

15 “If you love me, keep my commands. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—**17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. **18** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**19** Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **21** Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Orphans Often

Pirates of Penzance is a punny comedic opera. The basic premise is a child indentured until his 21st birthday as a pirate because his nurse made misheard his father when he said, “Make him a pilot.” Instead of a pilot, she made him a pirate. The odd thing about the Pirates of Penzance is all happen to be orphans who have sworn an oath to never harm another orphan. However, word spread quickly and any ship they capture claims, “I am an orphan.” It’s a joke often repeated throughout the opera. Even the elderly Modern Major General saves his daughters with, “Have you ever known what it is to be an orphan?” Leading to the lengthy argument of Orphan, as in a person who has lost it’s parents. Or often, frequently. The joke being he’s old of course his parents would have died by now. He’s an orphan.

But that’s not really a laughing matter. No matter what age or time whenever a parent dies it hurts. You’re still left alone. It’s enough to lose one parent but both would leave a child destitute, without hope, and a future. In Jesus time a child was considered an orphan if he only lacked a father because in such a society, a single-parent family would be impoverished and unable to survive without the help of others. Being an orphan is no laughing matter.

Neither are the pain and problems that come into our live. In fact you may feel like an orphan without hope and wondering how you are going to survive another day. You often may feel like an orphan, like God has left you alone to suffer. But Jesus has promised, “*Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.*” Jesus does not claim, “I will not often leave you as orphans,” but I will never leave you as orphans.

John may have felt like an orphan. John’s Gospel was written between 80-100 AD. That’s near the end of John’s life. All of the disciples are dead. He’s the only one left. Exile

probably isn't helping things either. Maybe he pondered Jesus' words and the ones that came back to him again and again were these words Jesus spoke on the night of his betrayal.

"If you love me. You will keep my commandments." 21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." so where is the Father? Where is Jesus? Why does John feel so alone? Is it because he doesn't love Jesus or obey his commands?

Just have more faith. Love Jesus more. Obey more and then Jesus will love you and show himself to them. Maybe this is too big for God. Maybe if he just had more faith or tried more.

Do you ever feel like John? When we have time to ponder, sit, wait, question - does God love me? A number of conclusions you can come to. The Pharisee in each of us would say, "What's not to love? Look at me I'm awesome. Of course God loves me." Then the Lutheran inside of us calls out, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner." We read those words of Jesus and that conditional sentence kills us, *"If you love me, you will keep my commands."*

That's because often, as in frequently, we have not kept his commands. We haven't kept his commands. There are times when we haven't loved Jesus. There are probably times when we've turned Jesus words around on him and used them as a tool to manipulate God, "If you love me... take away the pain, cancer." "If you love me... don't leave me as an orphan." That's the same tool husbands and wives occasionally use against each other and children against their parents, 'If you love me... you'll give me what I want." That conditional statement sets up a false premise, false dichotomy of only two options. Either you love me or you don't and your love hinges on what you will do for me.

If that's the case with Jesus... If Jesus is using this as a tool to manipulate his followers. Then there is only one conclusion we can come to. I haven't obeyed Jesus' commands. I must not love Jesus. I must not be a child of God. I am an orphan without family, hope or future.

But is Jesus using our love as a tool to manipulate us toward good works? Is that the same way God deals with us or his disciples? If you love me, you will keep my commandments. It may appear that way until you realize that this is a condition of fact. Jesus states a fact. If you love me, (and you do) - then you will obey my commandments. Since you love me you will obey my commandments.

That won't be easy to do. But Jesus has already promised to help them along the way. Jesus promises to send them another helper (John 14:16) - which implies they

already have one: Jesus is with them. He will be there for them even when they leave him as an orphan.

One by one they will all run away from Jesus. They will betray, deny, and doubt the one who has loved them so. They will leave him as an orphan and even the Father will turn his back on his son. It doesn't appear as if there is any love for Jesus or any obedience to his commands. But the real question isn't, "Do the disciples love Jesus? but does God love the disciple?" John has already answered that question even if he is sitting on the island of Patmos. John gives us the gospel in a nutshell. He gives us the will of the Father. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life."* John knows the answer even if he doesn't feel like it. God has not abandoned him.

God isn't using your love as a tool to motivate you toward obedience. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* He uses his own love for that. He points us back to the work he has done for us and the work he will do for us in just a few hours time. He motivates us with his love. When Jesus says, *"If you love me, obey my commandments."* We cry out, "But I haven't loved you as I should." Jesus responds, "I know, that's why I came, obey my commands." But I haven't obeyed your commands." Jesus responds, "I know, that's why I came. You are forgiven. Obey my commands." But I haven't loved you as I should, to which Jesus responds, "I know, that's why I came. Obey my commands." But you notice Jesus never says, "It's okay... You can ignore that one." He does however encourage us on to love and good works.

It's only by the Word and Sacrament and the Holy Spirit working through that word that we can even obey his commands and that often imperfectly. No, we don't often look like his children. We don't love him perfectly. We don't even obey him perfectly but we are children of God. We are not orphans and even if it feels like God has abandoned us you can go back to his words and his promises. You can go back to your baptism often and see that you are children of God who have had his name placed on you. You can go back to the sacraments and be reminded often that you are forgiven for your inability to love and obey Jesus perfectly. You have an inheritance that will never perish spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.

That's the love of God that motivates you to obey him. Obey his commands. Realize that the ten commandment serve as a unique summary of God's law. They are set before you to protect you from all that would harm you. Realize that God isn't trying to keep you from having fun but he is concerned for you. Maybe you will feel the effects of the fall into

sin. Maybe you will suffer in this world, like the thief on the cross. But that doesn't mean God is punishing you or that he has abandoned you as orphans. Far from that.

The pain and problems of this world are no laughing matter. You may find yourself as an orphan in this world. You're parents may pass away before God comes back but you have a family and God has provided for you with another: the church. His body. He is here for us even if the world walks away. God never will.

At the end of the movie the Pirates terrorize the town until they are commanded in the name of the queen to yield, stand down. They are forgiven. They're allowed to marry the Major General's daughters. All because they were orphans and they really didn't know any better.

But you're not orphans and you really do know better. Jesus still calls to us, "If you love me (and you do because through the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacrament) you will obey my commands and you do even if so very often they are imperfectly obeyed. You still have a perfect savior who always obeys and always loves even when we struggle to love and obey him. Amen.