

“Would you fancy a dance?” John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

It is amazing that we can read and reflect on the very words that Jesus spoke on His last evening together with His disciples. Just think about that for a moment! He knew what was going to happen, that He will be taken away, and He kept speaking His promises to His disciples, He kept building them up.

His words are pregnant with wisdom and insight and today, with the help of the Helper, whom Jesus promised on that evening, and whom He faithfully keeps sending to us, we will meditate on what He said.

Especially I would like to focus on three key themes. What is it that Jesus expects from us, how deep and hurtful our sinfulness is, and how can we be faithful to Jesus? What Jesus expects from us, how serious our sinfulness is, and how can we be faithful to Jesus?

What does Jesus expect from us, from you? The very first verse that we read gives the answer: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” How does this sound to you? I guess it depends on how close you are to Jesus.

Some may hear it as “if you want my attention, then you will do what I say”. This is how our old self perceives the Triune God. As God of never-ending demands, as God who just wants our obedience.

But, look, who is the one saying these words, and when were they said? Yes, it is Jesus who says them. Just a few minutes earlier He said something else: “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34)

“Just as I have loved you...”. And a few minutes later He will say: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13-14). Then He will lay down His life for you.

When does Jesus say all of this? On His way to the Cross. He says it while He is on His mission, He knows that during the next several hours He will have to

endure betrayal by His own disciples, brutality of soldiers, hostility and rejection of religious leaders, false accusations, beating, flogging and ... crucifixion. This is the person who says these words. Jesus.

As John has written it elsewhere: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us..." (1 John 4:10) Our God always loves us first, He always comes to us first, He always serves us first, cares for us first, blesses us first, and then He expects us to respond in a way that is fitting to His attitude towards us.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Okay, Jesus, but which commandments? Somehow even many Christians have this strange dislike towards God's Commandments. "Jesus could not possibly be speaking about those Commandments that were given on the Mount Sinai?

That was the Old Testament stuff, that was the angry and judgmental God of the Old Testament, and now we have Jesus, and Jesus speaks about love." It is sad when such misunderstanding occurs among us.

But, see, the person who is speaking now, Jesus from Nazareth, is the same God who gave His Commandments to Israel on the Mount Sinai. It was the same eternal Son who spoke from the midst of thunder and lightning and thick cloud.

What He commanded back then was no different from what Jesus commanded His disciples. The God who gave the Commandments was the same God who had just rescued them from the slavery. He had given them freedom.

He had showed them His love and was teaching them how to respond. Remember, what He said as He begun to speak to Israel? "I am your God... who have rescued and freed you. Now, if you love me, this is how you are to live."

Just a few days earlier Jesus was questioned in the Temple by the teachers of the Law: "Which is the highest commandment?" What did Jesus say? "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." (Mt 22:37-38)

The same God speaks to us throughout the millennia and His message doesn't change: "Love me, as I have loved you." Some may still try to object that Jesus is speaking about loving Him, why should we make it so legalistic, shouldn't we be more Gospel oriented? This is such a foolish objection.

Let's just take an example from our daily relationships. Think about parents and children! What does it mean to love our parents? Would it make any sense if a child said: "I love you, but I am not going to listen to you, I don't want to be with you, I don't want to do what you expect from me"? "I will just love you."

The command to love is not contrary to the Commandments, it is not an alternative, it is the fulfillment of the Commandments. It helps to understand the heart of the Commandments – “if you love me, you will keep them.”

All the dislike towards the Commandments probably stem from yet another quite common misunderstanding. The Commandments are not some impersonal rules or prescriptions that we are compelled to obey.

The Commandments summarize for us what our Creator has made us to be. They are the personal will of the Triune God, of the most attractive, the wisest, the most powerful, the most gracious, the most faithful and loving person.

They are not something imposed on us, something that restrain us and take away our freedom. They reveal us who we are according to our Creator’s design. They are the blueprint for our flourishing and happiness.

For our relationships with our God and with one another. The only thing that they restrain – is our sin, our desires and passions that are contrary to God’s good will for us. You are created to live according to the Commandments, and you are redeemed to live according to them.

The more we are able to live according the Commandments, the more fully human we are, the more loving we are both towards our God and towards our neighbours. This is why the Bible urges us to meditate upon the Commandments.

