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**United  
Reformed  
Church**

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*Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019*  
***The SIXTH Sunday of Easter***

***Reading: John 14: 23-29***

***WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?***  
***Farewell – Keep my words – The Spirit will come***

The reading we've just heard from John is often called 'The Farewell discourse'.

We're going back in time a little bit, because this moment happens in the week before Jesus heads down to Jerusalem – where he is ultimately crucified.

This would have all been a bit weird for his disciples and followers - why is Jesus saying farewell now?

Why is he preparing them for a time when he's not around? He's only just got started.

They didn't know what was to come, but Jesus clearly did.

In the weeks after Jesus death, resurrection and ascension, I imagine that these farewell words would have taken on a new meaning.

Jesus prepares them for a time when he is no longer with them. He gives them instruction to follow his words And he promises the Holy Spirit to guide them.

Well, I don't know about you, but I'd really like to know what it means to follow Jesus even though we can't see him with our eyes.

We may well ask WWJD?

We can't just flip open the bible and find an answer to 21<sup>st</sup> C problems like Global warming or Brexit.

What Jesus says this morning is, *'those who love me will keep my word and my father will love them.'*

And there's the tricky bit – keeping his words.

There are times when Jesus talks in broad-themes.  
*Love one-another, as I have loved you.*

Oscar Romero and the Liberation Theologians remind us of God's bias for the poor and marginalised, as seen in Jesus actions – a clear broad-theme.

There are times when it suits us to pick and choose texts or words that fit what we want Jesus to say,

Or we expand a story to put words into Jesus mouth  
'well Jesus said xyz about Same-sex marriage or women in  
ministry' – did he?

Equally, there are times that it suits us to overlook what Jesus  
says – especially if it requires us to change or to do something  
that we don't like.

It suits us to believe that there is a wide spectrum for the  
interpretation of Jesus ministry, Jesus words, Jesus demands.  
We like to think we can wriggle out of the challenging bits.  
That Jesus didn't really mean what he said.

Do we search for a loophole that might get us off the hook from  
living as Jesus lived, loving as Jesus loved?

When we ask WWJG?, we instantly find ourselves in this messy-  
grey area of trying to interpret his words and actions.

Jesus wasn't stupid.

He knew that this would be the case.

Which, I believe, is why he goes on to say

*'But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in  
my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I  
have said to you.'*

Working out what Jesus has said and done, is not just about  
opening a book and finding the answer,  
it's about inspiration and stories – to see his actions in the world  
today

it's about guidance and direction  
it requires effort on our part to read and interpret the scriptures  
it's about allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to us still.

There are broad-themes in Jesus ministry:

*Love one another, Love God*

There are clear references – to be alongside the outsider, to raise  
the weak, to give to the poor, to support refugees,  
To heal the sick.

If we are committed to following Jesus way,

To loving him

Then we must take his words seriously

And that means struggling with them

Trying to understand them

Seeing how they are relevant to our time

And the issues we face.

As a preacher and as church – we have much to offer and to say  
to this world – but to do so, we must work at trying to  
understand What Jesus would do – and then have faith in those  
words and actually say them and put them into action.

Now – knowing that this is quite a scary and difficult process,  
Jesus ends his farewell discourse, with some words of comfort.

‘Peace, I leave with you.

Not as the world gives – but as I give.

Alongside – or maybe because of the struggle of faith, of following, God offers us peace – as a gift for the journey.

**HYMN: 594 PEACE, PERFECT PEACE**

*Reading: Acts 16: 9-15 (Pg. 900)*

***‘Come and help us’***

So, we’ve unpacked the challenge of asking WWJG.

But that’s not a great deal of help as we go into the week – as we live this faith.

Jesus knew that we learn best through stories – and we have lots of stories to guide us.

In that reading from Acts, we hear a story from the early Church.

Paul saw a vision of a man pleading to him to ‘come over to Macedonia and help us’.

Paul and several followers of Jesus, set sail and ended up spending several days in Philippi – where they encountered Lydia and she began her journey of faith.

Lydia is considered to be the first documented convert to Christianity in Europe.

There is a lot in this story.

Faith and bravery – to follow where God called.  
Love – to respond when someone asked for help.  
Openness and inclusion – as they spent time with slaves, women,  
those outside of accepted society.

Paul must have constantly found himself asking – What would  
Jesus do?

And he followed.

We learn best from stories.  
And I could have chosen one of millions that show us what it  
means to love the way of Jesus.

So here is a story of hope.  
Here is a story that asks ‘What would Jesus do when it comes to  
climate change?’  
We can listen for the spirits guidance  
For the Spirit reminding us of Jesus words and actions.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iy-Bmg\\_tDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iy-Bmg_tDE)

We learn best through stories.  
The story of Paul and Lydia  
This story from Green Peace – helping us to see how humanity  
can respond to climate change.  
The Spirit reminding us how Jesus treated those around him.

These are stories about Humanity  
Our potential to change and adapt and to love

These are stories about God  
And God's faithfulness to us  
Giving us strength and hope for the future.

Jesus says 'keep my words'  
And the Spirit guides us how to do that.