

## "Inheritance of Love"

**On his last night with his disciples (John 14:15-21) Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Jesus' commandments are part of the inheritance Jesus leaves behind for his followers.** Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. Soon Jesus will no longer be with them physically, and He is preparing them for life without his physical presence. This is something we can relate to more now during this pandemic and have not been able to be together physically.

Jesus emphasizes how his followers can continue to use the inheritance He is leaving them by living a life of love and obeying his commandments. **What commandment is Jesus talking about?** Earlier (John 13) Jesus told his disciples he was giving them a new commandment--**to love one another as He has loved them.** But what does that love really mean? Our society is obsessed with the idea of love--but mostly with romantic love or love based on physical attraction. But Jesus is talking about a different kind of love---self-giving love for the well-being of the other person. In the Scripture reading (John 14:15-21) **Jesus promises that, out of love, He will give us another Advocate (the original word is "Paraclete"), the Holy Spirit.**

The Spirit would walk beside the disciples and guide them to live in Jesus' way. **The Spirit, like His commandment to love, is a central part of Jesus' inheritance given to all his followers, including us.** The Spirit will help us to live a life of love as Jesus did. To love in this way is to be an advocate---and to give of yourself for others as Christ gave Himself for us. In His ministry, Jesus loves and advocates for the poor, the sick, the marginalized, women, people with disabilities, outsiders, the most vulnerable. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. This part of Jesus' inheritance to us --we are to love our neighbors, especially those most in need. **Our practicing physical distancing during this pandemic is an expression of our love for our neighbors now--to slow the spread of the virus and to protect those most vulnerable. Our donations to provide for those who are suffering economically--for example, for the Whitewater Food Pantry and Community Space and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal--are another expression of the love Jesus bequeaths to us.**

**The Spirit is with us today as much as in the past, empowering us to love our neighbors in responsible and sometimes difficult ways.** Both Jesus' commandment to love and His Spirit are at the heart of Jesus' inheritance given to us. We can use and live out of this inheritance in many ways. In personal relationships, we can forgive and be forgiven, and make

sacrifices for others out of love. In addition to showing love individually, we can show love as a Christian community. We can help feed those who are hungry; we can advocate for justice for the poor and refugees; we can strive to protect people in medical professions, in nursing homes or assisted living, in prisons, and all service workers.

**The challenges we face can sometimes seem overwhelming, but the Holy Spirit is with us, to empower us and to guide us.**

**Let us pray, using the words of a hymn: "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me....Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me." Amen.**

Yours in Christ's love and in the power of His Spirit,

Pastor Steve

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