

“The Lord be with you!”

John 14: 15-21

We greet each other with the exchange, “The Lord be with you”/ “And also with you” at the start of our services. I am really looking forward to sharing this greeting with you again!

The fact that we can’t share this greeting at present has made me reflect on it. They are a reminder of God’s presence resting with each of us.

“The Lord be with you” – to help us in our prayers; “The Lord be with you” – to help us follow him in our daily lives; “The Lord be with you” – to support us in trouble, need or doubt. Who wouldn’t want to give and return that greeting? “And also with you.”



Our Gospel reading finds the disciples bewildered and frightened: how can they follow Jesus if he is going away? How can they know that they are doing the right thing? What *is* the right thing?

There are moments when we can find ourselves anxious and unsure. What does it mean to be a Christian? What about getting things wrong? Where do you start?

Jesus puts it very plainly: “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” The first and last step to being a Christian is to offer our hearts to him. That offering may be in tentative steps, growing steadily over time. Some people do have a very sudden “conversion experience”, but many find that their journey of faith is different. Whatever the route, love grows.

The result of experiencing that growing love is that we want to follow what Jesus says. The word “obey” can sound quite harsh, but Jesus isn’t suggesting a kind of slavish compliance, or a relationship built on fear. It is a response to God, who *is* love.

If being a Christian meant simply following a set of rules and remembering Jesus’ words we would be in trouble. We would be the scorn of others, following the words of a good man who died two thousand years ago. We would be left fending for ourselves, trying to make it up as we went along.



...and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever

But Jesus is not simply a good person whose example we should follow. He is God. He has promised us that the Holy Spirit will be with us, living with us and in us, inspiring us as we grow in love and faith. He calls the Holy Spirit in verse 16 “another Counsellor”, or in many familiar renditions of the verse, “another Comforter.”

A Counsellor is one who helps and supports someone when they are in trouble with the law. They stand by them, guiding and encouraging, taking away the fear of intimidation. The word “Comforter” reminds us that in the midst of our fear, pain and loneliness, we are not alone. A Comforter doesn’t tell you to simply pull yourself together or croon over your distress; it’s a person who brings deep peace and strength.

Our greeting, “The Lord be with you” is a reminder that Jesus is present with each of us through the Holy Spirit. It’s a greeting that sets us at peace. It reminds us that we are not separated from his love. He is here, alongside us in every situation in which we find ourselves. It is a greeting to us as individuals and also shared with many.

- In these anxious times, who in particular would you like to ask God to be with?
- Spend some time reflecting on what the words, “The Lord be with you” mean to you. Ask God to be with you in any particular tasks or conversations you have today.

Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ,
by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples;
help your Church to obey your command
and draw the nations to the fire of your love,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Rev’d Vicky Barrett