

WEEKLY SERMON

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I will not leave you as orphans (John 14:15-21)

In this passage we find ourselves in the middle of Jesus' final words to his disciples as he prepares to face the cross. These are the important things that he wants to instil in them, to prepare them for their post-Easter work. He wants them to know who they are, what their purpose is and what it is that will mark them out as his followers, and he wants them to be in absolutely no doubt about who God is and their relationship with him.

In the earlier verses in chapter 14 we hear Jesus addressing the concern of the disciples' troubled hearts, hearts troubled because he had told them he was going away, and they were not able to go with him. Hearts troubled by having invested their whole future in following him and now wondering if it was all futile.

Jesus tenderly addresses their fears and shows them that his leaving is not going to be the unmitigated disaster they fear and makes his promise that he will not leave them on their own. In Jesus' day, (and sadly too often today) the fatherless were especially vulnerable to exploitation and injustice and left without an advocate in the courts, and without someone to protect them. So when Jesus tells them "I will not leave you as orphans", and then promises them the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete – their advocate and comforter, he was recognising the validity of their fears and their vulnerability, but assuring them that they would never be alone.

In all the complexity of these strange that we find ourselves in, his promise to be with us always still holds true – we are not left on our own but have the Holy Spirit as our advocate and comforter.

So, this week if you are finding yourself or those you love feeling vulnerable and fearful, be reminded that today, as then, he is here to bring his peace and comfort and the encouragement that speaks truth to our hearts when our fears would try to convince us otherwise. Then, as our hearts are strengthened, we can follow his command of love and be those who advocate for the most vulnerable amongst us.

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