

“Kept by The Word to Keep the Word”

John 14.15–24

¹⁵“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. ¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” ²³Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” [NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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I. Introduction

One of the most tempting things for ministers is to take something simple and make it complex. I aim to resist the temptation today. Right now I am going to tell you what Jesus wants you to know from this passage. Ready? Here it is: God desires to have you be with Him. To be with God where He is requires that you be there in Jesus. When you are in Jesus, you begin to look like Jesus.

There. That's it. This passage is no more complex than that. Nor is the entire Bible. God desires to have you be with Him. To be with God where He is requires that you be there in Jesus. When you are in Jesus, you begin to look like Jesus. Now let me show you how I know this is what Jesus wants you to know from this passage.

II. God Desires You to Be with Him

If a Baptist can write a book entitled *Desiring God* (and it is a good book by the way), then a Presbyterian can write a book entitled *Desiring Man*. You might say Baptists by definition focus more on what man desires, while Presbyterians focus more on what God desires. We need both views. So I guess you could say Baptists and Presbyterians were made for each other.

Since we're Presbyterian, we'll focus on what God desires. That's why we can write a book entitled *Desiring Man*. God desires man. By “man” I mean, of course, men and women and boys and girls. I mean human.

God desires man. That's why He made man. God desires man. That's why He made man male and female, after His own image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. God desires man. That's why God came down out of heaven and spoke as Friend with Adam and Eve. God desires man. That's why when Adam and Eve stopped desiring God, God came anyway and promised to provide a Way for them to come back to desiring God.

This Way would overcome all the power of the devil. The devil is a liar. This Way would overcome the devil because the Way is the Truth. While the devil and his lies are the way of death, the Way and the Truth would be the Way and the Truth of Life. God is the Living God. Life and death cannot be in the same place at the same time. So to be with the God of life means you have to be alive. You need the Way and the Truth and the Life. Jesus said, ^{14.6}“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Desiring Man. God desires you to be with Him. How can you be sure? Jesus went to the cross to stick all your sins onto Himself and to stick all His sinlessness onto you. That is the only way God can have you be with Him.

If Jesus did not go to the cross in your place, then *you* would have to be despised and forsaken of men and God. *You* would have to bear all your griefs and sorrows forever. *You* would have to be stricken, smitten of God and afflicted forever. *You* would have to be pierced for your transgressions, crushed for your iniquities. Forever. No relief.

You would have to be oppressed, destroyed by oppression and judgment, cut off from the land of the living, buried with wicked men, guilty forever, never set free on parole, cast out into eternal torment where the worm never sleeps and the fire is never quenched.

Did Jesus go to the cross in *your* place? How would you know? Did He say He did? Yes. He ^{1Ti2.6}“gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.” ^{1Pe3:18}“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God.”

Is He the Truth? Do you believe Him? How would you know? Jesus told the disciples how they would know: Jesus would ask the Father and His Father would give them another Helper, a Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. What truth? The truth that God desires you to be with Him. The truth that Jesus is your Way to be with Him. The truth that Jesus is your only Life.

This Helper is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune God, the Spirit of truth. God will send Him so that He may be with you forever. If you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, you have God in you forever. He will open your eyes so that you can know Him. You will be different from the other people in the world who don't know Him—that is one way you will know that Jesus went to the cross in your place. You will be different.

You will see Jesus, but they will not. That makes you different. The Spirit of Truth is never half in you. Never three-quarters in you. Never 99/100's in you. He is either in you or He is not. If you know Him it is because He is in you. If you love Him it is because He first loved you and opened your eyes to behold His love for you. This is not complex.

Sometimes it will feel like He is not there, and you will be troubled as the disciples were troubled by Jesus going away. But Jesus is no fair-weather Friend. He's not around just when you're not troubled. Fact is, once He's in you He's never *not* around. He will not leave you as orphans. He will come to you. If you are His disciple He *has* come to you. God desires you to be with Him.

Are you a mess of emotional emergencies? God desires you to be with Him. Is yours a life of lost opportunities? God desires you to be with Him. Is your heart full of hideous hatreds, your flesh crawling with infidelities? God desires you to be with Him.

Do your lips spill lies, your thoughts plan thefts? God desires you to be with Him. Is your soul like a casket of covetousness, a gaping grave that can never find three straight days of contentment? God desires you to be with Him.

