

The Spirit beside us

Notes on the Bible readings

- This passage follows last week's. Jesus expands on what he said about following in his way by explaining how we put the idea into action: by loving Jesus and keeping his commandments.
- This relationship between loving Jesus and keeping his commandments is not a case of 'prove that you love me!'. Rather, it is Jesus explaining how loving him enables us to keep his commandments - a reminder that Jesus' commands are all rooted in a loving relationship: loving God and loving others.
- Jesus also explains that we are not expected to do this on our own; we have the Holy Spirit as our 'advocate'. The Greek word literally means the one 'called to your side' and could equally be translated as 'intercessor', 'counsellor' or 'intermediary'. Crucially, the term means someone who will never desert us in our hour of need. This then flows on naturally to discussing our relationship with Jesus and with the Father; this is all bound up in that oneness with God that ensures that we are not left on our own.

Practical love

The commands that Jesus urges us to keep are practical and everyday in nature. The current lockdown and social distancing rules have resulted in many examples of love in action, and also highlighted situations crying out for love to be expressed in a practical way.

Look (using the internet, perhaps?) for examples in your locality or network of contacts. Can you find one or two ideas to pursue further - either on your own, or as a household?

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Questions for reflection

- ▶ How might this image speak of relationship?
- ▶ How easy is it to follow Jesus' command to offer unconditional and practical love, following his example?
- ▶ What sort of things do you regularly do for other people, just because you love them?



A prayer of approach

*Gracious God, we come before you,
drawn by the power of your welcoming love.
We come with our sorrows and joys.
We come with our expectations and apprehensions.
We come with what we have done.
We come as who we are.
In your love we find peace and hope. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*God of love, we are sorry that at times our love for you falters;
that we have wrong priorities, and overlook your guidance.
O God, forgive us and renew us.*

*Loving Saviour, we are sorry that we disobey your commandments;
that we fail to love, and sometimes walk by on the other side.
O God, forgive us and renew us.*

*Spirit of truth, we are sorry that we disregard your presence;
that our thoughts and feelings are unrighteous, and that
we so quickly follow the world's way.
O God, forgive us and renew us.*

*May your presence abiding in us lead us in the right way,
in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*I am your child, O God:
Help me always to show love,
and fill me with the Spirit of truth. Amen.*

Live your faith

Wherever you go this week, look for examples of Jesus' command being fulfilled, and opportunities to demonstrate love in action. If you can, do it.