

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: I Will Not Leave You As Orphans

Lesson: John 14:15-21

15 "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^a in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 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."

Friends, today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter. During the season of Easter, we share the traditional Easter greeting. Let us do so today as well: Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

And today is also a special day. It's Mother's Day. Today is the day to honor mothers who have left a deep mark on our lives. As a way to honor that, I'd like to take a moment for us to greet one another by saying, "Happy Mother's Day!" It's a day to give thanks to all those who have embraced us as biological mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, aunts, or mother-like figures.

How can we describe their love? Their love is like a gentle light that guides us, comforts us, and helps us find our way through life.

When we look at today's Gospel reading from John, Jesus says something very strange to His disciples: "I will not leave you as orphans."

The moment when Jesus says these words to His disciples takes place during the Last Supper, just before He would be crucified on the cross. Jesus tells His disciples that He will soon leave them. Hearing these words from Jesus, the disciples must have felt anxious and filled with a sense of loss. Perhaps they were thinking things like, "What am I supposed to do if Jesus leaves?", "Will we be able to live well without Him?", "Are we going to be left alone?"

Knowing their hearts, Jesus says to them, "I will not leave you alone."

As I reflected on Mother's Day today, I thought that these words remind me of the love of mothers and the love of those who care for us.

Because most people experience something like this in life. When we are children, we think that our mothers and fathers, and those who protect us, care for us, and love us, will always be with us. But as we grow older and get married, we become separated from our parents. Some may still live in the same town. In my case, my mother is in S. Korea while we are here. And for some people, there comes a time when they are separated from their mothers for a while because they have entrusted them into God's hands. Yet even when our mothers are no longer beside us someday, the love we received from them remains within us in such a strange and powerful way.

When we were young, when we were children, we did not fully understand that love. We did not understand why our mothers repeated the same things over and over again. Why they told us to wake up so early. Why they cared about even the smallest things.

But as time passes, and as we grow older and begin to understand the weight of life little by little, suddenly we realize:

“Oh... that was love.”

“Oh, that was how my mother expressed her love.”

Perhaps some of you can still hear those words even now:

“Take your jacket with you.”

“Drive carefully.”

“Don't push yourself too hard.”

“Did you eat?”

And some of you, even though you have already entrusted your mothers into God's arms, may still remember the sound of their voices.

Isn't that amazing? Even when a person is gone, love remains.

And the words Jesus speaks today sound something like that:

“Even if I leave, I will not leave you alone.”

Jesus is not simply explaining doctrine here. Jesus is speaking about relationship.

Presence. Being with us.

When we think about it, good mothers were not usually people who did great and extraordinary things. They were not people who changed the world, but people who quietly remained in the life of another person. Some mothers woke up early every morning to prepare lunches for their children. Some mothers placed their

children before their own dreams. Some mothers silently worked for the sake of their families.

And most children realize that love far too late. When I think about it, I think that was true for me as well. During my school years, my mother always woke up early in the morning to prepare breakfast for me. Sometimes I thought I would be late for school, so I told her I would just leave without eating. And there were moments when I took that love for granted and became irritated with my mother.

When we are young, we think our parents' love is simply something natural. But as time passes, we slowly begin to understand how much sacrifice that love was built upon. Mother's Day is not simply a day to praise "good mothers."

In many ways, it is closer to being a day when we remember the love we realized too late.

And today Jesus says, "God's love is like that too." It does not always appear in grand and dramatic ways.

Instead, it quietly remains in our lives. Even when we fall. Even when we are lonely. Even when life does not go the way we expected, God does not abandon us. "I will not leave you as orphans."

These words sound so warm to us. We wish life could always be bright, but all of us go through moments in life when we feel like orphans. When life falls apart. When we lose someone we love. When our health becomes weak. When the world changes too quickly around us, we begin to ask in our hearts: "Am I alone?"

But Jesus says: "No. You are not alone."

And I believe this resembles the kind of love many mothers have shown throughout their lives.

Good mothers were often people who said through their lives:

"I'm on your side."

"I'm here."

"No matter what happens, I love you."

Of course, not everyone experiences a perfect Mother's Day.

For some people, today is a joyful day. But for others, it is a painful day. Some miss their mothers. Some had difficult relationships with their mothers. Some mothers have lost children. Some wanted to become mothers but could not.

So today is not simply a day that can be described as happy and joyful for everyone.

But even so, today we can still give thanks to God. Because there have been people who left traces of love in our lives. And above all, because of the love of God who never abandons us. Jesus says, “Because I live, you also will live.”

Friends, this is the hope of the Easter season. Love does not end. The presence of God does not disappear. And we are not alone.

Perhaps one of the most faithful things we can do today is to remember the love that still remains in our lives: the love of mothers, the love of family, and the love of God who continues to hold on to us until the very end.

On this Mother’s Day, I hope we can remember that love once again. Perhaps after worship today, some of you may call your mothers. Some of you may miss your mothers even more deeply today. I think I will also be contacting my parents in Korea today.

And as we remember a mother’s love, may we also become people who can say to someone else, “You are not alone.”

Because in the end, that is the kind of love Jesus has given to us. Amen.