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Glen Ridge Congregational Church

Sunday, May 10, 2026
John 14:15 – 21

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations
of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and
our redeemer.

Amen.



Today, on this Mother's Day, we hear a story of Jesus telling us that he is leaving, that he won't be with us much longer. And though this story is a story from Holy Week, a story in which Jesus is saying goodbye to his friends before he is arrested and crucified, we hear it today because even though Jesus rose on Easter, he is about to depart again. And this time it's for good.

For the disciples to hear that they were going to be separated from their friend, from the rabbi that challenged them to love God with everything they had, and to love their neighbors as themselves, this news must have been heartbreaking, confusing, and scary. But in the face of their anxiety, Jesus tells them not to worry because, although he will soon be lost to them, at least in the way they are used to being in his physical presence - hearing him laugh, and teach, seeing him heal and challenge and feed - God will be sending something else to be their companion and nourisher on the way: the Spirit of truth.

We hear these words today because we too are about to say goodbye to the risen Christ: the one who stepped out of the tomb on Easter, and showed us that to all of the ways we deny God's love for the world, God responds not with anger, and not with revenge, but with resurrection. Jesus is telling us, the

children of Easter, that he is leaving us again, but that we too shouldn't fear because God will be sending us that same Spirit of truth to walk with us through the journeys of our lives.

But Jesus promises those friends of long ago, and his friends today, something more. He doesn't just promise us we will have a separate, exterior guide and companion for our futures. He promises us a deeply intimate presence, even here, and even now. He promises us that we will live in God, and God will live in us. He promises us that we will continue to live in Jesus, even if he is nowhere to be seen and touched physically. And that he will live in us...if we keep his commandments, if we do the work of love in our lives, and in the world. Because it is in love that our relationship with God can never be broken, and it is in love that our friendship with the Christ will weather everything that life throws at us.

Love is the word that our spiritual ancestors found that they thought best described how God relates to humanity. As Paul says:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1 Cor 13:4 – 8)

It is in the posture of love that God comes to us. It is in the attitude of love that Christ embraces us. It is in the truth of love that Christ commands us to enter our lives, and become more fully human.

We hear Paul talk of love, but on this Mother's Day, I wonder if we have the experience of love that we know from our relationships with our mothers.

Jesus tells us that we need not worry about the future because in love we will be in God and God will be in us. I think of our mothers who carried us in their wombs. We were in them, nourished by them, kept safe by them. We were fed by them, and kept warm by them. In the experience of our earliest moments of life, doesn't motherhood have something to tell us about God's love for us?

We all have mothers, in that we have all been born, but to be a mother is often so much more than simply giving another life. To be a mother, to be called “mom”, is also to care for another’s personhood, their emotional and spiritual health and well-being. It is to teach, and encourage, and at times even to discipline with a bond that cannot break, and with a warmth of heart that hopefully always embraces and welcomes. Sometimes the women who gave us life are also our best friends, and the ones who will be there with us through all of it. They are the ones who live in our hearts, and in whose hearts we live. And sometimes the ones we call “mom” didn’t give birth to us. Sometimes they are a person we met along the pathways of our lives, someone that God sent to us, and we to them, so that we too can experience the joy of this holiday, this holy day, which we call Mother’s Day.

Jesus chooses this day, when we celebrate the blessing of motherhood, to tell us that he is going away. On this Mother’s Day, he tells us that he won’t be with us anymore. But he tells us not to worry, because God has sent us another. Our reading calls this the “Advocate”. The Greek word could also be translated as “Helper”. Perhaps, we might also use the word “Mother”. Because it is in experiencing the love only a mother can share, and the love that we can only have for our mothers, that we first truly understand what Christ’s commandment to love actually feels like, actually looks like. It is within the love between a mother and her child that we first understand what it means to live in another’s heart, and how that other person lives in our heart, even if they are no longer with us.

And it is in this primal experience that we can have a taste of God’s love for us, and how in love, we will never be separated from God, nor from the one we call the Christ.

Amen.