I don't know how she planted it in my heart - I only know she did. And what she planted in my heart has stayed in my heart. Though she died seventeen years ago my thoughts and words and deeds reflect her. When you talk with me, you are also in some ways encountering her. Love has great power in our lives.

She is gone, yet she remains. Even in my children, and children's children love that came to me, love that came to Sue, will flow to them.

Jesus had been with his disciples - like a parent he had led them and taught them and been with them. But now he was soon to die. These are his words: "I will not leave you orphaned, I am coming to you. In a little while the world will see me no longer, but you will see me; because I live you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

I will not leave you orphaned.

The disciples were still like young children, not yet independent, on their own. With Jesus death they felt orphaned; they huddled together in fear, paralyzed by fear.

Jesus promised that while the world would see him no longer, they would see him.

Will they see him the way I see my mother, in memory? Would he be with them the way she is with me, in what she taught me in love? Or is Jesus promising something more?

You will see me. Well they did, on Easter evening Jesus appeared once more. But the description of the encounter eight days later, when Jesus appeared to Thomas ends with the words, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." They saw Jesus, but what about us? Are we orphaned? Must we raise ourselves as best we can in this world, without Jesus being with us?

This is what Jesus promises: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you and he will be in you."

You turn to God, you seek to follow Jesus' words but Jesus way seems a word outside of yourself, a foreign way. The natural way is to rely on yourself, to hold grudges and to build up security for yourself. Jesus commands: "Trust in me." Jesus commands: "Forgive one another." Jesus commands: "Give away your security, your wealth to your sister who is in need." Yes, as we turn to Christ his command seems impossible.

But Jesus promises that he will turn to the Father on your behalf, and ask that you be given an Advocate - someone to fight for you - argue for you - someone on your side. The world cannot receive this Advocate but those who are turned to Jesus can.

Jesus told the disciples: "You know him because he abides with you and he will be in you."

This advocate is Jesus' own spirit in them. You follow where Jesus commands, trusting in him, more and more trusting in him and his spirit grows stronger in you. Jesus own spirit, the Holy Spirit, God's spirit however we would describe this Advocate - this spirit makes Jesus' way your way in you.

Trust grows; trusting in God is no longer so foreign but is the Spirit's way within you.

And when people encounter you more and more they are encountering the one who lives in your heart. And your thoughts words and deeds reflect Jesus. His love transforms you.

Luther teaches that faith in Christ is the Holy Spirit's work, that through the word that is preached and the meal of Christ's body and blood we share that faith is born in us, and fed and nurtured in us. We gather here and God goes to work to plant Jesus in us.

In that way what comes from God in us is often like what has come from our mothers.
God shapes us over time as we gather with the family and share the family meal.

“I will not leave you orphaned, I am coming to you.”

Amen, come Lord Jesus.