To strive to understand their depth. For when you meditate on them, you meditate on the Person who gives them to you, you marvel at His creative genius, and His incredible wisdom. This is what Jesus expects from us. Love that responds to God’s love and is shaped by His own will for our lives.

And this is where we can see the depth of our sinfulness. That was our second theme. How does what Jesus says reveal our sinfulness? When He speaks about what He expects from us, about our love. Think, what is this one attitude, one experience that is unbearably painful, that literary destroys us?

Have you loved and been rejected or betrayed? Has someone been nice to you only to get something from you? Have you loved and the other person was unfaithful? How did that feel? How hard was it to recover from it?

It may be painful even to remember it, but this is exactly what we do to our God. This is how we respond to Jesus’ love. And it includes everyone. Most of time we Christians are equally guilty. How does it happen? How often do we love Jesus as He loves us? How often do we centre our lives on pleasing Him, listening to Him, being together with Him, sharing the Gospel?

Ask yourself, do I read and study God's Word diligently, or do I find different excuses? Do I try to understand and live out God's will for my life, or do I think that that is enough if I show up in church from time to time?

Do I pray for the lost, and do I try to tell them about Jesus, or do I take the position that to be kind to others is enough? Do I stand for what the Word of God teaches, rejecting all false teachings, or do I care more what people will think about me?

Do I care that God's good design for marriage and family is promoted, that sanctity of life is protected, or do I pretend that these issues don't apply to me? Am I generous supporting the Gospel, or do my needs always seem more urgent?

Am I ready to suffer and be rejected for listening to Jesus, or do I value my comfort and convenience higher than being faithful to Jesus? We are shrewd enough to come up with good excuses why we don't keep Jesus' Commandments.

I hope this helps to see how deep our sinfulness goes. After what Jesus, the Son of God, has done and does for us, what sort of a person would choose not to commit to Jesus, or to be some lukewarm Christian? But this is what we often do. Your pastor is by no means an exception.

Jesus promised His disciples that He will not leave them as orphans. That's a great analogy. Without the Triune God we are like orphans. Without parents, without identity. Without Him we can't receive the love and acceptance that we long for.

Without Him it is very hard to feel either significant or secure in this world. But still, how many choose to be orphans... How many choose to reject the loving Father who wants to adopt them in His family. Too many... This is how we can see how irrational our sinfulness is. For who, being able to see things clearly as they are, would ignore or reject the Triune God?! But we do...

Finally, our third theme – **how can we remain faithful to our God?** The events of that last evening in Jesus' life give us the answer. On our own we can't, even the bravest among us. See what happened when the disciples were left on their own?

Shortly after they had sworn that even death threats won't make them unfaithful to Jesus, they all fell like dominos. On our own we can't. This is why Jesus sends us another Helper, the Holy Spirit.

The Triune God promises that He will not leave us as orphans. That He will be with us. This time it is different. We don't see this man Jesus in our midst. This time it is even better, for the Triune God comes and dwells with us.

The Helper Spirit is with us and in us. That is Him that brings you to Jesus and through Jesus to the Father. Without Him we would choose to be orphans of God. But now the Holy Spirit has come to us and has created new hearts in us.

New hearts that desire to respond to God's love and to keep His Commandments. Now our new life has begun, and this new life with the Triune God is something more than we can fully understand. It is like a wonderful dance...

We are invited and embraced into this wonderful fellowship with the Triune God. This is how Jesus speaks about it. The Father will send us the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will be with us and will dwell in us. But not just that.

As Jesus is in the Father so He is also in us and we are in Him. This is what our new life as Christians is about – we are united with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and their love surround us as a divine music.

We participate in this dance with the Trinity as we are embraced in God's own family, and Jesus manifests Himself to us, as does the Holy Spirit. Sure, we can't see them with our eyes. But every Christian can witness the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their own lives.

Especially in the lives of those who are just recently rescued from under the power of the devil and brought into the Church of Christ. Jesus keeps His promises that He gave on that evening, and you are the recipients of these promises.

As long as we live in this world, we will fail to love Jesus with all our heart and to keep His Commandments, we will be unfaithful to our Lord committing adultery with other lovers, with idols who tempt us and deceive us.

But as long as we don't reject the Spirit of truth, as long as we keep returning to our Father, and as long as we repent and ask for His forgiveness through His Son Jesus, nothing will separate us from our Father's love.

Would you fancy a dance?!

Amen.