

**John 14: 15-17, 25-27; 15: 12-17**  
**October 31, 2010**  
**Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church**

In verses 15-17 of chapter 14 Jesus tells the disciples:

“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 in you and he will be in you.”

This morning I propose to you that these verses create the framework for the passages we just heard. It is crucial that we understand what Jesus is saying and what he is not saying. In telling the disciples that if they love him they will keep his commandments, Jesus is *not* being manipulative. He is not saying that the disciples prove that they really love him by doing what he asks them. If you really love me you will...send me roses, take out the garbage, pick up your underwear from the floor.”

Rather, Jesus tells his disciples that if they truly love him, they *will* as a matter of course keep his commandments. Do you see the

difference? In one case the focus is on the commandments. When we are obedient and *keep* them we can say that we love Jesus. Of course the reality is that very often we do not keep the commandments. We especially do not keep the commandment of loving other human beings—even our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as Christ has loved us. Inference: we clearly do not love Jesus and are bad people, hypocrites and in the immortal words of the Elizabethan prayer book, “miserable sinners.”

On the other hand, if we understand Jesus to say that if we love him we will as a matter of course keep his commandments, the focus becomes loving him first and trusting God through the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

To me this is good news. I welcome the call to do one thing instead of many things. It is good news to me that if I make my highest desire to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind by loving and serving his son, Jesus Christ, I will “do” everything else.

Actually the truth is that if I love and serve Jesus above all things, *God* will do everything else. The catch to all this good news is the fine print which says, “Stewart, don’t get cocky. Loving and serving Jesus Christ above all things is the challenge of a lifetime. That is why so many people think it is easier to try to do the commandments and hope for the best. But don’t worry; getting you to love me is my job too. Just trust me.”

My point is this: The whole shooting match is God’s job. It begins with God and ends with God. What we need to do is be willing for God to work in our lives. We need to say out loud, “Lord I am willing for you to work in my life.” Let’s say that together right now. *Lord, I am willing for you to work in my life.* There, you’ve done it. The ball is now in God’s court. Your job is to begin to look for signs of God’s love working in and through your life.

So, you may wonder, what does this have to do with the two other passages from John? Just this: When Jesus speaks of leaving his peace with us he does not mean that he is leaving it behind like lost

luggage. “Leave” has the sense of gift or inheritance. We all hope that Uncle Moneybags will “leave” us something in his will. It is ours by right of being God’s children and therefore Jesus’ sisters and brothers. In other words it is the intention of our heavenly Parent that we receive the peace of his son. We are all named in the will.

But there is a catch. We have to stand up and identify ourselves as God’s children and Jesus’ sisters and brothers. We have to want the inheritance. Now you ask, who wouldn’t want the inheritance of Christ’s peace? No sane person, certainly! Yet consider how hard we as a culture strive to prove our independence! We say “In God we trust,” and yet how many of us are preoccupied with creating and preserving security in this world? How many of us would rather suffer in silence than ask for help? The cost of admitting weakness and depending completely upon God for everything is too much.

When I was a young seminarian I preached a church one Sunday and afterward a kindly parishioner said to me, “You know when you preached I heard words of confidence in God but the look on your face

said you didn't believe it." It was like I knew I was named in the Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ but I could not find the office of the lawyer executing the will. I was wandering the streets looking for the building. Then I was wandering the halls looking for the office. It was not until Jesus himself came to me and took me by the hand and led me to the right place. Leading me through the door he says, "It took me awhile but I found him! He would never have found this place on his own."

It was then that I asked for and received Christ's peace. Does that mean I am always *peaceful*? Heck, no! Does it mean that I function at a higher spiritual plane than anyone else? Certainly not! Is this what the peace of Jesus Christ is? No way!

The peace of Christ is the bedrock trust that you are safe in God's hands no matter what else is going on in your life. The peace of Christ is that unspoken but fundamental knowledge that no matter how the storms of life rage, to quote the hymn, "It is well with (your) soul." It is the trust that what Jesus says is true: "In this world you have many

troubles; but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world:" not *might* someday overcome the world; not *sort of* overcome the world. *I have overcome the world.*

Somebody might reasonably ask, "Well if Jesus has already overcome the world why does he need me?" The world may have been overcome in the sense of no longer having the power to destroy the soul of the faithful. But the world is still a powerful force. Suffering, death prejudice, fear, greed and oppression are still alive and well. A hurricane is still dangerous after it has been downgraded. The cause of a chain reaction may be over but the consequences continue. And that is why we who love Jesus and have been touched by his grace are compelled to respond in ministries of compassion and justice. We are still commanded to do the work of the Redeemer.

So, you say, we should all sign up to serve on committees and go out and do the mission of Jesus.

Not so fast. Remember? First things first.

If you love me you *will* keep my commandments. If you are willing to love and serve Jesus Christ above all else and to trust God with your whole life...what? You *will* be doing his mission. And you will be serving him with joy; not as a conscripted slave, but as a dear and trusted friend. Amen.