Have you despised and mocked Christians? Have you been accomplice to the persecution or ever murder of Christians? God desires you to be with Him. Are you the worst of sinners? God desires you to be with Him. ^{1Ti1:15}“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost.”

Is your estate in shambles? God desires you to be with Him. Do you have everything all together? Are you in good shape? Are you all set? You are fooling yourself, and God *still* desires you to be with Him.

III. To Be with God where He Is Requires that You Be there in Jesus

Desiring Man. God desires you to be with Him... But there is only one way you can be: you must be there in Jesus. You must be able to see Jesus, and the only way to see Jesus is to be in Jesus. ¹⁹“After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me... ²¹I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” “We see Jesus who was made for a little while lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.”^{Heb2.8f}

God desires you to be with Him... But there is only one way you can be: you must be there in Jesus. You must be alive, and the only way to be alive is to be in Jesus. ¹⁹“Because I live, you will live also.” You must have died to the condemnation of the Law, so that you might live to God. ^{Gal2.19} The only way for that to happen is to be in Jesus. ^{Gal2.20}“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

God desires you to be with Him... But there is only one way you can be: you must be there in Jesus. ²⁰“In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” You cannot be where God is unless you are hidden in Christ. *You can be where God is.* ^{Col3.3}“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

You cannot be where God is unless you are clothed with Christ. *You can be where God is.* ^{Gal3.27}“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” As God clothed Adam and Eve in bloody skins of an animal slain, so He has clothed you who believe with the robe of Christ’s righteousness purchased for you by the bloody sacrifice of Christ’s crucifixion. God desires to be happy. God is very happy and immeasurably impressed when He sees the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

God desires you to be with Him... But there is only one way you can be: you must be there in Jesus. You must be in Jesus for your sins to have been stuck to Jesus and His obedience stuck to you. Now there is a distinction you must see regarding this righteousness. John Colquhoun voiced it this way regarding such justifying righteousness: “The use of such a righteousness is not to make the believer fit for heaven, but to give him a title to heaven.” ^{Sermons,155}

God desires you to be with Him, but you can’t get to be with Him by getting in shape. You can’t be with Him by becoming righteous and holy. Certainly you *will* be made holy when you see Him as He is. But if you had to get to Him by being holy and righteous, no man but Jesus would ever get to be with Him. There is none righteous, no not one. ^{Ri3.10}

You must receive a title to heaven despite your unrighteousness. That title is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. You don’t get to heaven by being fit for heaven; you get to heaven by Jesus being fit for heaven... for you. You must go to heaven in *His* fitness. You must go to heaven hidden in *Him*. You must go to heaven in Jesus who is “The Lord our Righteousness.” ^{Jer23.6}

You must go to heaven *united to Jesus Christ* who is in the Father. No Jesus, no heaven. In Jesus, in heaven. Do you have a hard time saying “Jesus”? Why—do you have a hard time saying “Blue Jeans”? Do you have a hard time saying “The Lord my Righteousness”? Why—do you have a hard time saying “Raincoat”? Do you have a hard time saying “I love my Savior”? Why—Do you have a hard time saying “sweet sport jacket”?

Wrap yourself in Jesus. It is very much okay to find very much comfort in the enveloping embrace of His compassionate grace. You don’t need classes about religions and about cultures and about stress-free simple livings. You need to collapse in a muddled mess of joy and relief and liberty in the all-encompassing and heart-melting love of Jesus.

IV. When you are in Jesus, you begin to look like Jesus.

God desires you to be with Him... But there is only one way you can be: you must be there in Jesus. And when you are in Jesus, you begin to look like Jesus. ²¹“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

And here I have to laugh, because Judas, son of James (not Iscariot) tries to do what preachers like me try to do. He tries to make things complex. He tries to ask a complicated question. ²²“Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” And I then chuckle because Jesus does what I love to emulate: Jesus doesn’t answer. It’s just not the right question, and Jesus is under no obligation to answer wrong or misguided questions.

It's not that Jesus ignores His disciple. No! Jesus answers the right question... and the right question is this: “Lord, would you please repeat what you have been saying, so I can make sure I hear it right?” That is the question Jesus answers with “Yes, dear disciple, let Me repeat what I've been saying, because I really desire you to be with Me and I really want you to know that you will be with Me.”

So this is what Jesus says: ²³“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.”

Let's work backwards. Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him (v11). That is why when you hear Jesus speak you hear the Father's word who sent Him. So if Jesus says He will come to you so as not to leave you orphans, it is because the Father wants Jesus to come to you so as not to leave you orphans.

