

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

May 14, 2014 (6th Sunday in Easter, Year A)
John 14:15-21
Mothers Day

I want to begin today with a nod to all you mothers out there.

Watch video “Mother's Day 2023 -- The unique connection”

Happy Mothers Day. I know it's a commercial, but I don't care. It's good.

I hope you caught the intimacy between mother and child in that clip.

That's what Jesus is talking about in our Gospel today. We have a God who is CLOSE. Jesus said, “I will not leave you orphaned... Those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and reveal myself to them.”

He used the word “orphaned.” That's a POWERFUL choice of words there. He could have simply said “I will not leave you alone,” but “ORPHANED” says a lot MORE, doesn't it? To be orphaned means to have NO ONE, NO ONE that loves you, to be ABANDONED, to be COMPLETELY ALONE.

Alone. We can ALL relate to THAT. In a world as immense and complicated as ours, it's easy to think of ourselves as having no value – cogs in a machine, numbers in a computer, faceless, nameless, unnoticed by the universe. We feel powerless. We feel like no one's listening to us. We feel disenfranchised, left behind, left out, like NO ONE is looking out for us.

And there is something WRONG with this world. These days it seems like the world is QUICK to “orphan” people. It rejects the odd, routinely ignores the unusual, redefines the acceptable, and is repulsed by those out of the ordinary. It “orphans” the poor. It “orphans” the elderly. It “orphans” the addicts. It “orphans” the outsiders. It “orphans” all those who do not comfortably fit ITS standards.

But we have NOT been ORPHANED. We have a God who is CLOSE. Jesus said, “Those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Jesus is saying, FIRST of all, that we are LOVED. We have been adopted. In our Baptism, we have been CLAIMED and given a NEW name – child of God. It's not just ANYONE who has claimed us. God HIMSELF has looked at us with love and said, “THIS one's mine. I choose YOU.”

It's very comforting. But there's MORE to the image than FEELINGS – it's POWERFUL. Not ONLY does Christ love us, Christ is ALWAYS WITH us. “I am in my Father,” says Christ to US, “and you are IN me, and I am IN you.” We often skip over lines like this, but DON'T skip over THAT. That's HUGE! Christ is WITHIN us. We don't have to go to a mountaintop to find God. We don't have to peer through the Webb telescope. All we need to do is to listen for the Divine whisper from within our OWN HEARTS.

That's more than COMFORT; THAT'S STRENGTH. The God who ABIDES with us will help us ENDURE ANYTHING. We can CALL on Jesus to HELP us do the things we CAN'T do on our own. He'll give us the strength to say a KIND word, ESPECIALLY when we don't WANT to. The strength to FIND time to spend with our families. To keep HOPE in the face of illness. To REBUILD when we've LOST everything. To find the COURAGE to go ON when we've lost a friend or a loved one. We can FACE tomorrow, because Christ LOVES us, and Christ is WITH us.

Jesus will NOT leave you orphaned. You are loved, and we have a God who is CLOSE. When you're tired and weak, you can rest in his comforting arms. He'll give you the strength you need to cope with life. He'll give you the courage to CONQUER those things that would KEEP you from following his ways.

And when it's too MUCH to HANDLE, just CALL for him. He comes in the Holy Spirit, and he is ALWAYS WITH you. And that SPIRIT, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, He will NEVER let you go, NEVER give up on you...NEVER. God will NOT leave you orphaned. YOU ARE LOVED. Amen.