

And I in You  
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**Acts 17:22-31**

<sup>22</sup> Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. <sup>23</sup>For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. <sup>26</sup>From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, <sup>27</sup>so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup>For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.”

<sup>29</sup>Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. <sup>30</sup>While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

**John 14:15-21**

<sup>15</sup> ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup>This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>18</sup> ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’

I have known some people who have lost both of their parents far too young, some before they reached adulthood, some before they reached forty. Two young adults in their early twenties feel both cheated and lost without either parents’ guiding words and limitless love and support. A man I know lost his mother before his teens and his father before he turned forty. He feels their losses acutely and mourns the years which others seem fortunate enough to have with both parents. Having the identity of orphan thrust upon them has been understandably unwelcome.

And I know people in their sixties, seventies, and eighties who have become orphaned as remaining parents have died. No matter how old one gets, it is a strange and mournful occasion to become an orphan, no longer having either parent around with whom to share memories or of whom to ask advice or even whom to take care of. Losing parents is not like losing friends or other people

significant in your life. To lose parents is to lose people who have known you the whole of your life, who know intimately your struggles, and your successes, in your most formative years. To lose parents is to lose people who bore your illnesses and your sorrows, who shared your triumphs and joys, who patiently waited and guided as you learned and grew, people like no other persons in your life.

Our readings during this season of Eastertide are somewhat of a long goodbye, with Jesus trying to ready the disciples for the time when he is no longer physically present with them. Jesus says to the disciples, as he is preparing to go to the cross, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." Jesus, who has borne their sorrows, who has shared their joys, who has patiently guided them, is leaving but one who knows them just as well, one who has been with them all along will be with them still. They will not lose the love, support, and guidance because it does not reside only in Jesus but also in the Spirit.

We have had many funerals, many celebrations of life, of late. In the language of the church, we call these times celebration of life for we are giving thanks for the life of the person as given by God and claiming the promises of eternal life through the resurrection. Part of these services is acknowledging that the person is no longer physically present with us. If you have been in attendance at any funeral, you are keenly aware of this no-longer-presence; it most often presses itself firmly into our consciousness in those moments when we think of something we want to tell the person, or ask them, or include them in, and we remember again that this is now an impossibility. We feel their absence almost as tangibly as we once felt their presence. These disciples who had spent three years, more than a thousand days, with Jesus were soon to be thinking of things they wanted to share but could not, things they wanted to ask but could not.

A couple of weeks ago I was fortunate enough to be in attendance at an awards night at Jim's high school and there were a half dozen awards given which had been created in memory of someone who had died, some tragically too young, like a member of Jim's graduating class or an Army Ranger (who was also one of my youth group kids), and some had died after living long, full lives which included dedication to the school. These eponymous awards were created, and continue to be funded, in order to keep their legacies alive. We may not create scholarships in the names of those we love who have died but they do stay alive in our memories, in stories and photographs that we can continue to share and so continue their stories. Whose story continues to be told by you? Whose presence continues to be felt in your mind? This weekend we set aside time as a nation to tell the stories of those who have died in battle so that others might have freedom. This weekend in particular those military members we have known and loved and lost come to the very front of our minds.

Jesus said, “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.” In a little while the disciples would feel his loss deeply and persistently. When that pain is no longer so fresh, perhaps when we can speak the names of those who have died without an immediate ache in our hearts, then we begin to do our best work remembering others, telling their stories. This day was coming for the disciples but first Christ must die and be raised from the dead and then ascend, physically leaving those disciples for good. Jesus, their first Advocate, would be gone but another Advocate would come to and for them. They will not lose the love, support, and guidance because it does not reside only in Jesus but also in the Spirit. And they will not lose the love, support, and guidance of God.

Last week I mentioned that Jesus clearly identified himself as one with God by using “I am” in reference to himself. This week he goes beyond that, saying to the disciples, and us, “**I am** in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” God with us, Emmanuel, **is** God with us. Paul tells it this way in our reading from Acts: “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’...” Because God is with us, we can never be orphans. Jesus says of the Spirit, “You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” Because God is with us, we can never be orphans.

With this assurance, the disciples could tell the story of God and God’s love through Christ that much sooner. And because the Spirit was within them and within the generations which followed them, God’s presence was just as known to those who had never walked the dusty roads with Jesus as it was for those whose feet he washed at that Last Supper. Centuries after we have gone, our stories will no longer be told, our presence will no longer be held close in the minds of family and friends, but the story of Christ’s redeeming work for us remains new and close. Because of this, because Christ abides in us, and the Spirit, and God, we can continue to tell the story of how our lives have been shaped by God, how we have groped for God and found God. This is indeed good news. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray: Risen Lord, we give thanks for your presence in our lives felt even today. Help us continue to tell your story, we pray. Amen.

2 MINUTES FOR QUIET REFLECTION