

*23Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.*

*25"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

*28You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.*

For many years now we have been teaching you stories. Some true, like the story of a man named Abraham who trusted God's word, a woman named Sarah who laughed when she heard God promise that she would be a 90 year old mother of a newborn. Some of the stories were just made up, like the story of a father with two sons, one of whom wanted his inheritance now, and wasted it, and who was greeted by his father with open arms and a great party and an older son who could not join the joy of his brother's return.

In some of the stories you have seen yourselves, like the story of Peter who wanted to be faithful to Jesus but was afraid and said he did not know Jesus. Three times he said he did not know Jesus, then the rooster crowed and he wept bitterly. Some of you know that you have been like him, afraid to let others know your love for Jesus.

Or like the story of Thomas who needed proof, needed to touch Jesus' hands, Jesus' side, before he could believe Jesus had been raised from the dead. Maybe believing is not easy for you either.

Most of all there is that story that is at the center of all the bible stories, the story of God sending his Son to be born of Mary in Bethlehem. You have heard how Jesus taught and healed the sick, and quieted the storm, but when he died, he died as a powerless one. When Jesus died there is no miracle to save him, only darkness over the whole land. Jesus who cared for so many died alone, the religious leaders, the political leaders, even his disciples abandoned him. But God did not. Though it looked as if Jesus was God-forsaken, God remembered his Son, and raised Jesus from the dead. This is the truest story of all.

This world has many stories. Every night the news is full of them. There are stories of murderers, stories of sports heroines and heroes. There are the stories of people with great wealth, stories of terrible diseases. Constantly there are stories of battles between teachers and

school boards, between Republicans and Democrats, between the Red Sox and the Indians, between drug dealers and the police.

Just before Jesus was to be betrayed by Judas, that very night he spoke to his disciples. Some of the words that he spoke were these: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

Those who love me will keep my word.

This is why we have been teaching you stories from the Bible, so that you can keep Jesus' word in you and know that your whole life can be seen through that word.

Maybe someday you will have great wealth. And you will remember a story Jesus told of a man with a great harvest who decided to build great barns to store his great harvest. Maybe you will remember that God called that man a fool for thinking great wealth would take care of his future.

Or maybe you will see a person in need and remember the story of people who walked by in a hurry and the Samaritan who stopped to help.

Or maybe you will remember the story of Joseph whose brothers hated him and who was sold into slavery but who did not seek revenge but trusted in God and how he was blessed.

If you remember these stories then you will know that your life belongs to God. Every day you will not live in the world alone, but will live as the child of God that you are.

Someday either suddenly or after a time of illness you will die. That is the hardest thing to believe, especially the longer you live, but whether you believe it or not death will come for you. And when it does you may feel as alone as Jesus, because death comes for us one by one. But you will remember that Jesus' story of dying on the cross and being raised by God is your story now, for Jesus died and was raised for you.

Those who love me will keep my word.

Jesus' word - his stories that he told - his story that he lived - his teachings - all of these Jesus wants you to keep and to think about and to remember - for as you do, you will know the truth.

The truth about you is that you are the child that the father loves. You are the child of God that will die but who will be raised up again. You are the Samaritan who will stop by the road and help the man attacked by robbers. You are the one whose friends may fail you in your

time of need but whose God never will. You will be the one who will come to the new life where you will be with God forever.

Along the way Jesus gives you all the stories of God and Jesus, and this promise: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”