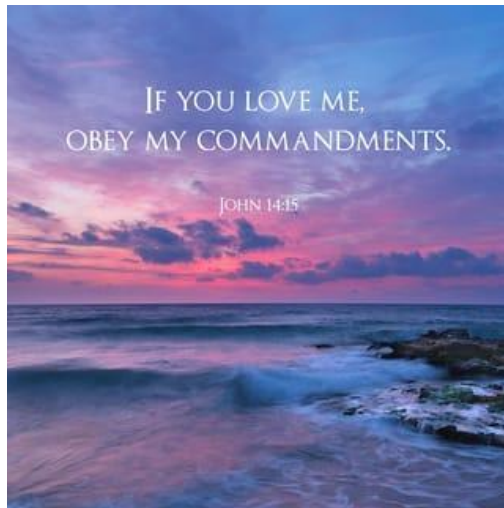


Sermon – May 14, 2023  
“Because I live, you also will live”  
The Rev. John C. Wright



Text: John 14:15-21

*Pray with me: Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Come, Holy Spirit come and visit, filling open hearts and anointing the sharing of these words, making them a blessing for your people that continues our transformation into Christ's image and leads us to fruitful labor as we follow Jesus into his mission right here, right now. Amen*

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Today is the sixth Sunday of Eastertide, and you are improving with your response to Christ is risen! Did someone tip you off that I was going to put that in the sermon? We are coming to the end of the season of Eastertide. Thursday we will gather a bit before 7 pm at Fairfields Methodist Church and celebrate the ascension of Jesus. Seedbed has arranged for people who attended the Awakening at Asbury to share some of their experiences via live stream. I hope that you will take time to come and listen to their experiences and seek to open our hearts to a mighty work of God in us. Remember that ten days after Jesus' ascension comes Pentecost, the outpouring of Holy Spirit. We might want to find our brightly colored outfits and see if they fit. During the summer, Seedbed is hosting a summer book club and will be reading Dan Wilt's book, "Receive the Holy Spirit." If you are interested in being part of a summer book club, go to [seedbed.com](http://seedbed.com), sign up, and get a copy of the book. I am planning to pick a day each week to meet with those reading the book to discuss what we have

read over the week and share our insights. Let me know if you would like to join; reading begins on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

I think some context for this morning's scripture reading might be helpful. Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples at the Last Supper. He is continuing to give them last instructions and to comfort them as they realize that he will be leaving them soon. They have no idea what his leaving means, but Jesus has made it plain to them they will not be able to go with him now but will follow later. The disciples are understandably confused, concerned, saddened, and shocked at this news. Jesus has also told them he is the way, truth, and life and that they will do greater works than he has done. Now Jesus turns to a new topic, one he has spoken of before, but now begins to explain in greater detail. That topic is the giving of Holy Spirit to his disciples.

Jesus tells his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."<sup>i</sup> Jesus' statement might bring several questions to our minds, such as, "How do we love Jesus? What commandments does Jesus include? How do we show our love to our Lord and Savior?" and "How do we love Jesus?" Keep in mind that Jesus is speaking to Jews. The men who follow Jesus would have begun and ended each day by reciting the Shema, "Hear O Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your might."<sup>ii</sup> They were constantly seeking to be those who love God with all of themselves. But it is one thing to say we love God and another to do so. Jesus tells his disciples that if we love him, we will keep his commandments. Notice commandments is plural, Jesus is speaking to us about keeping more than one commandment. He speaks to more than loving each other, the commandment he has given that is close in the early part of his words in the upper room. If we begin to think about Jesus' commandments, we will begin to identify others in the Gospels such as loving our neighbor as ourselves and laying down our life for another, and, in the Beatitudes, we will find Jesus teaching us that commandment keeping is not an external matter, but a heart matter, an inward heart condition. And finally, we might make the connection that Jesus is God, so all that God commanded in the Old Testament Law, we will need to keep as well. Our thinking should quickly bring us to the idea that we might not be loving Jesus if we have to keep all of the commandments that Jesus does not set aside, such as the food laws. We will need help to be changed to love in this manner, for some of us, like myself, a lot of help. I think I should remind us at this point in a commandment discussion that if

we love others as Jesus asks us to love, and have a profound love for God, we will, by default, keep all of the commandments.

As the disciples begin to struggle with this new requirement of Jesus to love, Jesus gives them more news. Jesus tells them, he “will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.”<sup>iii</sup> Now for those following along in your Bibles, you may have a different word for the advocate whom Jesus says he will send in your translations. There is a good reason for those differences. This Greek word, “paracleteos,” is difficult to translate into English. John alone of the New Testament writers uses this Greek word five times in his Gospel and letters when he refers to Holy Spirit. Four of those occurrences are in the Gospel of John and the other is in 1 John. The Greek root is a verb that describes someone “called alongside” and, in secular Greek, the word is used to refer to an advocate in a court of law. The paraclete is the person who comes “alongside” another person to speak in their defense and provide counsel. We will see many English words used to translate “paracleteos” into English, such as comforter, counselor, helper, and companion.<sup>iv</sup> While there is little agreement in our translations, the NRSV’s use of the word “advocate” may be the best translation as it includes the legal concept found in the Greek. Jesus tells us the Paraclete is the Spirit of truth. From Jesus’ teaching we know Holy Spirit is not physical but spiritual. Also notice that Jesus uses personal pronouns for Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is not a thing but is a person. And yes, we may have trouble getting our head around a spirit as a person, I know I do, but this is how Jesus speaks of Holy Spirit. We can have a personal relationship with Holy Spirit. Jesus is about to leave the world; he will go to the cross, die, and spend three days in a tomb. The world will no longer see Jesus, but his disciples will. On Easter morning Jesus is raised from the dead and his disciples see him again. Jesus will live, he will be resurrected, and because he lives, we also will live. We, as believers, are reconciled through Jesus to God for all eternity.

