

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Revd. Cara Heafey, Associate Minister, Summertown URC



Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

READ: JOHN 14:15-21

"I will not leave you orphaned..."

REFLECT:

This week's gospel reading picks up where last week's left off; in Jesus' 'farewell discourse' to his disciples on the evening of the last supper.

Our passage begins with Jesus' words, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." On first reading, I think this statement jars a little. It sounds reminiscent of the things children and young teenagers yell at their parents (OK, things I may have yelled as a 12 year-old) in the middle of a door-slamming "it's not fair" tantrum: "if you loved me... you'd let me stay up late / go out with my friends / get out of P.E."

But Jesus' words here are not emotional blackmail. They are a simple statement of fact. And when we read them in this way they can calm and centre us, even with their implicit challenge.

The 13th Century German theologian known as Meister Eckhart said this: “I have often said that a person who wishes to begin a good life should be like one who draws a circle. Let him or her get the centre in the right place and keep it so and the circumference will be good.”

I think that Jesus could be saying, “don’t put all your energy into trying to get everything right with no mistakes. Focus on me, and the rest will fall into place. Get the centre in the right place and the circumference will be good. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Keeping Jesus’ commandments, which can perhaps be summarized as “love, love and love some more”, will happen naturally when we love Jesus. Because love is not a finite resource. The more we give and receive love, the easier love gets.

CONNECT:

Our Synod is encouraging Ministers, elders and churches to begin to think about the time when we can physically gather again as congregations. When we do, it’s likely that things will look different for a while. We’ll need to maintain social distancing. We may not be able to share refreshments, or sing together (there’s evidence to show that when we sing we can project droplet particles farther than the 2 metre distance boundaries). We will need to continue to be creative in finding ways to share worship and fellowship, and spend time thinking and praying about what all this means for our future.

Maybe, like the disciples, we need to hear the reassurance from Jesus that our identity as Christians will go on. That we will not be left ‘orphaned’ and alone. That the Holy Spirit will dwell within and among us, even though the future is hard to visualise just now. Maybe those of us who are desperately missing being together in our building need to hear the message that the building is not where the “Spirit of truth” lives, “because he abides with you, and he will be in you” (v.17).

May this be so.

PRAY:

- For comfort in our grief, and for all who are mourning
- For discernment as we plan our next steps together
- For hope, and courage

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

If you need any help, have a prayer request, or would like someone to talk to; please contact your elder or one of us:

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