Jesus does not want anybody to make this complicated. If you are in Jesus it is because Jesus has loved you and now you love Jesus. And if you are loved by Jesus and you love Jesus, you will begin to look like Jesus. You will keep His commandments.^{v15} You will keep His word. That is very simple. Now I am going to explain this praying that I won't get complex on you.

¹⁵“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” This *could* be read as a command. “If you love Me, you *WILL KEEP* My commandments.” That's how the KJV has it. But that would be redundant. “Keep My commandments” is natural law. God does not have to add authority to His commandments by commanding us to obey His commands. He doesn't have to say “I command you to obey My command to love your neighbor.” “You shall love your neighbor” has all the authority of God.

Moreover, His commandment is not conditional upon our love. God's command to everybody in the world is to keep His commands. You cannot infer from Jesus' statement: “If you don't love Me, you don't need to keep My commandments.”

But a simple statement of future reality is perfectly reasonable. “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments; and if you don't love Me, you won't keep My commandments.” That's what Jesus says in v23-24.

“Uh-oh,” you say. “I sin every day at least once. (Once times a thousand, that is.) Do I not love Jesus? If “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all,”^{jam2.10} doesn't even one sin mean I don't love Jesus at all?”

I'm not going to answer that question. You need to ask a different question: “Does Jesus' love for me depend upon my keeping His commands?” That question I will answer: **!!NO!!**
^{1Jn4.10}“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” ^{Ro5.8}“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Yet at the same time, it is this love of Christ for us that compels us willingly and heartily to love His commandments and want to keep them. Do you with Paul struggle, “not practicing what you would like to do, but doing the very thing you hate?”^{Ro7.15} Is there a sin you commit, and you hate it, you hate it, you hate it... not because you can't control it, but because you abhor the thought of grieving the Holy Spirit who is dwelling inside you all the while you're committing that

sin? Do you hate it not because you can't make your twelve-step program powerful enough... but because you have seen the loveliness of Jesus and your sin is so putrid in comparison?

If you love godliness and hate sin, then you *know* that Christ is dwelling in you. If you long to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts,”^{Rom13.14} then already you are clothed with Christ. Take heart brother, take heart sister, our Jesus has covered you with His precious blood, and He is making you holy like He is holy.

You already have your title to heaven; everything your spirit desires is yours and awaiting you. And when He who is your Way, Truth, and Life comes to receive you to Himself that where He is, there you may be also,^{v3} He will finally and completely perfect you—body and soul—in holiness so that your struggle will be no more.

But listen... are you here and feeling left out of this conversation? Does this sound like nonsense to you? Or does it begin to burn like a fanned ember in your deep insides? Have you had no care for keeping Christ's commands? Have you had no care for the offense you've given to your Creator and the One with Whom you will have to do in the day of His Judgment? God desires you to be with Him.

Will you go in the way He has given? Will you throw yourself into Jesus' open arms? Will you be pleased to be brought to God's throne of grace and mercy through the Person of Jesus Christ and none other? Will you exult in beginning to look like Him in keeping His commands?

V. Conclusion

Perhaps I'd be a lot more comfortable right now if I had made this a lot more complex. Maybe next week. For now let me close with a very simple principle. Jesus said to His disciples and to elders of the Church today, to make disciples of all the nations by going, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe—that is, to keep—all that He has commanded us.^{Mt28.19f} The simple principle is this. God desires you to be with Him. To be with God where He is requires that you be there in Jesus. When you are in Jesus, you begin to look like Jesus.

God has given gifts—elders—to the Church to teach you to keep Christ's word, Christ's commandments. He did not give elders to *tell* you to keep Christ's commandments. You don't need anybody to command you to keep His commands. But God is pleased to give gifts to *help* you to love Christ who first loved you. God is pleased to give gifts to help you do what you already *want* to do because you already love the Lord Jesus.

Elders and ministers do not have the authority to command you to keep Christ's commands. All we can do is declare His commands and then help you to keep them. So I plead with you, when your elders seek to help you keep Christ's commandments, see it as a work of God's love for you. See it as a manifestation of Father, Son, and Spirit making their abode with you.

And if you find yourself insistently reluctant to receive and engage with God's love for you, then at least remember that His love for you does not depend upon your keeping His commands. He did not wait for your concurrence before He said, “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”^{Mt28.20} Amen.