

He Lives in You!

Meditation on John 14:15-26

May 21, 2017

Merritt Island Presbyterian Church

15 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17This 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.

18 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21They 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.'

22Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' 23Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

I came home from church on Thursday and found that my husband had bought me a present. I was so happy! He bought a Black and Decker 20 volt Hedge Trimmer. He had been hearing me talk about how

overgrown our hedges had become, and how we don't have the right tools.

I couldn't wait to use my new power tool! I had never used a power hedge trimmer before. On Friday morning, I dressed in my grubby clothes, put on a hat, glasses and yard gloves and slathered on sunscreen. I was ready to conquer the rainforest! Ok, it wasn't really as bad as that.

But Jim said, "Wait." He told me to read the instruction manual. So I did. I read about the safety switch that you have to push before you can squeeze the trigger and start the blade movement. I read the "Trimming Instructions" that described the "working position," telling me to "maintain proper footing and balance" and to not "overreach. Hold the unit firmly in both hands and turn the unit ON. Always hold the trimmer, as shown in the illustrations, with one hand on the switch handle and one hand on the bail handle (see figure 4). Never hold the unit by the blade guard!" Well, that seemed straightforward enough.

I read how to trim new growth with "wide, sweeping motions, feeding the blade teeth through the twigs" being the most effective way. "A slight downward tilt of the blade, in the direction of motion gives the best cutting." I read the cautions against cutting stems greater than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and how the blade may coast after turning off.

Then I read, "Danger: Keep hands away from blades." That sounded like a great idea. I was ready!

But, not yet. Jim walked me out to the hedge with the trimmer and went through all the instructions, again, before turning it on and demonstrating its use.

I was growing impatient. "I can do it!" I said. He just smiled and told me he wasn't going to leave the house until I was finished using the new hedge trimmer. The reasons for his staying close by were obvious:

1. I could have a question and need his help OR
2. Something could happen and he might have to make a tourniquet and call 911 (not necessarily in that order) AND
3. He loves me and only wants what is good for me.

As I worked outside, I thought about Jesus' character--His love for us--and how he prayed God's will would be done, knowing that God's will is best for all of us. This is what leads him to tell the disciples to keep his commandments in John 14:15 --to do what he tells them to do--that is, *if they love him*. Love's proof, Christ is saying, is *obedience*. The disciples find it much easier to talk about their love and loyalty than to always live it--just as we struggle at times to walk in Christ's ways.

Jesus will repeat the same instruction to obey his commandments several times in this chapter and the idea will come up again and be expanded upon in the next. After saying, "keep my commandments" in 14:15, he says in 14:21, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me." He substitutes "word" for "commandments" in 14:23, "Those who love me will keep my word." And the converse is true in v. 24, when he says, "Whoever does not love me does not keep my words." He goes on to say that the authority for the "commandments" or "words" comes from God. "The word you hear

is not mine,” he says, “but is from the Father who sent me.”

OK, I think we get it. We need to live in obedience to Christ. But what are these commandments--or words--that he is talking about? His language evokes the covenantal language of the Hebrew Bible, in which the people of Israel are characterized as those who “love God” and “keep his commands.” When we hear Jesus tell us to “keep his commandments,” we may also think of the *Ten Commandments*.

But since he says, “my commandments,” we might remember the *Greatest Commandment* he talks about in the other 3 gospels: (Matthew 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-31 and Luke 10:26-27) ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’

The best way, perhaps, to understand what Jesus means by “my commandments” in this context is to read what comes directly before and after this passage. You are probably not surprised to discover that in both before and after this passage, Jesus commands his disciples to love, in his example.

In John 13:33-35, after Jesus washes the disciples’ feet and Judas Iscariot leaves to set in motion the act of betrayal, Jesus gives the remaining disciples his “new commandment”--to bear witness of him to the world through the way they treat each other: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In chapter 15, beginning at verse 9, Jesus commands his followers to love, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have

kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." Then at verse 12, he says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." He adds, foreshadowing the cross, "No one has greater love than this --to lay down one's life for one's friends." And then we are back to love's proof--*obedience*. "You are my friends," Jesus says in 15:14, "*if you do what I command you.*" And finally, we learn the purpose for Christ's commands in 15:11: JOY! For Christ wants what is GOOD for us! "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

Now, there is only one thing left--the most important point of this passage--the gift of the Spirit. Why do you think that would come up immediately after Jesus tells them that *if they love him*, they will keep his commandments?

Because of God's grace and mercy for us! God knows we can't keep His commandments, no matter how hard we try. We can't love as Christ loves and abide in His love-- without His help.

"I will not leave you orphaned," Jesus assures his followers in 14:18, "I am coming to you."

This is not the Second Coming, of which He has already spoken in 14:2, with his "preparing a place" for them in His Father's "house of many dwelling places." And how he will "come again" and take them to himself in 14:3, "so that where I am, there you may also be."

He is talking about a living presence that God will send *at his request*-- "another Advocate" or "helper," the "Spirit of Truth" to guide and empower us to do His will. And to be with us "forever." For like my husband, who for love was loathe to leave me alone with a dangerous

power tool, Jesus, our Friend and Lover of our Souls, will not leave us alone to fend for ourselves in this dark world. While we listen for God's voice for us today as we read the Bible, we also rely on the Holy Spirit every day to guide and empower us to do the works God has planned for us. Jesus says in 14:25-26, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send *in my name*, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you."

On Friday morning, after Jim taught me how to use the new power tool and insisted on staying close by, I pushed the safety button, squeezed the handle. The engine roared to life. The blades did the work as I held the power tool, following Jim's example, and made downward, sweeping motions, as the instruction manual told me to do.

While I trimmed back the overgrown hedge, I thought about the Savior's love and how he commands us to abide in his love, *if we love him*. And how His Spirit, a gift from God, enables us to do this.

How he lives in me!

How He lives *in you!*

Let us pray.

Holy One, we are so happy that you have not abandoned us to try to follow your Son on our own. Thank you for the gift of your joy and the promise that our joy will be complete when we are obedient to you.

Thank you for your gift of the Spirit of Truth that guides and enables us to do the works you have planned for us to do. Forgive us, Lord, when we try to resist the Spirit's leading in our lives, when we choose not to abide in your love, but simply to do whatever we feel like doing. Transform us, by your Spirit, to be more like Your Son, who was perfectly obedient to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.