

John 14:15-21

Easter 6; May 14 & 15, 2023

Do you remember what it was like trying to ride a bike for the very first time? Many of us began with training wheels on our bikes. (That was before the newer balance bikes that kids use today.) After a while, the training wheels would come off. The day had now come for you to ride the bike all by yourself. Yet, as you began to pedal, you would wobble and struggle to maintain your balance. Yet, in moments of doubt and fear, you would look back and see your parent running right behind you, their hand ready to catch and steady you and your bike, if needed. That could give you a sense of security and trust, knowing that even if you would falter, you would not be left to fall alone. Why? You knew just how much they loved you. That may have only been one way that they had shown their love to you. Because of their love for you, you wanted to show love back to them. One of those ways that you would show that love to them was doing what they wanted you to do. But it wasn't always easy to follow all the rules. At times, it would be hard to follow the rules.

Following the rules is not something we all do well in our culture. If you want to see that, just watch people board the plane with their carry-ons. There are signs all over the gate area telling how many carry-ons you can have. The gate agents will remind you several times as well. There are small boxes at the gate where you can place your carry-ons to measure and make sure they fit. There are pictures demonstrating how to properly store carry-ons in the overhead bins. Yet, there is always someone who has one too many carry-ons... and that carry-on is two sizes too big... and so they stand there in the aisle, pushing and shoving it into the overhead bin as hard as they can to make it fit. Regardless of the rules, they will do what they want to do. Right? (Or maybe, that is you?)

In our culture, people do what they want when they want, regardless of what anybody says. Such radical expressions of personal freedom only create more rules and regulations. Our public spaces become filled with more signs, more warnings, and more instructions, yet we only see more chaos as individuals resist the laws in a willful expression of their own personal freedom. Just listen to what people say at times: *"Rules are made to be broken."*

Today in our text, Jesus is talking about rules. He speaks about commands, and mere mention of commands can cause some resistance to rise. But notice one thing. When Jesus speaks of commands, He does so in the context of love. Jesus begins our text with these words: **"If you love me, keep my commands."** At the end of our text, he repeats the idea: **"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."** Love is connected to keeping the commandments. Commandments are kept not because of fear, not because of force, not because of threats, and not because of punishment. Commandments are kept because of love. Love leads to a delight in the Law. Jesus is talking about deep and everlasting love which leads those who follow Him to obey His commands.

The words of our text pick up where the Gospel Lesson for last week had stopped. He still is in that upper room celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples for the last time on Maundy Thursday. Jesus had told that there would be a time coming soon that he was going to be leaving them. What were they going to do? How could they live without Jesus? He looked at the men around that table, he knew just how much they needed His love to go on living. Later that evening they would be scared and run. Peter would pull out his sword and cut a man's ear off. He was ready to defend his Lord. Then in a little while later, he would deny even knowing who Jesus was. They would see Jesus die. But by his death, he would show them just how much he loved them and this world. They would be hiding behind locked doors fearful if they would be next. They needed to hear the words of Jesus: **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."** They needed to remember those words of Jesus. **"I will not leave you!"**

We need to remember those words. It's the same promise that Jesus gives to you as well. **"I will not leave you!"** Today, Jesus stands before you in His Word and tells you that He came to reconnect you to the fullness of God. He promises to each and every one of that He will NOT leave you as orphans. This thing that Jesus has done is not just for a moment. No, it will last. It will last an eternity.

Not only does Jesus promise that He will not leave his disciples, Jesus tells them what He will do after His ascension. **"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and**

will be in you.” The disciples would not be alone. They will have *another* Helper besides Jesus. An Advocate. One who would walk alongside them every step of their life.

Suppose you were a hiker planning to explore a deep and dangerous canyon. Before setting out, you receive instructions from a seasoned guide on how to navigate the treacherous terrain safely. The guide warns you of potential pitfalls, such as loose rocks, steep inclines, and hidden dangers. Yet, you decide along the way that you think you know better. You decide to ignore the guide's instructions and blaze your own trail. You disregard the warnings and stray from the established path, confident in your own abilities. The consequences could be disastrous and deadly. Yet, don't we do that on a daily basis? We sin. We break the rules. The consequences of sin are disastrous. Instead, we have a God who doesn't just keep us from falling off the edge of a cliff. We have a God, who removes us completely from all danger.

Why? You are His child. You have been adopted into the family of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is his love that gives us the motivation to love others as our Lord has loved us. In Christ, we are not alone. In Christ, we have the Holy Spirit who walks beside us. In Christ, we can live this life with the confidence that Jesus goes with us always. Loving Jesus, we delight in following His commands and living in Him. May we take comfort in the words of Jesus: **“The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”** May God grant it. Amen.