**John 14:23-31**

This text, like last week’s, is also part of Jesus’ farewell discourse, his “last testament,” which runs from chapters 13-17 in the Gospel of John. Jesus is preparing the disciples for life without his physical presence among them. How can they still love him and have relationship with him if he is not there in person? How can we, for that matter?

We love Jesus through obedience to his word. Jesus’ love for the Father was demonstrated by his obedience, even to death on a cross. And we follow in the same pattern. Jesus ends this passage by saying, “Let us go.” It reminds us that we are called to love Jesus by the same path of obedience that he walked in his love for the Father. We love Jesus by taking up the cross and denying ourselves, just as he did.

Our love for Jesus is demonstrated by doing his work and obeying his commands. Obedience is the only real proof of our love for God. We can say we love God. We can come to church and sing our love for God. But it’s only proven by our obedience to God. There are some in this world who profess a love for God but their living only shows a love for self.

And if we are obedient, Jesus says, “We,” meaning he and the Father, “will come and live with us.” This happens through the Holy Spirit, who communicates the presence of the Father and Son into our lives.

This is an incredible promise of God. In the Old Testament, Israel was blessed because God “tabernacled” with them. God made his throne on earth among them. And God’s Spirit worked among them through the prophets. But now Jesus expands this: Every single believer is a temple where God, the Father and the Son, dwell through the Holy Spirit. You are a temple of God, if you have faith in Christ. And the Holy Spirit works through all of us. Every believer is filled with the Spirit and gifted by the Spirit to do the work of God for the purpose of building up the whole Body of Christ.

“These are not my words but the Father’s.” These are promises God made in the past which are now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is the New Covenant God promised through the prophets, like Jeremiah and Joel.

“I say these things while I am with you but the Counselor is coming.” Jesus is not leaving the disciples, or us, alone. In verse 18, he says, “I will not leave you orphaned.” We are not alone. Jesus is speaking to the very natural fear of the disciples. If Jesus is not with them, then they will feel alone. They have put their hope and trust in him. How can they go on hoping if he is gone? But as Christians, we are never alone. The Spirit, the Counselor, is always with us. And the Spirit brings the presence of Jesus into our lives.

And I think we should add here that Jesus is not just present in the Holy Spirit, but also in the love of the faithful community. How many times have you experienced the presence of God through the love of the Body of Christ? How many times, just when you really needed it, did the face of Jesus show up in the face of a fellow believer? I know I’ve been there, and I certainly hope it’s an experience all of us have had.

And the Spirit continues to do work in our lives. He’s not just with us; he is helping us along the journey. “He teaches us everything,” Jesus says. I don’t think we should understand that to mean literally everything, but rather everything we need to know about God and his will for our lives. I’m not expecting the Holy Spirit to teach me how to do quadratic equations, whatever those are.

But in order for the Spirit to teach us, we must also be willing to learn, too. Learning should be viewed as a lifelong process, whatever it is we’re learning. And that is especially true when it comes to spiritual growth. It doesn’t matter if you’re nine or ninety, every day is a chance to read God’s word, pray, study, and learn to know God and his will better than the day before.

“And the Spirit reminds us of everything Jesus said.” Have you ever had the experience of the Spirit bringing a word of God to you just as you needed it? I can certainly think of some times in my life when the right word came at just the right time. Maybe it was in a moment of temptation or anger or need, but it’s happened just like that.

This also means that we can trust Jesus’ words to be true. The Holy Spirit is there to ensure that they are coming to us faithfully. 1 Corinthians, chapter two, says this, “No one can know a person’s thoughts except that person’s own spirit, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths.”

Jesus goes on, “I leave you with a gift – peace. Not peace like the world gives.” The peace of God does not depend on present circumstances. It doesn’t go away when times are tough. God’s presence doesn’t cease when we go through difficulty.

The peace Jesus gives endures because Christ has overcome the world. He has defeated sin and death. And the end of the story is already written. We know where it ends. It ends with us walking on the streets of New Jerusalem with Jesus. Our peace is secure because it depends on what Christ has done and what he will do.

In biblical use, the word peace is more than just the absence of conflict. One scholar I was reading defined it as “all that makes for our highest good.” Christ supplies all that is needed for our highest good, and the world can never do that.

In biblical use, peace is always tied to right relationships. I saw a quote not too long ago, and I wish I could remember who said it. I’m not even 100% sure I remember it exactly, but the essence was, “People don’t have peace with each other, because they don’t have peace with themselves. And people don’t have peace with themselves because they don’t have peace with God.” God is the ground and the center of all things. The world can talk about having inner peace, but inner peace is only possible if we have peace with God. And that is only available through Jesus Christ. Once we have peace with God, then we can have peace within ourselves. And from there peace can flow out into all other relationships. But it all must begin with God.

“So don’t be afraid. I am going but I will come again.” I don’t think we should understand this to be about the three days between his arrest and his resurrection but about his coming again in glory, the second coming.

“Be happy for me because I am going to the Father.” There should always be joy when someone leaves this troubled world to go home to God. That doesn’t negate the sadness we naturally feel at death, but it stands over and above it.

“I tell you so you that you will believe.” Only God knows the future. Jesus tells them what will happen so they know the trustworthiness of all his words.

The prince of this world has no power over me. I will do what the Father requires.” Jesus goes to the cross not as a helpless victim but as a willing servant who triumphs over death by death. And in so doing, he secures for us a peace that the world can never give. We are not alone. We are never alone. And true and lasting peace is only available through Jesus Christ. No one else can deliver it.