

John 14:15-21

If you have a bible where the words of Jesus are printed in red then John 14 and the next 3 chapters are virtually solid red! They make up the last supper discourse and tell of Jesus' final message to the disciples before he is arrested on the night of Maundy Thursday. We are so fortunate that John remembered so much of what Jesus said and these precious promises have found their way down the centuries into our bibles. It seems to me that there is so much about love in these chapters and in our reading in particular. Love, giving and receiving.

The beginning of John 14 is frequently read at funerals. Do not let your hearts be troubled for in my Father's house there are many rooms and I'm going there to prepare a place for you. In his love for us Jesus makes sure there is room for us. My sister and I chose this reading for my mother's funeral and my Father found it so comforting he asked that we would read it at his too! Which we did. There is so much hope in its promises and isn't this exactly what we need to hear when we are in the midst of the pain of bereavement. Of course, that night the disciples had very little idea what Jesus was talking about. That they were about to be plunged into the pain of bereavement. So often Jesus had told them he was going to die but that Jesus would be dead in less than 24 hours would have seemed impossible to the disciples at that moment.

It was Passover. The disciples wanted to party. The wine was flowing and the barbecued lamb smelt delicious. They must have wondered why Jesus was so serious as he spoke to them. But Jesus knew he might not get another opportunity.

The Christian Faith is all about relationships. Loving relationships. Many of you know that my career was in the field of counselling and therapy. Primarily concerning relationships. My parents always thought this was a very strange field of work. If people didn't love each other anymore how could talking about it possibly do any good. But theory and practice would show that where there was willingness and commitment love can grow. That was the joy of the work. Couples who had somehow closed down emotionally could open up and make room to love each other again. The truth is; love is so much more than lovely words and warm feelings. Love is work. I find the definition from the classic book "the road less travelled" really helpful. Love is extending yourself for the sake of another.

Our reading from John is about how God shows his love for us and how we are to show our love for him. We show our love for God by living life the way Jesus asks us. Humanly speaking this is an impossible task but God doesn't leave us without help. Jesus in his love for the disciples, and us, is going to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit to live in us, to be our guide, our helper, our comforter and our advocate. But it's even more remarkable than being given these gifts, to have the Holy Spirit is to have Jesus himself.

This reminds me of a story the we heard at New Wine about 10years ago. It was told by Mike Breen and went like this. There was a very wealthy gentleman who spent his fortune buying famous works of art. After dinner each night he and his beloved son would wander around their mansion admiring and discussing the paintings. War broke out and his son was called up. Tragically the son was killed in action. His Father was devastated. Such was his grief that he didn't enjoy his paintings anymore.

A couple of years later a veteran came to call on him. He explained that he had served alongside his son and he had painted a picture of him that he wanted to present to his father. Well it wasn't very good but somehow it captured the likeness of his son. The old man was delighted to have it, framed it and put it in pride of place with his old masters.

Years went by and the old man died. He had no living relatives and news quickly went round that his paintings were going to be sold at auction. This was the most exciting event to have happened in the art world for a very long time and collectors gathered for the great day. The old gentleman had left very strict instructions in his will, as to how the auction was to be conducted. The gardener who had worked on the estate for many years stood at the back out of interest. The auction started. The first painting to be sold was the painting of the son. Who will bid £1000? Silence. £500, £100? The jeers started "we're not interested in that old rubbish. Come on let's get on to the proper stuff."

The gardener had £10 in his pocket, he'd always been very fond of the son, it would be nice to have a keepsake. So he waved and put in his bid. " Well if there are no more bids" the auctioneer said " Going, going, gone sold to the man in the blue shirt at the back". The gardener was delighted. Then a strange thing happened, the auctioneer announced "That is the end of the auction" The crowd shouted "Hey what's going on? what about the rest of the paintings" The auctioneer explained "The one who has the Son has everything".

Let that sink in. "The one who has the Son has everything". That's what the bible tells us. When we have the Holy Spirit we have Jesus himself. We have everything in Christ, all the love we could ever wish for. Our invitation is to believe this truth. Our challenge is to live it out.