

The title for today's message is: **Comforting Promises.**

Jesus said: **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Imagine if you will, that you are one of the twelve disciples. And you just heard Jesus, your best friend, tell you that He was going to die soon.

You'd be perplexed to say the least. You would wonder how Jesus could say that, because Jesus promised to be with us always.

But Jesus had to leave, He had to return to heaven, in order to complete the salvation of the world.

Here in our text we see Jesus giving us two comforting promises, one He promises to take care of us, and two He promises to be with us always.

Look everyone likes to feel needed, cared for, and loved, right? And to think, now days you can pay someone to do just that for you.

In fact in many parts of the country today, maybe this very weekend, select groups of people are meeting to brainstorm.

They're hoping to find some secret power that will develop all their hidden abilities, allowing them to experience a new level of life.

One advertisement for such a seminar reads: "Start the major love affair of your life, by spending a weekend with yourself.

It continues; Take at least two days out of your life to discover the most fascinating, wondrous, and magnificent person you know.

Of course, that would be you, right? What an experience this seminar would be, sounds exciting, doesn't it?

The ad certainly makes some bold claims. First of all, It promises great results in fact 100% guaranteed great results

And yet, you may be wondering, “What’s the catch?” Is it the cost of the whole thing? Well, the cost is only \$250 dollars per person, not bad.

These seminars, retreats, and self-help groups seem to be in vogue today. I mean you can find groups of people meeting for all sorts of reasons.

Now, I’m not knocking weekend retreats, or seminars. In a sense, the Gospel lesson for today is like a seminar, or retreat.

It’s an account of a first century seminar, and special retreat which Jesus conducted for His disciples.

Back in chapter 13, we find Jesus telling His disciples about true greatness. He says greatness is found in humility, and service to others.

Jesus then demonstrated this greatness, by washing His disciples’ feet. Doing so, He was showing a radical concept: Something called Christian love.

This was the very heart and core of Christ’s love which was demonstrated on the cross, as Jesus sacrificed Himself for us all.

Jesus gave Himself wholly to His Father’s will. He dedicated Himself to every law, decree, and command His Father ever uttered.

He did this for you and me, so that we might find favor in God’s eyes. Remember, everything Jesus accomplished here on earth was for us.

And this was all part of God’s plan to provide comfort and healing, care and mercy, to all who believe in Him.

Now in verse 16 of our text, Jesus expands on God’s plan of salvation. He promises to send another Person, whom He calls a “Helper.”

Here Jesus is promising to send the Holy Spirit, actually He was foretelling the events of Pentecost, giving His disciples comfort.

Jesus knew they would be confused and helpless as they witnessed His crucifixion, and death.

So, for that reason, Jesus wanted to let His disciples know that He

Jesus cared for them, so He makes a promise to send a “Helper.” Now, the original Greek word Jesus uses here, is Par-a-clete“

Which translates; one who walks along side of you, encouraging, and instructing you. Another words, someone who cares about you.

As a “Helper”, the Holy Spirit comforts, guides, and instructs us through the Word of God, showing all of us the need for a loving savior.

The Bible tells us that we cannot love ourselves into heaven, nor, can the power of positive thinking remove sin from a guilty conscience.

Simply put, a pow-wow with the “helper”, the Holy Spirit, is needed. Jesus promised this to His disciples, and He promises it to us here today.

Just listen to the determination in His words: **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,**

The Lord shows His care, and concern, by dealing with the truth which is that, God calls sin what it is: SIN.

Its an infraction of God’s holy commands, and the Holy Spirit reminds us that we have broken God’s decrees again, and again.

Look, we encounter our sins every time we read the Bible. We come face-to-face with the truth as the Holy Spirit convicts us.

The Spirit does this so that we don’t trust in ourselves for salvation. God wants us to despair in ourselves, so that we trust in Him for all things.

The Holy Spirit’s main job here is to turn us from ourselves and towards Christ for certainty of forgiveness, and salvation.

The Spirit needs to force us to look into the mirror of God’s law, and clearly see our sins.

Yet, sadly, a lot of people deny this truth. Consider Christ’s words: **the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.**

Therefore this world looks at the truth of Christ’s love, and pronounces it

A lot of people do talk about charity and peace, but rarely will they get close enough to anybody, to actually love, to come along side, and help.

It's when we come alongside to help one another, to put our Christian love into practice, that the Holy Spirit feels at home in our hearts.

He moves us to love each other, just as we are loved by God. In this way, we obey God's commands. It's all about humility and sacrifice.

You say: I show love to others. But we don't truly love each other when we do things only to get a pat on the back, or some other kind of recognition.

True Christian love gives when the sinful heart isn't willing to do so, or when its inconvenient, or un-appealing.

In short, Christian love is the willing response that the Holy Spirit works in our hearts.

And it's evident in our lives, as He leads us to focus on God's faithful love, and promises.

Another promise Jesus makes here, is to be with us. Jesus made this clear when He said: **for he dwells with you and will be in you.**

Talk about loving faithfulness! The Spirit has been with us much longer than we ever thought.

Before we knew Jesus, or even thought about spiritual things, the Holy Spirit has been calling out to us, drawing us to Jesus.

Now, this isn't a relationship we can create on our own. As Martin Luther correctly states in his catechism:

*I believe I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.*

*But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the one true faith."*

The Holy Spirit sought Luther out, and made His home within him. He did this through the gospel: the message of salvation in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is responsible for our faith in Christ, and He's also responsible for keeping that faith alive, and allowing us to live for Christ.

Now, it might sound a bit unsettling for Jesus to say, **If you love me, you will keep my commandments.**

But those words need not frighten us. It would be scary to think that our obedience to Jesus was based on our merits, or worthiness, it's not.

We can't believe in Jesus Christ on our own, let alone obey Him. Again, this is all credited to the work of our Savior-God.

The Holy Spirit leads us to obey God, by reminding us of His faithful promises.

The Spirit uses the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments to remind us that we have a faithful God.

A God who loves us so much that He died for our sins and rose again so that we might live with Him for eternity.

You know, weekend retreats and seminars are nice. They do provide a "shot in the arm", rejuvenating a person's outlook on life.

In fact, it's good to get away and focus on the simpler things once in a while. And thanks be to God, the Holy Spirit does that for us everyday.

We don't have to listen to a charismatic, world-renown speaker to inspire us, because it's all right here in the Bible.

So listen to God Himself, so we don't have to spend a small fortune to hear about the secrets of salvation.

God's love is a gift of His grace, it's free of charge. So, don't doubt. Simply believe. After all, God promises it.

Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy spirit be with us forever. Amen