

May 17th Sermon

John 14:15-21

“May the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts always be pleasing to you O God.”

Our Gospel reading this morning picks up from where we left off last week and continues Jesus' final discourse to the disciples. These are Jesus' final words, final instructions and final comfort.

The Gospel of John was written by the end of the 1st century and most if not all of the members of the community would not have known Jesus personally. They would have heard the stories and participated in the community meal. They would have been doing their best to follow the commandments that Jesus had given them. But they would not have seen the things that he did in person.

But like the earlier disciples before them the question remained - how do we live without Jesus?

John has the answer given by Jesus on the night before his death.

If you love me keep my commandments. And what were those commandments? To love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and your neighbour as yourself.

And Jesus told them that he was sending an advocate. An advocate walks alongside you, represents you and speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. An advocate is an intermediary. The Advocate that Jesus will send will stand up for the believers and will intercede with God.

Only John uses the term “Advocate” or one who is called alongside. A title for a 1st century Greco-Roman defense lawyer. Other translations than the NRSV that we read today prefer “comforter”.

This is the Spirit - the Spirit of truth - this is the spirit that will actively work in the community - this is the spirit that will galvanize individuals and communities to work for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells his disciples - I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming to you - the translation more accurately should be I am coming again and again or I keep coming to you. Jesus will not abandon them - Jesus will not abandon us. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus comes to believers in every

generation. We receive the Spirit in baptism and when we participate in communion we pray that the Spirit will transform us to be the body of the risen Christ in the world.

Jesus tells the disciples and those of every generation who have listened to these words. You will never be alone. I am with you. I have sent you what you need. And God loves you as I love you.

Comforting words indeed.

Jesus is promising that he will remain with the community in the person of God the Advocate. Jesus is calling us to a life of love. The Spirit of truth is the cure for our fears and our trials.

Sometimes we can feel distant from God. I read something the other day that Mother Theresa spent the majority of her life feeling distanced from God. She said she did not feel Christ' presence. But she kept doing the work she did because she knew deep in her heart and soul that this was what she had been called to do.

Often we feel distant from one another and the past couple of months have made this very clear. On one hand we are physically distanced - in our day to day lives - in the inability to visit family and friends. I am thinking

especially of people in care facilities, retirement and group homes and hospitals. But we have also taken up the challenge to remain in touch. To phone or video chat - we want to stay connected. We want to stay connected to God. And the way we do that is through the Advocate that Jesus sent to be with us all the time. Forever.

Jesus said - if you love me you will keep my commandments. Do we love Jesus? Are we keeping those commandments. Are we remembering that God loves us all - and that we are to love all as well?

Jesus was trying to make something clear to his disciples. He wanted them to live their lives from a place of love as he did. The love that found form in healing and teaching and caring for those on the margins of society. Love as service and compassion. This was what Jesus wanted the disciples to take as the goal of their lives. This is what the Advocate wants from us. To love our neighbour. To recognize that God loves all of us.

The love of God is the source of life. The love of Jesus is active; love and serve one another, the love of the Advocate, our strength and our comfort.

Jesus' message moves across time - I will not leave you orphaned....I am coming to you. AMEN

