

5/17/20 6th Sunday of Easter Pastor Priewe

Text: John 14:15-21 **Theme: The Triune God Lives in You**

“If you love me, keep my commands.” (John 14:15). If you love me, you will keep my commands. “The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.” (14:21). Do those words of Jesus make you tremble in your boots? There’s no escaping them as they seem to sandwich this text with an overwhelming condition. Profess your love all day long, but talk is cheap. If you love me, prove it. Keep my commands.

As we tremble in that mindset, the devil stands by grinning, licking his chops, as he’s about to pounce and devour. For me, he’s got a 26-year long docudrama of my life to proudly parade before my eyes of all the times I have obliterated the commands of Jesus. After each chapter in the story, he proudly appears with a gut-punching accusation, “You say you love Jesus, but this is what you did! There’s no way you love Jesus. Look at the footage! You’ve never even obeyed for a single day. You don’t obey his commands and you don’t love Jesus and I’ve got 26 years of this to prove it.”

If I look at those words of Jesus, **“If you love me, keep my commands,”** and think they are the way that I am going to love my way in a good relationship with him, that I am going to woo his heart with my obedience, then Satan’s accusation has me dead-to-rights. I’ve got no chance of doing anything but proving my inborn hatred of God and guilt before Jesus, much less proving any love, any obedience, any right status with God.

But we need to look carefully at when those words were spoken, who they were spoken to, and what their purpose was. The situation may surprise you, as here we sit in the sixth week of Easter, but those words are spoken by Jesus on Maundy Thursday, the night before he was crucified. **“Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (John 13:1).**

The words Jesus spoke are not spoken in the context of the “courtroom” where God the righteous judge declares sinners guilty or righteous. Jesus speaks

these words in the upper room, you might say in the “classroom,” where he is training and preparing and encouraging his disciples, his beloved children for everything they are about to face. **“My children, I will be with you only a little longer.” (John 13:33)** What an understatement that seems to be as later that evening he will be handed over, and in the morning tortured and crucified.

Now we look again at those words of Jesus, which initially overwhelm us, **“If you love, you will keep my commands,”** and we see the heart with which our Savior speaks. Not an angry boss demanding obedience or else, not a drill sergeant thundering threats, instead, these are the words of a tender Father bolstering his children in the faith and emboldening their lives of love and obedience. These are the words of the heavenly bridegroom entreating his beloved bride to love him and be faithful to him. When we hear them spoken with that voice, they’re so completely fitting and expected.

This obedience and love, which he asks for, Jesus himself ultimately gives the means and ability to do. He’s not asking us to love our way into a relationship with him, he has already gone to the ends of the earth for his bride. He has already loved us into the faith. The apostle John, who recorded our text for today, explains how Jesus brought us into this relationship in his first letter, **“This is how God showed his love among us; He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love; not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin.” (1 John 4:10).** God loves us first, the unlovable, and bring us to himself through Jesus.

Here’s the result of what God’s love brings us to life to do. **“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (11).** He makes the unlovable able to love him and one another. That’s the very same command Jesus had given to his disciples that evening: to love one another, as he had loved them.

Still to us it seems like a lofty command far beyond **our** ability until we realize what Jesus has promised to us in order to carry this out. He doesn’t leave us to our own ability, like saying, “Look what I did for you! You better love me and you better start figuring out how to do that on your own.” He promises us the full passion, power and presence of the Triune God! **“Keep my commands and I will**

ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth.” (John 14:16). Forever!

Perhaps now more than ever we feel like we need an advocate, a counselor, a comforter, to help us navigate the difficult road we’re walking. The times have us totally confused. The social distance has us all feeling like orphans, deprived of those who care for us on this earth, deprived of the ones we love, deprived of those we worship next to, deprived of those we normally play with or would graduate with. Those are genuine difficulties we’ve had to endure over the last few months that force us to struggle even harder as we seek to follow his commands.

But those hardships aren’t the tipping point, they are exactly what Jesus was equipping us for. Jesus certainly knew the extreme difficulties the disciples were about endure as a gory crucifixion would deprive them of their Shepherd Savior by their side. He knew their weaknesses and the fact that they would need help keeping his commands in the coming days. But he promised to give them and us his Holy Spirit to be our heavenly helper every step of the way.

“The world cannot accept him [the Spirit of Truth], because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you!” (17) Did you hear that? **The Spirit of Truth lives with you and in you!** You know when he carries out his work in you, helping you, comforting you, pointing you to Christ, and guiding you in the way of truth by using the truth.

Circumstances might cause you to feel orphaned, but those circumstances will never make Jesus a liar. He has promised, **“I will not leave you as orphans.” (18)** Not only has he promised to send **another** advocate, the Spirit of Truth, he reminds us of the double comfort that he never stops advocating for us. So he adds to the promise, **“I will come to you. Before long the world will not see me anymore.” (18)** Just as it didn’t see him when he came the first time, neither will the world believe his resurrection or recognize his Spirit. **“But you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” (19)**

Often we hear that passage and jump way to the end when our bodies will be raised to life eternal because Jesus lives, which is totally true. But don’t chop off

the part until we reach that day. The disciples would see him after he rose. The Spirit would soon come on them with power and reveal that Jesus continues to live and so too they would **live** right then and there! Victorious living starts here and now in this life and here's why. Jesus told them, "**On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.**" (John 14:20). The Father lives in Jesus and Jesus lives in you, and you already heard that the Holy Spirit lives in you. Do you know what that means? ***The Triune God Lives in You!***

In Acts 17:24, the Apostle Paul says, "**The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands.**" That makes sense. Heaven is his throne and earth his footstool. But try to grasp the full magnitude of what Jesus promises next in our text. "**The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them...and we will come to them and make our home with them.**" (John 14:21, 23). That means: ***The Triune God LIVES IN YOU!*** Not even close to orphans, you've got the almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Redeemer of the world, the Helper of your soul, the three most powerful helpers in the universe caring for you. The Triune God makes his home in you, his temple.

Now we look again at Jesus' command, "If you love me, keep my commands," which at first seemed so daunting. And now we see that he has committed his strength to us for this task. St. Augustine captures this so beautifully when he prays, "*Give what you command, O Lord, and then command whatever you will.*"

God has given his passion, power and presence for us and so he enables us to follow whatever he commands, even the ones that seem impossible, even the ones you personally struggle with the most. Love me above all. Deny yourself. Put your evil desires to death. Repent and produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Take up your cross and follow me. Love one another as I have loved you. Be my witnesses. Do not worry. Live in harmony with one another. Remember this the next time sin is crouching at your door, desiring to have you. Jesus loves you and you love him and you fight with the power of **the Triune God living in you, fighting for you. That's Victorious Living Here and Now! Amen.**