

Pastor Kenneth Mars

St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Sixth Sunday of Easter (Series A)

May 21, 2017

Text: John 14:15–21

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Last Sunday, I spent a great deal of time and effort proclaiming that God the Father and God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, share the same divine essence though they are distinct Persons. Twice, the Lord Jesus said, “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (14:10, 11) and “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him” (vs. 7). The works that Jesus does are the works of the Father; the authority of the Son is the authority of the Father, and so forth. The great mystery of the relationship between the Father and the Son is briefly and beautifully described in those few verses from John 14.

But we are Trinitarian Christians who worship one God in three Persons, the Father, the Son, *and* the Holy Spirit. What was curiously missing from last Sunday's sermon was any discussion of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. That was intentional on my part. Today and the next couple of Sundays will focus our attention on the Holy Spirit. So let me say here, right at the beginning, that the Holy Spirit shares the same divine essence as the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is God. Yet the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the highest and most glorious mystery of our Christian faith.

Without the person and work of the Holy Spirit, we could not and would not have faith in Jesus. We would still be in our sins, without hope in the world, and forever separated from God's love. Through the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith and love in us.

Today's gospel reading continues where we left off last week. Let me combine the last verse from last Sunday's reading with the first verse from today's. Jesus said, “¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. ¹⁵If you love me, you will keep my

commandments.” The divine promise of answered prayer is balanced and informed by love, which seeks to obey Christ’s commandments.

The commandments mentioned here do not refer, primarily, to the Law of Moses and the 10 Commandments. Instead, the commandments refer to faith in Jesus and love for one another. Listen to I John 3:23, “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.” And we mustn’t forget that Jesus had already given His “new commandment” in John 13:34, “...that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” Loving Jesus means believing in Him as our highest and greatest treasure. It also means loving His people as Christ loves us.

These are the commandments our Lord Jesus is talking about in John 14. Christ is saying that He does not ask or demand anything from us than that we faithfully preach about Him, to be careful and diligent in the salutary use of His Word and Sacraments, to show affection and harmony among one another for His sake, and patiently bear the difficulties that such love and faith bring upon us (paraphrase of Luther, LW 24:102).

You must remember that Jesus is teaching His disciples about loving Him and one another because He knows He is about to be betrayed, arrested, and crucified. Our relationship with Jesus is to be one of love and devotion for He is our Savior. He swallowed sin and death to save us from its awful effects. What could be more proper than to love Him and His people and cherish what He commands? All that He does and gives is for our good. We keep His commandments because He loves us and we love Him.

But to think that we poor sinners can love God and one another in the strength of our own resources or our own good intentions would be a grave mistake. Even in this, Jesus must lovingly provide for us. Look at vs. 15–17a, “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.” Did you notice the language of giving? I will ask the Father and He will *give* you another Helper, even the Spirit of truth.

It’s as if Jesus were saying, “Because of my love for you and your love for Me, I desire to give you a most precious and priceless gift. I will ask the Father to give you the Holy Spirit. Because the Father loves you and Me, He will give you the Holy

Spirit, the Spirit of truth. The Spirit loves Me and my Father and all that belongs to Us. He will be with you forever, into the ages of ages.”

Isn't that what people who love each other do? Give to each other what is most precious and cherished. So it is with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. This is not about earning God's love and favor. He already loves you dear saints of God. He loved us long before we were conceived; before the creation of the universe, He loved you, perfectly and completely! Our God's love is true and genuine. It gives and receives sacrificially for the sake of the beloved.

Please notice the intimacy we have with the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, in vs. 17b, “You know him (i.e., the Holy Spirit), for he dwells with you and will be in you.” The Father sends the Holy Spirit at the request of Jesus for the purpose of living within your heart and mind. This is a Holy Spirit-filled place because you, as God's beloved children, are filled with the Holy Spirit.

And wonder of wonders...Jesus promises to remain with us forever through the Holy Spirit. Vs. 18, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Jesus comes to us in and through the power of the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of bringing us into fellowship with Himself and His Father. Our sins and the sins of the world have left us as orphans, children abandoned and unable to take care of themselves. It's a sad picture.

But Jesus is telling us that we will never be abandoned. I will come to you. And you will be mine and I will be yours forever. No sin, no mistake, no evil, nothing in this life or the life to come can separate us from the on-going presence of God in our lives. Jesus has come to us in the power of the Holy Spirit and, vs. 19a, “Because I live, you also will live.” All the glorious events and enduring promises of Easter should rush into our minds when we hear these words. You should also think about your baptism in God's Trinitarian name through which you received forgiveness of sin, rescue from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. The Lord's Supper should appear all the more desirable. For it gives us Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. With Jesus, we receive the Father. And the Father hears our Lord's request to give us the Holy Spirit. “Because I live, you also will live.”

Easter is linchpin that holds everything together. Jesus says (vs. 20), “In that day (what day? Easter!!) you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, we know that He is the Son of the

Father as He claimed to be. Because of Easter, we know that the Father lives in Jesus, Jesus in the Father, the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son. Because of Easter, we know that God the Holy Trinity lives in each and every baptized believer!! Look at the people around you. The glory and mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed in each and every Christian. Young or old, rich or poor, male or female, none of things that create distinction and separation in this world apply when it comes to our relationship to God. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you and the Holy Spirit with you forever!!

This is the kind of love and commandment-keeping that Jesus has in mind. “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” (vs. 21).

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus and God the Father are manifested to us. Through the Spirit of truth and for the sake of our relationship with the Father and the Son, we keep the commandments of Jesus; that is, we love Him and we love one another.

Be encouraged dear people of God. Remain faithful in our Lord’s Gospel. Continue to love one another, as you are doing. Pray for and encourage one another. Forgive each other and be forgiven. Rejoice and be glad, beloved and precious, saints of God.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.