

Every day when I leave the house, my little Bella begins to whine. She knows that I am leaving her, and so she sits on top of the sofa looking out the window when I drive off, and when I arrive back she is still there – almost as if she just sits there waiting. Now I'm not sure what is going to happen on Friday when I leave for Nairobi. I will be away for 2 weeks, so I wonder will Bella give up and think I'm gone for good. I can't imagine what she will be like when I return.

As always when I leave Bella I promise that I will return. Which leads nicely to our reading today from John 14. Jesus reassures his disciples that he will not abandon them. In fact every promise which Jesus makes he will fulfil. So let's have a look at these promises today.

Jesus promises he will not leave us as orphans.

Jesus promises that the Father will send us His Spirit.

Jesus promises that God the Father and God the Son will be at home with us also.

1. He won't leave us

Verse 18 of our reading, Jesus says "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

A bit like my little Bella, we all want to hear the comforting words from our relatives when things seem difficult in life that we are not alone. They speak into our fears and our vulnerability. They remind us that we are not destined to walk this earth without an identity or direction. *I know what it feels like when things fall apart in life, and so the questions come What will I do now? Where do I go? What happens next? Those are the questions I imagine running through the heads and hearts of the disciples. It's the last supper. They've been fed, feet have been washed, the betrayer has left. It is night, it's dark, and Jesus announces he is leaving.*

They wonder how they are going to make it without him. Jesus knows they won't. So, Jesus promises and reassures them. But if Jesus was about to leave them, to be crucified, be raised from the dead and then ascend to heaven, how would he come to them? We believe that one day Jesus will return personally, but that is not what he promises here. The first promise is that Jesus will not leave us as orphans.

2. The Promise of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 15 Jesus says that "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

We see this word Advocate. The Holy Spirit. The word is "parakleetos" in Greek which is difficult to translate into English but typically means Counsellor, Comforter, or Helper. But Jesus knew that this word would mean so much more to many of these fishermen. You see in the Mediterranean Sea at the time of Jesus, there were small boats sent out from the harbours to meet incoming ships offshore and to guide them safely into port. They were known as *Paracletes*. Jesus is using a metaphor that would be well-known to his hearers. Entering a harbour, especially an unfamiliar one, was a dangerous business, and so it was definitely wise to send for the assistance of the *Paraclete* to come alongside you and guide you in. He knew that these men needed to know the assurance that would come from the parakleetos to come alongside them and guide them in the next steps.

Jesus then says, "*But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*" (John 14:17). Notice the present and future tense here. The Holy Spirit was already with them just as he had guided God's people through their wanderings in the Old Testament. But after Jesus was crucified, raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, God the Father would send the Holy Spirit not just to be with them but to be in them. To fill them, to indwell them. This happened at Pentecost which we will celebrate in 2 Sundays time.

Without the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, to encourage us, lead us, guide us and indwell us. without Him we too will not make it. No one can live a godly life without the help of the Holy Spirit.

So there is such reassurance here in these verses, we know that we are not left as orphans, we know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and is alongside us in every decision if we ask him, and then finally there is the promise of the Father.

3. The Promise of the Father

Verse 21 Jesus says, *"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them... Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."* (John 14:21, 23)

Surely this promise must be one of the greatest and most profound in the whole Bible. Jesus promises that if we obey his teaching, God the Father and God the Son will make their home with us. In the Old Testament, the Shekinah glory of God was unapproachable, dwelling first in the tabernacle and then in the Temple. Only one person on one day of the year could enter the Holy of holies to make sacrifice for God's people. But because of the cross, because Christ atoned for our sins but dying on the cross in our place, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit will make their home with us.

God the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – our Creator, our Saviour and our Advocate each have a special interest in your growth, your health, your welfare and above all your future. They want to be with you on earth because they want you to be with them in heaven. When we obey God's word and fulfil our mission, God comes and makes his dwelling in us. With that strength we can deal with any issues – illness, addictions, disagreements. And from it hope comes, people are blessed, unity is established, we see joy.

So what about you? Are you feeling like an orphan today? In our Gospel reading, Jesus promises to be with us in the same way he was with the disciples, except that we cannot see him. He lives with us by His Holy Spirit. Although we cannot see him, we can see the effects of his presence in changed lives. As we express our love and thankfulness by obeying him, we can have an increasing assurance that he is with us, guiding, leading, comforting, transforming us to become like Jesus Christ, and fulfil our mission.

For those that live life without the Lord, I can see how things can become so hopeless. Therefore if we truly love the Lord, then let's lift our heads high, let's not allow the issues of this life to bring us down because we have the Holy Spirit in us. Let me lift your spirits even further today in the words of the great Jim Packer from his book *Knowing God*. He writes, *"I am a child of God. God is my Father; heaven is my home; every day is one day nearer. My Saviour is my brother; every Christian is my brother too. Say it over and over to yourself first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, any time when your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it is all utterly and completely true"*.