

If You Love Me
John 14:15-21
May 21, 2017

If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – 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 in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

How many of you remember enough English grammar to define the term “conditional statement?” A conditional statement is a statement in which one thing depends on another. Parents use conditional statements when dealing with children – “If you keep teasing your brother, I’m going to send you to summer school.” Wives can be heard using conditional statements, “If he does that one more time, I’m going to scream.” Get the picture? A conditional statement says – if this happens, that will happen.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus makes seven conditional statements. He only uses the “if” clause of the conditional statement once, but it is followed by seven results. To emphasize these conditional statements, we are going to attach the “if” clause to each as we look at what Jesus has to say.

The first conditional statement is the only one that isn’t a promise. This is the only one of the seven which calls for some action on our part. Jesus starts by saying, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” “If you love me” is the condition and “you will obey what I command” is the result.

With God, love and obedience always go hand in hand. God loves us with a love beyond human comprehension and that love is to bring two results in our lives; 1) we love God in return, 2) we obey God’s commands. We obey not to make God love us but because God loves us.

You might say that love equals obedience and obedience equals love. One more thing, obedience means complete obedience. The only controlling factor on our obedience to God is to be our love for God. Our obedience is not to be only obeying the things we like, or only obeying the things we agree with, or only obeying the things that our friends approve of, or even only obeying in secret so no one else sees. This is simply a black and white, straightforward statement, “*If you love me, you will obey what I command*” (Jn 14:15).

The rest of these conditional statements are promises made by Jesus to us. These are promises that result from our fulfilling the condition of “If you love me.” When we love Jesus, when we put him first in our lives, our lives change. Wonderful things come into our lives. I’m not talking about money, fame, and social status because these are things

that don't last. I'm talking about truly important things coming into our lives. Things that we will have both here on earth and forever in eternity.

The first of these forever blessings goes like this, "If you love me . . . *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth*" (Jn 14:16). The Spirit of truth is, of course, the Holy Spirit. This blessing is as necessary as it is wonderful.

We need the Holy Spirit in our lives. We are nothing without the Holy Spirit in our lives. Martin Luther describes our need for the Holy Spirit like this, "The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." It's the Holy Spirit who gives us faith, who keeps us in faith, and who enables us to live out our faith. It is this Holy Spirit that Jesus promises to us on the condition, "If you love me."

Our next conditional blessing is tied to the one before it. Jesus tells us the unbelieving world can't accept the Holy Spirit because they can't see him or know him. But Jesus promises us, "If you love me . . . *you will know [the Holy Spirit], for he lives with you and will be in you*" (Jn 14:17).

Our love for Jesus gives us the special privilege of personally knowing the Holy Spirit of God. And when I say personally, I mean personally. Jesus tells us that our relationship with the Holy Spirit will be closer than any earthly relationship. God's Spirit will be so closely tied to our lives that Jesus says he won't just be with us but he will actually be in us.

Next, Jesus tells us, "If you love me . . . *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you*" (Jn 14:18). This is one very important promise because this promise will take you through the most difficult times and circumstances of your life. Life can be hard. Life can be cruel, unfair, and uncaring.

When I hear the word orphan, I always think of a scene from a TV commercial for one of the children's world relief organizations that shows a little girl, about three years old, standing in an area of total devastation. The little girl is dirty, tattered, and very alone. Have you ever felt like that little girl?

It's not hard to feel like an orphan. We are people who are not at home in this world. We are in this world but not of this world. However, when we feel lost, alone, or abandoned, we have Jesus' promise that he will not leave us to fend for ourselves. We are not orphans. Jesus has adopted us as his own and he promises to be with us right to the end of the age.

Now, if you're not all happy and giddy inside yet, wait until you hear the next of Christ's conditional statements. "If you love me . . . *because I live, you also will live*" (Jn 14:19). Friends, it doesn't get any better than this. This is the promise to top all promises. Those who love Jesus will live with Jesus and like Jesus.

We will live with Jesus because we are strangers here on earth. We don't belong here. We have a home but it's not here. Jesus told his disciples that in his Father's house there are many rooms. He also said he was going away to prepare a place for them. And when the time is right, he would be back to take them to be with him. That promise is also true for us. Those who love Jesus will live with him in heaven.

We also will live like Jesus. The world sees life as the time that stretches between birth and death. We know that's not true. Life is eternal because God is life and God is eternal. Those who love Jesus will live like Jesus and that life is eternal life.

Christians are the only people who have no reason to fear death. Some religions promise heaven but you can never be sure if you're going to make it because your salvation is based on your good works and you can never be sure you've been good enough.

Jesus tells us to forget all that nonsense. Our salvation isn't based on our works. Our salvation is based on Christ's work. Our salvation is based on our faith that Jesus died to pay for our sins. Faith and love are all that Jesus asks. When we love our Lord and our faith is in him, our ticket home is not only guaranteed, it's also stamped 'paid in full.'

I suppose there might be some who would ask, "I'm glad my eternity is covered but what about the here and now? Is anyone going to help me with the here and now?" Yes, Jesus is going to help out with the here and now. Jesus tells us in the text, "If you love me . . . *you are in me, and I am in you*" (Jn 14:20).

Jesus promised not to leave us as orphans and that promise isn't restricted to just at our time of death. Remember the text said the Holy Spirit of God will not only be with us but in us? Through the Spirit, who lives in us, Jesus lives in us. He is closer than a brother. There is a union between the believer and his Savior. We are not Jesus and Jesus is not us, but nonetheless we are joined with him. We are the brothers and sisters of Christ. We are the family of God and that means we are God's family.

Our last conditional promise is, "If you love me . . . *you will be loved by my Father, and I too will love you and show myself to you*" (Jn 14:21). God loves everyone. All people are God's creation and all people are God's people – believer and unbeliever alike. But while God loves the unbeliever, his love can only go so far because it is not returned. It's God's will that all people are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. However, some will be lost because they don't love God.

Our love for Jesus completes God's love in us. This two-way love between the Lord and his saved people brings a special measure of God's love. This is love of the highest degree. This is the love that held Jesus to the cross when he died for your sins. This is a love which no human tongue can express and a love that we will never fully appreciate until we are home with our Lord.

Today's text is seven short verses. In those verses are seven conditional statements. One of those statements deals with our obedience, which shows our love for God. The other six statements deal with God's love for us. God loves us more than we can ever love him. God's love for us is perfect, complete, without limit. Because of God's love for us we study his Word, we worship him, we stay in conversation with him through prayer, we serve him by serving others, we tell the world the Good News of Jesus Christ, and we support God's church on earth.

By our obedience to our Lord's commands we are saying, "I love you, Lord." And by his promises to us, and by his faithfulness to those promises, Jesus is saying, "I love you, too."