**Easter 6C – John 14:23-29 – 22 May 2022**

**Sermon Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/etVwV6voJRs**](https://youtu.be/etVwV6voJRs)

It was Anzac Day 2013. Caryn and I were in our caravan at Brighton. Just before 6 am we received a text from our son saying his wife was in labour three weeks early. He asked if I could pick up his four-year-old son Ethan who was being taken care of temporarily by some kind nursing staff. When I finally picked up Ethan he asked when his mum would come home. I said it would be a few days but it would be OK because he would be home with his dad. He had a worried look on his face as he said, “Dad and I will be lonely because mum won’t be home.”

**Very few people like to be alone**. Sure we may like some space of our own for a little while, but then most of us want company again. We are made for relationship, and we need other human beings around us. One of our great fears in life is that we may lose those who are close to us, be it through relationship breakdown or through death. Sometimes it is hard to tell which is worse, that someone we love dies or that our relationship with someone we love falls apart.

**We need relationships but not just any kind of relationships.** What we really need is loving relationships. We need a relationship with someone who listens to us, knows us, and whom we listen to and know. A relationship built on mutual conversation, concern for one another, mutual trust and compassion. We need someone whom we can depend on and who can depend on us. For many people, this is their life’s partner, or family member, for others, it may be a good friend. Ideally, we will live in a community where we have many good relationships. In an ideal world that is what the church is, a community of people who know each other, care for each other, love each other. A community of people where no-one is lonely and everyone feels safe.

**It begins with a relationship with Jesus.** Jesus knows what real relationships are made of. Love is the glue that holds relationships together. A big part of a loving relationship is getting to know the other person by truly listening to them. That is why he says, “If anyone loves me they will keep my word.” (John 14:22, NRSV). Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, and they don’t take in a word you say? They are either so busy thinking about something else or so busy telling you about themselves that every word you say just disappears into the air. How do you feel when you talk to someone like that? “Worthless, annoyed, angry.”

**If you love someone you keep their words.** You pay attention to what they say, you value what they say and you do your best to remember what they say. Not only do you listen but you do your best to understand. Jesus listens to everything you say, he even knows your thoughts, because he loves you. When Jesus says, “If anyone loves me they will keep my word” (14:23). He is stating the obvious. If you love Jesus, you will listen to his word, believe his word, and keep his word close to your heart. You can’t have a relationship with someone if you don’t listen to them and value what they say.

**Jesus loves his disciples, and he does not want them to be alone, but he must leave them.** They have been with him constantly for three years and now he tells them he is going away. Their hearts are troubled, and they are filled with fear, the fear of losing the one they love. Jesus prepares them and makes them a promise. He prepares them by telling them he will be leaving but that he won’t leave them alone. He will send an advocate, a counsellor to take his place. This counsellor will remind them of all that Jesus has said to them. The counsellor is the Holy Spirit.

**Our memory is a fascinating thing.** A song, a poem or certain sayings can bring back to life moments in our lives that occurred years ago. Suddenly, we are transported back to the event or the person, and it is as if for a brief moment we are back there with all the feelings and sensations rushing back to us. The Spirit will remind the disciples of all that Jesus has said. Through the Spirit, Jesus will be brought back into the presence of the disciples. Through the Spirit, Jesus will be present as more than merely as a memory, because the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and of the Father. Through the Spirit, Jesus will always be with the disciples, beside the disciples and in the disciples. They will never be alone.

**Through the Spirit, Jesus also comes into our presence.** Through the Word written in the Bible, the Holy Spirit brings Jesus into our presence. John tells us why he wrote his account of the good news of Jesus, he says, “[T]hese are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life to the full in his name” (20:31). Through the Word, the Spirit creates faith in our hearts, through that faith we experience the love of Jesus and through Jesus the love of God the Father in our lives. As we keep that word close to our hearts and in our minds, reading it, listening to it, meditating on it, and confessing it, through the Spirit we experience the presence of Jesus with us and in us. Our hearts and minds are transformed, and through the Spirit, we find ourselves being filled with love for God and neighbour and the desire to obey God’s word.

**When Jesus comes into our presence through the Holy Spirit, he also always comes in peace. On the night before his death, Jesus made the disciples a promise which was at the same time a blessing as he said, “**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (vs 27). Three days later they did not feel a sense of peace and they were very afraid. The risen Jesus knew this as he appeared to them. His first words were, “Peace be with you!” This is more than a mere greeting. When Jesus says, “Peace be with you!”, he is confirming all is well between us and God. Our sins are forgiven, and nothing in all creation can separate us from God’s love. Perhaps you have experienced the kind of peace you feel when you are spending time with someone you love. Someone who understands you completely accepts you unconditionally and listens to you intently. Someone who will stand up for you in whatever difficulty life may throw at you. Perhaps you have had glimpses of such peace. Through the Holy Spirit, the peace Jesus gives is all of this and far more.

**We may be lonely and even afraid when someone we love leaves us, but with Jesus, we are always assured of his presence with us.** Through his word, he continually comes to us in peace, fills us with the Holy Spirit and drives away our loneliness and fear. Through the Spirit, God the Father and the Son make their home with us, living with us through all the ups and downs of our lives. Staying with us always until Jesus finally takes us to the eternal home, he has prepared for us, where we will live a full life of peace and joy forever. Amen.

**Rolf Lungwitz**