

051423 "I will not leave you orphaned" John 14:15-21

Happy Mother's Day! There are so many things our mothers taught us. I'd like to share with you some of them.

- My mother taught me LOGIC.

"Because I said so, that's why."

- My mother taught me FORESIGHT.

"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

- My mother taught me IRONY.

"Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."

- My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS.

"Shut your mouth and eat your supper."

- My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE.

"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

- My mother taught me about ENVY.

"There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."

- My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION.

"Just wait until we get home"

- My mother taught me WISDOM.

"When you get to be my age, you'll understand."

- My mother taught me about JUSTICE.

"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

Of course, these words express mother's love in a fun way, but no matter how much the world has changed, it is almost impossible to find something that can replace mother's love in this world whether she is your biological mother or non-biological mother. On Mother's Day we can't say enough good things about our mothers, but we'll try. And God help us if we don't!

Today, we read John 14 according to the lectionary. John 14 is known as Jesus' "Farewell Discourse," and it extends to John 16. Jesus promised that he would send paraclete, the Holy Spirit as counselor, when he returned to God the Father. In addition, he promised that he would grant his peace that the world could not give. Jesus had told his disciplines beforehand, on numerous occasions, that he would die on the cross and rise from the dead.

Jesus promised his disciples, who were steeped in worry, that he would eventually lead them to their home, to the kingdom of God, even though his disciples did not understand its meaning at that time, and Jesus promised he would not abandon them like orphans in the rough world. We as Christians live today placing faith in these words. Even as circumstances are difficult and tough, we try to keep these words in mind: "God did not abandon me like an orphan!"

The Bible passage we read today, John 14:15, is truly challenging. "If you love me, you will obey my command." Then, what does Jesus' "command" refer to here? Of course, you could think that it refers to the whole Bible or maybe the Ten Commandments. But when Jesus speaks of "my command" in verse 15, it refers to what the Lord mentioned in chapter 13. You see, in the previous chapter, Jesus proclaimed "his new commandment." Specifically, that commandment is "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Jesus commanded people who loved him to love sisters and brothers in pursuit of love. A word that is often used in our world is "love." Love is a subject that frequently appears in songs, movies, dramas, and novels. There is no one who does not love. Whether the object of that love is a person, money, power, or popularity. But each person loves based on his or her standard. In other words, people love those who meet their standards.

But if you look at today's scripture, there is a condition attached to "love" – "as I have loved you ..." We are comfortable around people who fit our profile. It is when another person's educational background, morality, life circumstances, and race match ours that it is fun to meet the other person and that meeting is enjoyable. In that respect, Jesus' teaching is a challenge to all of us! That is because if you reflect on the commandment, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another," you realize it was Jesus Christ who consistently lowered himself for us, devoting himself to and loving us until he died.

Well, if you take a look at Jewish community in the first century you will find there was not a whole lot of love being shared. The people were divided into Pharisees and Sadducees, students of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai,

Herodians and Zealots, and on and on. God's people were greatly divided when Jesus gave this new command. They did not love the aliens in their land. They did not love their neighbors as themselves, most Jews despised their neighbors, the Samaritans. They did not love one another.

So Jesus calls his disciples back to the basics, because if they cannot love one another, then they certainly cannot love the community and they cannot love God. Jesus gave us the command: Love one another. But Jesus did not stop there. He added a qualifying phrase to this new command:

The adverb *kathos* in this phrase means "just as" or "in the same manner." Mom and dad provide an object lesson for kids when they are very little, let's say you are trying to show your children or grandchildren how to tie their shoes, what do you do? You show them and then say, "Now, you do this just like me." This is what Jesus is telling us. He says to us, "I have showed you how to love, now you love others the way that I do."

This is a very difficult thing to do, but if you look at today's passage, there is good news! The good news is that while it is difficult to go down the path alone, you are not alone! If you read verse 16 again: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you Forever." Jesus promised the Holy Spirit be with us. And the Holy Spirit listens when we earnestly pray in Jesus' name. I don't know about you but I certainly believe that God listen to our prayers.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, in Romans 5:8 the apostle Paul said, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Let us love one another as the Lord has loved us. When we love each other, our community also will know it. We will see new things we can do for our community as one. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.