

# **“Inner Assurance”**

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

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The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of John, chapter 14, verses 15 through 21. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This 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. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They 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. This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God. God touch our hearts and minds today. Give us ears that hear and minds that comprehend. We pray for focus and let there be no distractions that would hinder or steal our attention. Amen.

In John 13 the disciples sit at the table having their Last Supper with Jesus. They hear his farewell to them. He's told them of his impending death and departure, but they're confused and worried. Simon Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answers and says, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." And then Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, why can I not follow you now?" They just want Jesus to stay.

In John 14 they're still restless and troubled. Again, Jesus tells his disciples that he's leaving. They've been grieving. Thomas says he doesn't understand *how* they could find their way if Jesus is leaving. Philip says "Show us the way." Their hearts are troubled and fearful. They're struggling with the idea of having to cope in life without him. While Jesus is still in their presence they're grieving their loss.

It's seems odd to me how after a loved one dies the world looks the same, but *it feels so very different*. There's an absence, there's a dryness to everything. Nothing feels the same. When you go home the emptiness feels even more painful. I think that's how the disciples felt hearing Jesus say he was leaving. They wonder what they can call home because home is going to be different.

Jesus continues. He reassures them they won't be left homeless. They won't be left alone as orphans. He tells them he's coming to them in a different way. He's sending another Comforter. So even though he's gone, and they can't see and touch him, he tells them he'll be *in them*. Even though they live in a world that isn't their home, they'll still have him with them.

The Comforter Jesus is sending "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." Jesus tells them that his presence will be felt and known through the Holy Spirit—a Spirit of Truth. The world can't hear this Spirit, but those who receive the Spirit of Truth hear the Spirit that says "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

We read in the text for today that there's a deep relationship—a correlation between love and obedience. We can see it in verses 15 and 21. Let me read these two verses again. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And then the beginning of verse 21 reads like this. "They who have my commandments and

keep them are those who love me.” These verses say that love expresses itself in obedience. If we say we love God then we’ll obey God.

But who is this Comforter Jesus said he sends when someone receives him? The Greek word for *Comforter* is rendered “advocate” and means “one called alongside” to help us. Jesus was a comforter, but now he’s sending another one of the same kind that will never leave. The bottom line is this. We can’t obey God without God providing the source of help we need that goes with us everywhere and will never leave us. The life we aim to live and strive for is a supernatural one. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us we live the Christian life. That’s the only way we can live for God. We’re freed from having to follow rules. That didn’t work for us. We couldn’t do it. So God provides grace and power which is a divine presence that enables us to obey. Oh we still fall short, often, but that’s where grace provides the way and motivates us to continue. Without that inner assurance that God is with us, we’d lose hope and give up.

The disciples wondered how they would carry on without Jesus being present physically. He speaks a promise to them and says that he’ll give them another Advocate—someone who will be with them and in them forever. To whomever the Spirit comes to be with and live in, they will live in love and obedience.

We might wonder why those who don’t know Christ can’t understand us. Jesus emphasizes the sharp contrast between those who do receive him and those who don’t. Verse 17 says “This 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.” And then verses 19 through 21 state “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in

me, and I in you. They 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.”

What holds us together and sustains us as a church is the Holy Spirit. Individually and corporately, it's the Spirit of Truth within us that testifies to the world that Christ is alive. The Spirit lives within our hearts and moves within us to act out what the Spirit says. It's an inner assurance that keeps us from being and feeling orphaned in a world that doesn't accept us. Those in the world can't be expected to understand or value what we think. One thing that is certain, though we live in an uncertain world, our security and hope is in Christ. It's an inner assurance, a guarantee, a seal, and a sign of our life with Christ.

As spoken last week, we may not have the circumstances of our lives line up the way we expected, but we do have that inner assurance through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Allan Krouse spoke up last week and said he'd found a Christian companion at work because he put a sign on his office door. Allan said, “It was sad because management made him take the sign down. The sign had a picture of the crucifixion, and next to that Christ had died. There was a picture of the stone having been moved with a statement saying Christ has risen. Then he had a picture of Jesus in flowing robes with bright lights all around with the statement Christ will come again.”

The world can't understand the power of the Risen Christ that lives in Allan's heart. They don't get it. They don't understand it. No matter how sad we feel that is, that testimony on his door found Allan a Christian to talk with at work. And I know it did much more than what can be seen because our testimony to the world is reality. We live that reality through our love for others, each other, and the things we do to care for people in the world. We're strengthened by the word of

our testimony. We're not islands. We're connected. We're knit together in love and made stronger because of our obedience.

So I challenge you. Love one another. Forgive one another. Work together and be like water on a duck. Obey Christ and testify to the world that you belong to God. Let's pray. Holy God, one who walks alongside us to help us obey, compel us to know you more intimately through acknowledging your presence throughout the day. Move in us as the Spirit of Truth guides, leads, teaches, and comforts us. In Christ's name we pray. Be that inner assurance as we acknowledge you. Amen.