

John 14 23-29

It's still Maundy Thursday...The last Evening Jesus spends with his disciples before His death.

He breaks the news that He won't be with them much longer but He also assures them that He will not leave them in Spirit! They will not be abandoned! And of course His disciples have questions...they didn't make the trip to Jerusalem for Him just to leave right?! Peter asked Lord where are you going? Thomas asked How can we know the way? Philip says Lord show us the Father and we will be satisfied Judas asks Lord how is it that you reveal yourself to us and not to the world? And Jesus answers them and reassures them that He will not leave them orphaned...He talks about "abiding" and obeying and loving and He further talks about the Holy Spirit and the Father...Probably way over their heads.

Today's gospel covers only a part of Jesus' answer to Judas' (not to be confused with the other Judas – Iscariot) and this is part of Jesus' answer to Him. Jesus' final conversation with His disciples covers John 13 -17. Read it in total if you get a chance...It focuses on relationship, love and service!

What would you tell your loved ones if you knew you would be leaving them!?

Jesus says, "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live."

There is a bond here, a relationship that transcends our physical being, time & space. Think of a loved one whom you lost... are they living with you in Spirit? Do you hold them even closer than you did when they were physically alive? Do they in a sense abide in you?

There is no secret here...the world will see Jesus abiding in His followers...and right here and now that's you and me!

They will know we are Christians by our? By our Doctrines of course...they will know us Christians by our theology and liturgy...no wait by our good Judgement? By our ability to make others feel guilty or afraid or that they are not worthy? That's how the world will know we are Christians...right!?

So how will the world come to see and know Jesus and conversely God today?

Is He a white nationalist? How about a Vengeful and Judging Bearded Man Coming to Reward His followers while punishing eternally everyone else? Is He even a He...The word for Spirit is actually a feminine word in Hebrew...so how will the world know about God?

There's only one way the world know Jesus experientially...And that's through His followers...that's us.

And earlier in this conversation Jesus tells His followers that they will know they are His by their outpouring of Love through action...through loving and serving one another. PERIOD...that's it!

That's the only way to be Christian...no exceptions! That's what God looks like...love in action...That's why this idea of Discipleship is so important!

To keep the mandate of Jesus means to keep his commandments and I'll remind you what they are since I don't say them enough... love God and love one another as He loves you...and how do we do these things...through washing one another's feet in other words to serve one another... especially the "least of these" ...those who have been marginalized by the system...those not in the in group!

The followers of Jesus will be a community characterized by mutual respect, love and service to everyone (agape)...with no qualifiers...why do you think Jesus went out of His way to be with Tax collectors,

Roman soldiers, prostitutes, lepers and Samaritans...these were all the outsiders and hated people groups of Jesus' day...and how does Jesus treat them?

Throughout His farewell conversation with His disciples Jesus makes it very clear that followers love Him by serving others. Although we might try and separate loving Jesus and keeping his word and imagine that we can do one but not the other, Jesus does not recognize any such distinction.

Jesus here places a condition on Discipleship... those who love me will keep my word. Love for Jesus has always been about posture and action. Jesus doesn't give us the Gospels He lives them out in action. Following Jesus then is simply this...it's love in action...the body of Christ in motion.

BTW This is the Last Supper...and how did Jesus begin...he acted out the role of a slave and washed everyone (including Judas Iscariot's) feet...a humble act of service and love...and everyone is worthy of this love!

And to live this kind of love, they and us will need the constant presence of God in their midst...because it's not always easy is it!?

Jesus offers God's presence with three different promises.

First, he says of himself and the Father about those who love him: "We will come and make our home with them." From the first chapter of this gospel we know that prior to anyone's love for Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us".

No one would be able to love Jesus if the Father had not first loved the world enough to send (Godself)...Jesus into it. The cohabitation that Jesus speaks of is not a reward for good behavior. It is simply a statement of where and how God likes to spend God's time...WITH us creations.

