

John 14:15-21
May 17, 2020

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

If I asked you to think about your favorite teacher in school, who would that be? Or how about your favorite coach? Or, a supervisor perhaps? Someone that has impacted your life and continues to do so yet to this very day? Even, if you have not seen them in years, decades, or perhaps they are no longer living. (Pause) I suspect you all have thought of at least one person, even given I just sprung the question on you with a very brief pause to ponder it.

Early in my pastoral career and one of the first funerals I presided at, the daughter of the deceased, whom at that time I barely knew, told me she just did not know how she would go on. Mom was everything to her. She was her best friend. They did everything together. She was always there for her. She taught her so much. Days turned into weeks, weeks into months, and still the pain was very real for this beloved daughter. The anguish of her mother's loss had crippled her and cast her into the depths of a dark depression. We talked frequently and over those months she shared with me many stories of their relationship together. I do not recall most of them now; however, I do recall a saying her mother told her, "When we fall, we will get up again." The first time I heard it, I remember thinking to myself, "that's a bit odd." We have probably all heard the saying or something like it, "When you fall, dust yourself off and pick yourself up again." There is a distinct difference in these two sayings. The latter touts an individualism often deeply embedded in us. The former infers a relationship. A togetherness. A companion on the journey. Ultimately, there were many people that came alongside this woman and assisted her in getting up again, but when the darkness finally cleared and she was able to fully abide in the light once again she would tell me that as dark as some of those days had been, as lonely as she felt at times, those words spoken so often by her mother continued to echo in her ears, "When we fall, we will get up again." Though her mother was physically gone, make no doubt she was very much present through these words of comfort, encouragement, hope, and life. She had fallen, but she was able to sense that just

as she always had, her mother was there once again as she knelt and helped pick her back up again.

Now think back to that teacher, coach, supervisor, best friend, or perhaps, like this woman, a parent. I suspect we can each think of a word, phrase, teaching, or behavior we continue to carry with us. Something that continues to help us when we stumble and fall. But it is more than just a word or phrase. It is also the relationship through which those words were spoken.

Jesus has fostered a relationship with his disciples. He has loved them. In just a few short verses he will call them his “friends.” (John 15:14) But, now he is leaving. It is their time of need and he knows it. Soon and very soon, they will feel abandoned. Frightened. Lost. Yet, Jesus, their source of comfort, strength, guiding light and advocate (i.e., companion) will send them another advocate for their journey, the Spirit of truth that will remind them of Jesus’ words and teachings. The Spirit will dwell in them. Always present. Encouraging. Supporting. Comforting. Guiding. Loving just as Jesus loved and equipping them to carry out Jesus’ commandments. In John, there is only one and it is given twice by Jesus. A chapter earlier, he states, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 NRSV) Again, in chapter 15, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:12-14 NRSV).

In their time of need, in this farewell discourse during their final meal together, in this very passage Jesus begins and ends with words of love. This is the defining mark of their relationship together. It is the impetus to why the Word was made flesh and came into the world. It is the driving force behind all Jesus does and says as he journeys to his ultimate destination, the cross. It is at the core of John’s Christology in a verse we all know and that often are words of the Holy Spirit helping us to get up again, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NRSV)

Jesus loves them. He loves the world. He loves you. He will not abandon his disciples; nor, us. The Spirit of truth dwells in each of us. While we may not always sense that Spirit's presence, she is there. I heard it said once, the Spirit is like a butterfly that softly and gently lands on your shoulder. You may not even know it, but it is there. This is our time of need in so many ways. We will come through this. We will rise again. Not alone. Together. The Spirit of truth the helping hand we need kneeling at our side and lifting us to new heights to see and experience the glory and grace of God. Helping us see resurrection happening here and now. Reminding us of the promise, "Jesus loves us." Equipping us to love one another.