

“I’ll Love You Forever”

John 14:15-21

Jesus has washed his disciples feet, fed them bread and wine, and now in his final words in the upper room, tells his disciples he's going from them but not really leaving them. The father will not abandon his children. They will not be left defenseless orphans. They will not be left alone.

“I will ask the father, and he will give you another helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.”

In the form of the spirit, the Father will give us a helper, a counselor, that will be the continual coming of Jesus Christ to us, in between his physical first and second coming. Just as Jesus was sent by God and came to earth, so is the Spirit sent by the exalted Christ and comes to we believers, his community. The coming of the Spirit is an unbroken coming of Christ. The form has changed from physical to the spiritual.

Three times Jesus tells us that we cannot by ourselves come to him. In John 7: 34, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. “You will seek me and you will not find me; Where I am you cannot come.”

In John 8: 21; “Again he said to them, I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin; Where I am going you cannot come.”

Speaking to his disciples in John 13: 33; “Little children, yet a little while I’m with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, where I am going you cannot come.” Jesus makes it clear that on our own we cannot come to Jesus, so his sending of the spirit is an absolute necessity.

So Jesus promised us to send us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The problem is we have a difficult time seeing it, a hard time hearing and feeling it. Jesus addresses that problem in the next verses.

“When I go you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you. In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you will also live. When that day comes; You will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.”

Jesus promises us that we will see him and that he will be in us, in our hearts. If he is in us now, how are we going to see him? What kind of seeing is Jesus talking about?

A mother delicately holds her newborn baby son in her arms and slowly rocks him back and forth, back and forth. The mother sees that newborn baby as a special gift from God after nine months of waiting and planning and praying.

While she holds her new son she sings; "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be." The bonding, the oneness begins. What does that mother see as she looks down at her newborn son? Jesus promises us we will see him and he will be in us.

The baby grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was two years old, and he ran all around the house. He pulled all the books off the shelves. He would grab The Plain Dealer and tear it apart until his hands were black. He would lift the toilet seat up and play in the water. Sometimes his mother would say, "This kid is driving me crazy!"

But at nighttime, when that 2-year-old was quiet, mom opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor on all fours, and if he was really asleep, she picked him up and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. While she rocked him she sang; "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

What does that mother see as she rocks her two-year-old son? Jesus promises us we will see him, and he will be in us, in our hearts.

The little boy grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was nine years old. And he never wanted to come in for dinner, he never wanted to

take a bath, and in Sunday school class he would always say bad words and misbehave. Sometimes his mother just wanted to get rid of him, sell him.

But at nighttime, when he was asleep, the mother quietly opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor and looked up over the side of the bed. If he was really asleep, she picked up that 9-year-old boy and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And while she rocked him she sang: "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

Jesus promises us we will see him and he will be in us.

The boy grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was a teenager. He had strange friends and he wore strange clothes and he listened to strange music. He was staring at his phone too much and he ate too much pizza. Sometimes the mother felt like not coming home from work.

But at night time, when that teenager was asleep, the mother opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor and looked up over the side of the bed. If he was really asleep she picked up that great big boy and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. While she rocked him she sang: "I love you forever, I love you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

The bonding, the oneness is strong. What does that mother see as she looks at her teenage son? Jesus promises we will see him and he will be in us.

The teenager grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was a grown-up man. He left home and got a house across town. But sometimes on dark nights the mother got into her car and drove across town. If all the lights in her son's house were out, she opened the bedroom window, crawled across the floor and looked up over the side of the bed. If that great big man was really asleep, she picked him up and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And while she rocked him she sang: "I love you forever, I'll like you for always, and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

There's now an unbroken harmony between the mother and son. The whole event of salvation is anchored in this most intimate union between mother and son. This is the core of the Gospel.

Not even the crucifixion, not even death can disrupt this unity. The mother and son are one. The father and son are one.

The mother and son promised to send us the Holy Spirit. The problem is we have a difficult time seeing it, a hard time hearing and feeling it. Or do we?

Well, that mother, she got older. She got older and older and older. One day she called up her son and said, you better come and see me because I'm very old and sick. So her son came to see her. When the son came in the door, the mother

tried to sing the song. She sang: I love you forever, I'll like you for always... but she couldn't finish because she was too old and too sick.

The son went to his mother. He picked her up and rocked his mother back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And he sang this song: "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, and as long as I'm living my Mommy you'll be."

Jesus promises us we will see him and he will be in us, in our hearts.

When the son came home that night he stood for a long time at the top of the stairs. Then he went to the room where his very new baby daughter was sleeping. He picked her up in his arms and very slowly rocked her back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And while he rocked her he sang: "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always and as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

Jesus tells us that we will never be alone. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the spirit, who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you."

How could we not see Jesus? How can we possibly resist the work of the Holy Spirit? We cannot. Seeing Jesus, seeing the Holy Spirit happens every time we hold our baby or grandchild in our arms rocking back and forth, back and forth.

Seeing the Holy Spirit happens every time we are held in our children's arms and rocked back and forth, back and forth.

Next Sunday during worship we are honoring our graduating seniors. They are at the stage where most of them will be moving across town or out of town. They may not find their mothers physically crawling into their new bedrooms and peeking over the side of their bed. But then this isn't a story about the physical. It's about the spiritual. Your parents go with you inside you just as Jesus and his church go with you, inside you. You will not be left all alone.

Jesus said, "When I go you will not be left alone; I will come back to you. In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live. When that day comes, you will know that I am in my father and that you were in me just as I am in you."

May the Peace of God...

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