

Young people won't remember, but everyone else will. There was a time when tornadoes came through Oklahoma City and if someone wanted to check on you from far away they wouldn't have been able to do that immediately. The best way to communicate with someone was by sending a letter. That took a couple of days at least. Once the phone was more commonplace people began using that, but you still had to wait your turn. There were only so many lines available. To let my mom know that we were okay would have taken days. Now I get in trouble if I don't call the same day while it's happening.

How many would want to go back to the old ways of communicating? Letter writing, phone calls, even email seem old fashioned. Relationships that would have been nearly impossible because of distance are suddenly very real. The phone is anytime we want. Text messages are almost instantaneous. Facebook allows opportunity for updates quickly. Even talking over video keeps relationships close and thriving as we express love to each other even when we aren't right there.

Jesus is speaking with his disciples face to face in the gospel. But it won't always be that way. The preparation is underway. The time is coming eventually for that moment when Jesus won't be on earth visibly anymore. This is just a glimpse of that life, of course our reality. These words have even more meaning for us who have lived our entire lives without Jesus' visible presence on earth. We're called to...

**Love Jesus even if he isn't here  
Keep his Word  
Receive his peace**

It all starts with a question asked by Judas, not the soon to be traitor Judas Iscariot. **"Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world."** Ah, the problem the disciples often seemed to have, mistaken identity of the Messiah. In their minds Jesus was still going to be an earthly king. They figured Jesus would rule from a throne, have a big army, and create an empire on earth. If this was the case Jesus was going about it the wrong way. Showing himself to the disciples only and not the world wasn't a good beginning to a strong earthly kingdom. Of course these were mistaken impressions of Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus was preparing his disciples for the complete opposite. Instead of an earthly kingdom, Jesus prepped them for a time when he wouldn't be around. He drew their attention away from his visible presence to something that would last. His Word. **"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching."** Love and obedience are closely linked. So close that the person loving Jesus will show that love in obedience to Jesus, his teachings, his Word. Anyone who claims to love Jesus is going to hold to Jesus, guard Jesus, and keep Jesus in their life. Not clinging to a Jesus they could see, but one they heard from in his Word. Listen to his teaching and show love for him by obedience.

So we claim to love Jesus. Every one of us here would say we love Jesus if asked. Now obey him. Keep his Word. We're supposed to live our lives always keeping Jesus' Word in everything. But what of the people who understand some sins as worse than others? What of making excuses for heavy drinking and excessive cursing? We might even convince ourselves that some parts of God's Word are to be kept and others aren't. Do not murder, but hatred is okay. Some of it we're more enlightened about. Love your neighbor now must mean be tolerant of everybody and everything. We go to God's Word, that centuries old book that people from different backgrounds argue over all the time whether some is true or any of its true. Now Jesus wants us to obey and keep all of his Word. That's a lot of law to live up to.

The Word of Jesus to keep isn't only law. Telling us what to do and not to do would never spark love for Jesus. God's commands and his constant judging could only make us resent him and maybe even hate him. You mean he keeps telling us what to do? You mean if we mess up just once he gets mad? That's never loving responses, only disgust with God. Love comes from something else, the gospel.

Love can't be commanded into existence, it's generated, it's given, it's a gift. How? Through God's Word. Jesus' teaching of law leads us to understand our sinfulness. We feel and appreciate a deep need for something more, something that will allow us to keep Christ's Word. The gospel leads you to your Savior. Jesus doesn't force himself on you or anyone. He wins you by the wonderful promises of what he's already done. Sin is overcome and lifted away. In your heart trust is built in Jesus. He dwells in you. Not just around you, close to you, but in you. He sets up a home there, a place where he plans to get comfortable because he isn't leaving. God is in your heart, calling it his. Your heart is God's home because he's forgiven you. That's yours right now. Christ Jesus dwelling in you with all his power, love, and grace.

The promise of Jesus dwelling in his disciples seemed exactly the opposite of his statement, **"You heard me say, I am going away and I am coming back to you."** Jesus was leaving. Yet believers would not be alone. Not only would Jesus dwell in them, Jesus would also send another in his place. This one would encourage, help, and comfort. He would advocate, teach, and keep believers in the Word. He would never leave believers alone witnessing to them exactly the Word of God. He would encourage believers in keeping Jesus' Word and lead them to receive Christ's peace. Jesus calls him the Paraclete. You read the Counselor. The Helper, the Encourager, the Advocate all work too. Whatever the title, the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit.

Peace is the ongoing gift of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”** Jesus’ peace is promise and reality. Not so much a relationship between warring nations, but a state of existence. Peace means total wellbeing and rest. True peace means sins are forgiven. Everything is as it should be when you’re at peace with God. Your sins are gone and the actions of others can’t take away your peace from God. You rest securely and comfortably because you’re right with him in a state of peace. That’s peace only God gives. Peace only Jesus earned.

The world wants shortcuts to peace. Divorce my spouse so I’ll finally have peace in the house. Do what everyone else is doing so that I’m not arguing with someone and we can have peace. Let me just become popular at home, in the office, in church and I’ll have peace. But you and I both know that peace lasts a short while. It’s wishful thinking because it’s peace on my terms. I’ll be peaceful if these conditions are met. I’ll find peace myself when I have no troubles. Peace isn’t controllable by us. It’s not something we can force. Two sinful people will never be completely guaranteed of peace. Peace doesn’t come on our own.

Peace is received from Christ alone, given by him to you. That peace is real and it is yours. Peace that Jesus gives removes all fear and worry. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** You are forgiven. Your guilt is gone. Whatever troubles you can’t trouble you anymore in Christ. Jesus has removed your reasons to fear. Nothing can separate you from God anymore. Nothing. Nothing can ruin the state of peace because it’s not based on you but on Christ. We no longer have a need to act cowardly in the face of life that seems against us. No need for fear or worry. We have received his peace.

The one who continues to work through the Word of God is your encourager and comforter. He works through the Word to reassure you of that peace. He comes to your side and never leaves you. He always stands by you to speak when you are weak or frail. He comes to you when life’s troubles bend you over. He kneels down, cares for your needs, and comforts you with God’s peace. The Holy Spirit utilizes the Word of Christ to do this. Christ’s victory makes it possible. Jesus verifies the state of peace we live in now. **“If you love me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”** Jesus leaves you with comfort and the one who comes to your side so you receive Christ’s peace.

Communication with people around the block and around the world now is basically the same. What once wasn’t even close to possible now is regular. We communicate with people so much easier and it allows for us to maintain relationships and demonstrate love. Christ Jesus may be gone and not visibly present. But his communication with you and me remains the same. He comes through his Word. We love Jesus so we keep his Word. And through that same Word we receive his peace.