

**Sixth Sunday in Easter**  
**Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish**  
**Saint Francisville, LA**  
**21 May 2017**

**John 14:15-21**

“If you love me,  
you will keep my commandments.”

Love is active, it is not just a feeling. It requires engagement, involvement, action. When you say that you love Jesus, you are also saying that you are willing to imitate him and to live in accordance to his commandments. Of course we know what these commandments are: Love of God and love of neighbor. Loving our neighbors is very hard, especially the cantankerous neighbor, the gripping and complaining neighbor, and especially those neighbors related to us: our children, our extended family, and our friends. Sometimes it is harder to love those in our own lives than to love people we don't know. In fact, love of neighbor is so hard that Jesus continues,

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,  
to be with you forever.”

When we have made a decision for Christ and that decision turns us to face our neighbors, to love others as God has loved us, we don't do it alone. God will send us an Advocate to be with us for the rest of our days. This advocate we call “Paraclete” walks alongside us and gives us the strength to be Christ's disciples. This Advocate, who is God's own Holy Spirit, illumines our way in the darkness and gives us the resolve to remain faithful even in the face of daily challenges, reversals, illness, and conflicts. Now, the comforting reality of Jesus' statement is that this Advocate, this Spirit who walks alongside us, is not here just for a season, but he will be with us for the rest of our lives. This Spirit is Christ's own presence among us. Jesus says about the spirit

“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.”

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth, whose job is to reveal God's truth to us, to help us recognize him in the world, to be a constant reminder of God's love for us. A love so incredible that he himself saves us in his son, and accompanies throughout our lives in his Holy Spirit. This Spirit resides in our world, it is all around us, he abides with us. The Spirit is also inside of us. Deep in our hearts and in our souls. He is both an external reality that resides in the world and can be found in the world, as well as an internal reality that resides in the interior of our hearts. Many of us are so busy looking for God in the world that we forget he also resides in us, he has taken a dwelling in our own hearts and souls.

Jesus continues his very intimate prayer. He says,

"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."

I love this promise. He will never leave us orphaned. Many of us feel abandoned by God like children without a Father or a Mother. We feel isolated and forgotten, alone in the universe. Yet Jesus promises us today his love and support for ever. In the same way he has always been with us, he will continue to be with us to the end of the ages. We are not orphans. God loves us with a love so strong that the only comparison we can make is the love of a good and loving parent for their child. In fact, Jesus reminds us of this often, "If even you, sinners, are able to give good things to your children, then how much more with God be able to give good things? Even if our parents were to abandon and forsake us, God will never abandon and forsake us. Even when we lose our parents to death, we will never lose God to death because God is life itself. He is the forever here parent, the eternal protector who loves us in ways we can't understand. And one day, when our days on earth are done, "We will know that I am Jesus is in the Father, and the Father is in Jesus." One day we will see God face to face and live in his own presence.

Now Jesus ends where he started. He says,

"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."

Jesus started the passage by saying "If you love me you will keep my commandments." Now, he ends with the same message. There is a close

connection between our love for Jesus and our desire to keep his commandments. A Christian is as a Christian does. There is no escaping it. We can not say we love Jesus without also loving our neighbor as ourselves. Love is practical and it unfolds here on this earth.

Let us resolve to love by forgiving, kindness, not holding grudges, not keeping an account of offenses....

This is hard

But he is with us and with him on our side this is possible

Amen!