

Day after day we live in a world in which many demands are placed upon us. From the time we wake up to the time we go to bed, one thing after another demands our time and our effort; one person after another expects us to give them our undivided attention. We live under a demanding set of rules. Some that others place upon us. Some that we place upon ourselves. This is our daily routine. It can be tiring and even frustrating.

And then Sunday morning comes, the day of rest both for our body and for our soul. How we need this time in the house of God. A time to get away from our daily routines. A time to be refreshed, to unload our burdens. How good it is to be here with our gracious Lord. He knows how demanding our lives truly are. He would never add more demands to our already demanding lives.

But then we listen to our Gospel text for today in John 14, and the first words we hear from the mouth of Jesus are these: *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”* And perhaps we feel like letting out a sigh as we think to ourselves: “Here we go again. My non-Christian friends are right. Church is just one more demand upon my already demanding schedule. Rather than unloading me of my burdens, which are already too great for me, Jesus is adding to my burdens with a whole additional set of rules to keep. Not only this, He is adding to my guilt. ‘If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.’ That’s like my spouse telling me, ‘If you love me, you will take out the trash and clean the toilets.’ Yet I think to myself, but I don’t dare say it to her, ‘I can love you just fine from the sofa watching TV.’ But no, if I love her, I have to obey her demands.”

And by the way, I am not here describing my own married life in any way, shape or form. I’m describing life in general for all of us.

And doesn’t it seem like Jesus, here in our text, is a very demanding spouse, or a very demanding parent? Why, Jesus? Why are You making life tougher on me? I already have the Ten Commandments, and I have enough trouble trying to obey them. Why burden me with more commandments?

Before we get all bent out of shape here, let’s take a closer look at these commandments of Jesus. The ones we will keep if we love Him. Just what does Jesus command us?

Well, in the chapter before our text He says, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you.”* In the chapter after our text He commands us to abide in Him as a branch abides in the vine. A little later He says to ask the Father in His name. *“Ask and you will receive.”* The same night He spoke all these words, He gave this command: *“Take eat...take drink...do this in remembrance of Me...for the forgiveness of your sins.”*

So, what is it that Jesus commands of us? To love with the love He has for us. To pray that we would receive what we need. To abide in Him so that our joy may be full. To receive the forgiveness of our sins in His Holy Supper.

Are these harsh demands? They are more like invitations. Now it is true that Jesus calls them commandments. But they are certainly not burdens. Not in the way that the Ten Commandments burden us and accuse us.

Since this is Mother's Day, allow me to use the following analogy. When mom tells her little boy to do something, but he does not, he has failed to obey what was commanded of him. And he might well face some type of discipline. Picture a child acting in this way, and let's say that it's on Mother's Day that he is being disobedient. After being disciplined, he is crying in his room. He's upset because he made his mom upset with him. He feels very much unloved. He feels isolated as he cries tears into his pillow.

And then he hears his mother who is standing by his bed. She says to him in a gentle voice, "Son, come here." And as she says these words of command, she opens her arms wide to him.

Now, what do you think? Is she giving him a harsh command here? Or is her, "Son, come here" a loving invitation to enter into her arms and be held close to her? That's it, isn't it? She has come in love. She comes to forgive; to restore her little boy and to dry his tears.

This is how we can understand the commandments Jesus gives to us. We, too, have been very disobedient. We have failed miserably in obeying the Ten Commandments. The world doesn't care in the least about such things. Those who are of the world are not concerned that they fail to keep God's Law. They shrug it off, perhaps thinking, "Who cares? Others are worse than me."

But you are not of this world. Your baptism marks you as God's child in Christ Jesus. He loves you and you love Him. And so, when you and I disobey Him, we may feel like that little boy who disobeyed his mom. "Is God angry with me? Maybe He doesn't love me anymore?" We may feel isolated from God, even that He is against us.

Yet God is like that mother who calls out, "Come here." Lift up your eyes and see Jesus giving you this very command. Not a demand. An invitation. "*Come to Me and I will give you rest.* Come to My Supper and be refreshed." What Jesus commands is for you to be unburdened. His arms, spread out upon the cross, those same arms He opens to you in love. He takes your burdens. He takes your sins, your disobedience, and He forgives you for all that you have done.

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* The world does not love Jesus. But you do love Him. You love Him because He first loved you. You love Him because you believe that He truly has forgiven you, forgiven you all of your disobedience. See Jesus always as your loving Spouse, yes, your loving Mother whose arms are wide open to you. Amen.