

John 14 23-29

It's still Maundy Thursday...The last Evening Jesus spends with his disciples before His death...which is the very next day!

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 lots of questions right?!

So, Peter asks where ya going? Thomas asks, "How can we know the way?" Philip says Lord show us the Father and we'll be satisfied, and Judas asks the 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 talks about the Holy Spirit and the Father...This is probably way over their heads...and probably over our heads too sometimes.

Today's gospel covers only a part of Jesus' answer to Judas' (not to be confused with that other Judas – Iscariot) and this is part of Jesus' answer to Him. Jesus' final conversation with His disciples in it's entirety covers relationship, love and service!

What would YOU tell your own 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."

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

There is no secret here...the world will see Jesus abiding here in His followers...and today that's you and me! At Baptism we signed up to be a follower of Christ...a Christian!

And like I said last week how will folks know that we are Christians? By our Doctrines by our theology and liturgy...by our good Judgement? Will they know we are Christians by what flag we wave...or how about our ability to make others feel guilty or afraid or 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 His followers today?

Is He a white nationalist? How about a Vengeful and Judging Bearded Man Coming to Reward His followers while punishing others for all eternity? Is that how you view God?!

Is God even a He...The word for Spirit, Ruach, is actually a feminine word in Hebrew...so how is the world gonna know about God?

See there's only one that way the world will know Jesus experientially...And that's through 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 is the ONLY way to be a Christian...THE ONLY WAY...no BS and NO exceptions! That's what God is...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 God loves you...

And how do we do these things...through washing one another's feet...in serving one another... especially the “least of these” ...those who have been marginalized and victimized and made the scapegoat by the system...those not in the current “in” group!

The followers of Jesus will be a community characterized by mutual respect, love and service to everyone...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 crystal clear that followers love Him by serving others. Although we might try and somehow separate loving God from loving others...Jesus never makes any such distinctions...unless of course you choose not to love others...then you get to go over and be with the goats.

Jesus places a condition on Discipleship... those who love and follow me will keep my word. Love for Jesus has always been about your posture and your actions in the world. Jesus doesn’t just give us the Gospels... He lives them out. Following Jesus then is love in action...the body of Christ in motion.

Now this is the Last Supper...and how did Jesus begin...he acted out the role of a slave and washed everyone’s feet (including Judas Iscariot’s) ...a humble act of service and love...and everyone...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 very easy to live this way...is it!?

Jesus offers us God’s presence with us in three different promises.

First, he says of Himself and the Father about those who love Him: "That We will come and make our home with them." From the first

chapter of John's gospel, we know that prior to anyone's love for Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us". God is with us – Emmanuel!

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

It hearkens back to the first chapter of John's gospel and again at the end...a reality envisioned by John in Revelation: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell WITH them...they will be His people, and God 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 else God's desires is to be WITH us!

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

And now that Spirit 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 is with us as we remember Jesus and follow in His footsteps today...making Jesus very real for those we meet So how are we loving? ...and how and who 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 way that Jesus instructed us and lived out His life...This is Love in action with the Spirit of God abiding and dwelling within us.

How have you experienced the living Christ in your lives so as to let your love for God show up in all the ways that you relate to others?

Jesus speaks of the home that the Father will make with those who love Him. He promises the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we follow and remember him.

And then finally, Jesus gives His peace to those He is about to physically leave. He describes this peace which He gives as something different than the peace of the world...in other words it's a peace grounded in God.

Peace, Love and Joy...these are the gifts of the Spirit. These things are not of this world and therefore are not subject to whatever situation or circumstances which you may find yourself in. They cannot be measured, and they 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...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 or experience from time to time. The Buddhist call this state of being enlightenment.

It is characterized by time standing still and a clarity as we see ourselves as connected and a being part of a greater whole...the Spirit of well-being that transcends whatever circumstances or situations we may be in. This is Shalom! Many of us find that peace in Nature or even 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 sharing God's word... and through sharing a sacred meal together. Here we are both in and outside of time...Shalom...connected!

This concept of Peace in John's gospel first shows up right here before Jesus is crucified the very next day...He will be leaving them, but He will reappear to the disciples after the resurrection...and Jesus 'peace will grant the disciples comfort and courage in the midst of all their doubts and fears and they're gonna need that peace going forward.

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...through us revealing Jesus to the world.

In the Father and the Son abiding in and WITH you through The Spirit.

It is our continued work in God's Spirit that allows us to remember everything Jesus taught us and did...and then more importantly for us to re-enact this way of being in the world with others...this is how we change the world and bring about the Kingdom of God today.

And in this, we come to experience that peace that comes from being in relationship with something greater than ourselves. A peace that transcends our situations...and grounds us and is not of this world. Jesus tells His disciples, then and now, so that we may come to experience a relationship with God today!

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 as Children of God.

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...never orphaned... never 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...followers of Christ...Shalom my friends!
Shalom!

Your faithful servant,
carmen