It hearkens back to the first chapter of the gospel and forward to the reality envisioned in Revelation: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell WITH them as their God; they will be his people, and God himself will be WITH them".

You know the preposition "with" occurs more times in the Bible (over 6000 times) than anything else! WITH ! More than anything God's desire throughout the Bible is to be WITH us!

Secondly, Jesus proclaims the Holy Spirit among His disciples...God's Spirit, Jesus' Spirit – the Holy Spirit!

Now the Spirit for me is the indwelling of God made manifest through you and me! God abiding through us and with us and in us!

And it is this same Spirit that accompanies us as we remember Jesus and follow in His footsteps today...making Jesus real for those we meet day to day here and now...So are we loving? ...are we serving?

Did you really think the Spirit of God stopped speaking to us 2000 years ago! I can tell you story upon story of God working in my life in very real tangible ways. The Spirit of the living God lives on through you and me...the kingdom of God...everlasting life has always been about the here and now...not what happened thousands of years ago!

God's Spirit guides us and our church through loving and serving others in the ways Jesus instructed us and by the way Jesus actually lived this out with His life...This is Love in action with the very Spirit of God abiding within us.

How have we experienced the living Christ in our lives as we seek to let our love for God show up in all the ways we relate to others?

Jesus speaks of the home that the Father will make with those who love him. He promises the guidance of the Holy Spirit as his followers remember him.

And then finally, Jesus gives his own peace to those he is about to physically leave. He describes the peace he offers as His own and says that He gives it "not as the world gives."

Peace, Love and Joy...these are the gifts of the Spirit. What does that mean? These things are not of this world and therefore are not subject to your situation or circumstances. They cannot be measured, and therefore are not quantitative or qualitative...

For example think about your own children you loved them before they were even born and you love them now it's not a question of more or less and it transcends conditions...This is unconditional love.

This peace, the world Shalom in Hebrew...means to be in right relationship with God and Creation. That state of oneness with everything that we sometimes can feel. The Buddhist call this state of being enlightenment.

It is characterized by a quality of time standing still and clarity when we see ourselves as connected and a part of the greater whole...the Spirit of well-being that transcends whatever circumstances or situations we may find ourselves in. This is Shalom! Many of us find that peace when we come to this place each Sunday...

Here we re-ground ourselves to God as we allow the Holy Spirit to abide and dwell in us through God's word and through our sharing this sacred meal together. Here we are both in and outside of time...Shalom!

This concept of Peace in John's gospel first shows up right here before he is crucified the very next day...He will leave them but He will reappear again and again as Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection...and Jesus 'peace offers the disciples comfort and courage in the midst of all their fears.

Throughout the events of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, as well as in the resurrection, Jesus will embody the peace he offers here.

Why tell the disciples all of this now? Recall Judas' question: "How is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"

These are the ways those who love Jesus will continue to see and know him 2000 years later:

In the Father and the Son abiding in and WITH them through Spirit.

It is our continued work in this very Spirit that allows us to remember everything Jesus taught and did...and then more importantly to re-enact this way of being in the world with others.

And in this, we come to experience that peace that comes from being in relationship with something much larger than ourselves. A peace that transcends our situations... a peace which grounds us and is not from the world. Jesus tells His disciples then and now so that we may come to understand and to not so much believe it but to trust it in relationship experientially!

As the events of our lives unfold; We disciples can trust the One who loved us enough to send us Jesus and then to send to us The very Spirit of Godself to abide within each one of us.

Love God and Love one another! Go and bring Peace, Love and Joy into this broken and needy world...Wow can we... and those around us use some real Peace...Love and Joy today!

Go now and make disciples of all people and know that on your journey you are never alone...not orphaned... not abandoned... for God is Love and God is WITH you – ALWAYS!

Now go... walk the talk! For only by our Love will the world know that we are truly Christians...Shalom my friends! Shalom!

Your faithful servant,

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