Notice that Jesus tells his disciples that he is coming to them and that he will be in them. Jesus will be in us. The presence of another in our bodies is a very difficult concept for a child, as children have difficulty with abstract thought, and it may be difficult for us to understand as well how Jesus is in us. Let’s work through this idea a little this morning. Jesus and God are one. Jesus is God. Jesus is in his Father. We may be okay with these ideas, but there is more. Jesus and Holy Spirit are one as well. This is starting to sound like trinitarian language. Jesus sends Holy Spirit to us (as does the Father who gives us another Advocate). Holy Spirit is in us and

since Jesus and Holy Spirit are one, through Holy Spirit, Jesus is in us and with us. Yes, Jesus is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, but through Holy Spirit, Jesus is in us and in all believers across the world. Christ with us. And of course, since Jesus is in us through Holy Spirit and Jesus is in his Father, we are connected to God through Jesus' presence in us through Holy Spirit. The Paraclete, when he comes to us, brings God's words to our minds. The Paraclete works in us to enable us to do the works Jesus did. Through Holy Spirit, Jesus is now present in all believers all across the globe and is able to work through them to do greater works. And we, through the Paraclete, have an intimate connection to God in prayer, as we pray in Jesus' name. It may be challenging for us to get our heads wrapped around the presence of Holy Spirit and what his presence in our lives means. Remember, in all of these relationships, love is the key. If we love Jesus by keeping his commandments, he will ask the Father and the Father will send another Advocate (Jesus the Advocate is leaving) to be with us forever.

We might be wondering if Jesus is in us. Is Holy Spirit in us? How do we know Christ is in us? There are many answers to these questions, but let me share an example that might help us grow in our understanding. This example was shared with those attending the Fairfield's Bible study this past week. The lectures for our study of Revelation are provided by Dr. Mulholland. During this week's lecture, he shared with the class his conversion from a young teenage atheist to a follower of Jesus. After he accepted Jesus into his life by asking Jesus to come and fill the void he felt within, he first received a peaceful night sleep, one of the best he had experienced in a long time, and when he awoke, his desire was for a Bible. He had a hunger for Christ. He wanted to know who Jesus is. He wanted to read about Jesus and to learn more about him. He had received Holy Spirit, but Holy Spirit points us to Jesus who points us to the Father. He shared that his mother knew something was different in his life when he got up that morning and passed by the refrigerator and instead got on his bike to ride the six miles to town to get a Bible. I found this same hunger following my own conversion. After I received Christ, I too developed a hunger for reading the Bible, for knowing who Jesus is and how he lived. The other response within us that points to the presence of Jesus through Holy Spirit is we are given the ability to love where we have no love to give. The world cannot see Jesus but we who have Jesus in our hearts can be seen by those in the world if we will love them. We don't seek to love those in the world as they ask to be loved, but as Jesus commands us to love, with our hearts in truth guided by Holy Spirit. Those who have Jesus dwelling in them are the body of Christ in all of the places

they reside. They are not a body that goes to church and seeks to keep Jesus' commandments only at church or in their homes, but are those who go out into the world to love others, to be the body of Christ to the lost, broken, lonely, scared, confused, deceived and hungry. They are those who seek to be good news to the poor, to set the captives free and to restore the sight of the blind. They are those who go out into the world to love not as the world loves, but as those who love Jesus by keeping his commandments. Let us seek to love Jesus, not in words but through loving actions for each other and all we meet. Ask Jesus for Holy Spirit to be given to us so that Holy Spirit might bring the presence of Jesus into our hearts, and we might become the body of Christ right here, right now, loving others as Jesus loves us in this community. Come, Holy Spirit come. You are welcome not only here in this place but in our hearts as we seek to be your church, the body of Christ in our community.

*Pray with me: Lord Jesus, help us to obey your commandments. Jesus, ask the Father to give us another Advocate. Jesus, come and dwell in us through Holy Spirit and lead us to be those who love you, keeping your commandments and loving others as you love us. Amen*

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, because he has anointed us to bring good news to the poor. He has sent us to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Go forth into Jesus’ mission.**

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<sup>i</sup> NRSV John 14:15

<sup>ii</sup> NRSV Deuteronomy 4:6

<sup>iii</sup> NRSV John 14:16

<sup>iv</sup> Burge, Gary M.. John (The NIV Application Commentary Book 4) (pp. 573-574). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.