John 14 v 15-21

Just to set the scene once again, following on from Jacqui’s talk last week – this 14th Chapter in John’s Gospel is known as the Farewell Discourse. Jesus was nearing His death and He was preparing His disciples for being separated from Him and He needed to get some important things across to them but as we read last Sunday, Thomas said that they didn’t know where He was going and Philip asked Him to show them the Father.

In verse 11 Jesus urges them “Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me. Or at least, believe because of the works you have seen me do. I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works.

These disciples were ordinary (flawed) human beings who had left everything they knew to follow Jesus and had seen his miracles, heard his parables, and they obviously loved Him.

We are told little about them, but we can imagine that these were quite disturbing utterances from Jesus being that they seemed not fully able to understand Him. How would we have felt with this earth-shattering news?

Our text continues: “If you love me, keep my commandments”. Throughout the history of the Old Testament, God had required His people to keep His commandments and they had not, in the main, done so. Jesus was sent by God into the world as a human being to live amongst them and to reveal the Father’s character to them. The Jewish leaders and people in authority didn’t understand who He was and had been expecting a great King to be their Messiah and ultimately Jesus was to pay the price for mankind’s sinful ways. However, He was now reiterating this requirement, yes Friends, requirement– that was the deal! “If you love me, keep my commandments”.

Jesus in Matthew Chapter 22 had been asked by the Pharisees – “what is the greatest commandment” –His reply was “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind and equally important, love your neighbour as yourself”.

In John Chapter 13 Jesus tells His disciples to “love each other as I have loved you”. Therefore, love must be at the centre of all we do and keeping His commandments is inextricably linked to that.

The disciples were His chosen ones and as such, He would ask the Father to send them an advocate/counsellor who would never leave them. The Message version says “another Friend – the Spirit of Truth”. The King James “version, a Comforter”. This “friend” would live with them and eventually in them. Then they would know all things and understand all that had happened whilst Jesus had been with them.

He assured them He would not leave them orphaned (or as the King James’ Version says “comfortless”), indicating that He along with the Father would be as a Father to them by the Spirit, who would be with them from then on.

In the current situation, our imposed isolation feels like being orphaned. Like the disciples, we wonder what tomorrow might bring. but we have, at this time in the age, been privileged to receive the Holy Spirit and we know that God is our comfort.

He said to them “I will come to you”. –Soon the world would not see Him again but they would see Him. We with our present knowledge ask “did He mean the several appearances after His resurrection or was He referring to His second coming?” One might conclude the former in this context as He only came to His disciples in person after His resurrection and appeared to a chosen few in a different guise—not to the world in general. However, perhaps a third meaning would be closer to the truth in that the Holy Spirit would be sent to live in believers and to have the Holy Spirit would be to have Jesus himself.

He went on to say that after He was raised to life again, they would understand that He was in the Father and they would be in Him and He would be in them. What an amazing thing – but at this stage we have to refer back to His audience and ask—did that reassure them at that precise moment or did that leave them in despair? Could they have understood any clearer the text we are analysing now, any better than they had in verses 5 and 8?

It is difficult to ponder these words of Jesus without referring to what we now understand. I have endeavoured to keep them in context. However, all these words were recorded by John long after the event. Those disciples who loved Him had to go through the terrible events of the crucifixion and see their beloved friend die. We are told that afterwards they fled (who could blame them). Perhaps when our Lord reappeared to them, they might have begun to be reassured but that promised Holy Spirit had still not yet come to them.

Before Jesus finally left them, he gave them the Great Commission to take His Gospel to the Gentiles and that must have given them encouragement for a new purpose in His name and that meant we would receive that message too.

**In conclusion**

In our text, Jesus says that the world cannot have this gift of the Holy Spirit because they did not believe in Him and therefore did not love Him. However, if we go on to verse 22, Judas (not Iscariot) asked Jesus why He was not revealing Himself to the world at large but only to them.

Again, Jesus says only those who love me and do my commandments will be able to receive the Holy Spirit. As the disciples were expecting Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom and overthrow Rome, they didn’t understand why He didn’t declare to the world at large he was the Messiah. He explained that not all could understand his teachings.

Just prior to His ascension to His Father, the Holy Spirit came upon them and we rejoice that they now were in a position to continue with Jesus’ Great Commission. All was now becoming clear to them

We, friends, have the privilege and honour to be Jesus’ hands and feet at this point in time (again flawed people in whom God has seen some potential for His purpose) – we know that we love Him and we endeavour by His grace to keep His commandments. The disciples had such a huge responsibility and suffered much in their lifetime for the “friend they had come to love”. We follow on that path like many many Christians before us and by the Holy Spirit, continue to be able to witness to those God calls us to meet. What a responsibility! What a privilege!

Amen