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Hudson UMC
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Easter 6A - 2026 - Jn 14
John 14:15-24

Prayer for Enlightenment

O Lord, we pray, speak in this place, in the calming of our minds and in the longing of our hearts, by the words of my lips and in the thoughts that we form. Speak, O Lord, for your servants listen. Amen.

I will not leave you orphans...

This short verse is part of a much longer story, one that takes up four chapters in the Gospel of John.

This story begins when Jesus tells his disciples that he is leaving: "Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me . . . but where I am going you cannot come."

This is hard to hear, especially to those who had followed him for three years. "You can't leave us! What are we going to do?"

Jesus probably saw the fear in the eyes, the confusion on their faces, so he quickly added, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:33-34).

Of course this was not enough for Peter...this did not seem like enough. So Peter asks, "Lord, where are you going?" (John 13:36) And then Thomas adds, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

This whole story veers between fear and love...worry and trust...abandonment and comfort. The disciples are frightened that their friend and teacher is leaving; Jesus reassures them that, although they cannot follow him into suffering and death, he is present with them through love, trust, and faith in him.

The disciples have a fear of separation God, from Jesus, and probably from one another as well. They have known what it means to live deeply into God, to have overcome the estrangement both with the divine and within their own lives. They cannot fathom losing that.

If Jesus goes away, will they be banished back to a splintered world, the one sharded in sin? Is that their fate?

No says Jesus.

I will not leave you orphans.

Fear, estrangement, separation – these are not the last words.

Instead, Jesus invites his disciples to dwell in him, even as he dwelt in God.

I am the way... This is not a threat, this is a promise.

I will not leave you orphans," says Jesus.

But sometimes...even on good days I feel like an orphan.
I feel unprotected and unsure...not certain of the next steps...maybe you do too.

Jesus continues just a couple verses later with what I think might be a clue.
He says “If you love me, you will keep my commandments (vs 15)”

The Hebrew word is *mitzvot* is usually translated commandments.

COMMANDMENTS is a good translation of this Hebrew word...but it leads us to usually thinking only about the 10-Commandments.

Mitzvot are commandments or religious duties of the Jewish faith. These are found in the first-5 books of the OT. These instruct Jews on how to live an ethical, connected and sacred life.
Mitzvot can also be translated as good deeds.

Technically, there are 613-*mitzvot*; all of these are aimed at connecting the people to God.
Today some of these are no longer relevant since the Temple no longer exists. For example, the 52nd *Mitzvah* states that trees are not to be planted in the Temple courtyard...hard to follow when the Jerusalem Temple no longer exists.

In the face of the chaos of life, when we feel vulnerable or like an orphan, Jesus says do the *mitzvot*.

As I look at these *mitzvot*, I find them to be acts that lead to life. I wonder if Jesus isn't saying here to look for the things that lead to life...and to do THEM. Do them again and again. You and I, we are not in charge of bringing the entire universe to life...but when we see something that helps, protects, nurtures, or loves. Just do it. Again and again...just do it.

What will those life-giving things be for you and for me?
I have some ideas in my life, but not for you...you must figure out what brings you life. My guess is that we will each have very different things that we will do.

I do think that this scene in John's story links doing those things with the messiah coming to people who feel abandoned. I think this scene in John is about helping to turn the world right-side-up...even just a little bit.

I do know that talking about messiah coming, while refusing to look for and do those everyday *mitzvot* is nothing more than pie in the sky.

So...let's get on with it. I'm pretty sure that, if we had to sit down and thrash all this out before we did anything, we'd mostly discover that we disagree with each other about which *mitzvot* are most important.

Then we could argue about who was the only person who was right.
We love to do that.

It's a lot easier than actually doing the things that help people not feel like orphans.

Use your imagination.

Is there a way that your company, or your family, or even just you could give life and hope and protection that you have never thought of before.

Can you help prevent an eviction?

Can you help feed someone who is hungry?

Indeed the world is upside down...this will require everybody's best imagining.

And it is going to require that we just do it.

Mitzvot...Doing the things that bring us and those around us life...righting the world...even just a little...even if only for a moment.

Mitzvot as we remember Jesus saying I will not leave you orphaned.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.