

Bonded to God (John 14:15-21, 27)

10:00am Fifth Sunday of Lent – 22nd March 2026

Jesus said: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 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.'

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

<prayer>

I wonder if you have ever used Super Glue. You know the product, it's that sticky little tube of stuff that was once billed as the ultimate solution to every breakage. It was introduced back in the 1980s **as the new miracle** – the sort of thing that only God could do perhaps. The best bit was that it worked in seconds. You could take something broken, put a little bit of Super Glue on it, push it together, count to five and hey-presto it's just like new – or even better! Everyone should have a tube in the draw somewhere as an emergency to fix every aspect of your broken homes and lives.

But the problem with Super Glue came the second time you tried to use it because then the little plastic nozzle would be stuck to the cap from the first time, and the tube would get all blocked-up. So in order to make it work again you had to squeeze the tube hard to try and get some out....and every time it seemed to happen the tube would then burst out the entire contents of the world's most sticky stuff, all over your hands. You were then unable to touch anything, lest you spend all night attached to something or someone. A&E departments will know this very well.

But rather than be stuck to something we don't want, today I'm going to tell you that **it's possible to be stuck to God in a way that we would want to be.** In the nicest way possible, God is very sticky too! But what is God's Super Glue, and what exactly is being bonded together? Well, the idea that ourselves and God can become broken and need to be stuck back together again is not a bad one for the season of Lent and towards Easter. From the great exultant crowds of Palm Sunday, just a few days later Jesus will go to the cross alone – broken, denied, rejected and forsaken.

As the time of his passion approaches, Jesus keeps using doom-laden and rather serious language, prefiguring his journey to the cross. To the disciples, the realization is that things are beginning to feel that they might soon become very broken. This passage from John today is the same teaching in which Jesus has just said those immortal words: **'I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.'**

Jesus is essential, yet Jesus is going away. **Is the relationship between Jesus and his disciples to be permanently broken?** In our passage from John gospel's today Jesus is reassures the twelve who are worried about becoming unstuck.

Jesus is concerned to ensure that both we and the disciples do not feel that way, and so here in our passage today he is trying to reassure them, as He says to them:

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.'

That must have just confused the disciples even more. Why are you coming to us, when you are already with us? They could not possibly foresee or understand the resurrection, Jesus's ascension, and the return of God's presence in the Holy Spirit when it descended at Pentecost.

We often speak about our lives of brokenness because of sin and separation from God. In the earlier weeks of Lent, I spoke to you several times about real repentance. Sin is the natural human condition. **But God always wants to heal that gap which sin creates, not to punish us for it.** In the beautiful words of Psalm 51, the worshipper prays that:

'My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, O God, will not despise.'

The Psalmist knows that regardless of their wretched sinful condition, God will always be open to the return of a penitent – **looking to stick things back together again.**

A big challenge of the Christian faith is that we believe and worship a God who is unseen. **For some this is a big prevention.** *'How can I believe in something I can't see?'* I've had that one said to me plenty of times.

Jesus said to those listening that day: *'In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.'*

Although Jesus declares several times that he is to depart, yet he confirms to his disciples that they *will* see him again. **I wonder what they thought of that?** We know that they did see him rise again soon at the resurrection, but the same words to us mean seeing God in a life not of this world – that of our own resurrection in the end times, in the Heavenly places. **Our faith requires us to be attached to the God who is unseen.**

Until that time, we are kept attached (glued) to God by the presence of God's Holy unseen Holy Spirit, who brings the promise of peace and hope in this life. I think we need God's presence within us to keep out the other things that will try to claim our hope (falsely) and the many ways of fleeting peace which do not last. **Our perpetual link to God is by the graceful gift of His Holy Spirit. God's spirit protects our faith in this life and tends to our doubts.** Jesus said them:

'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

It sounds a bit crude, but we are bonded to God like some miracle glue. Yet that abiding connection is not restrictive or rigid, rather it is transformative, repairing, restoring and bringing lasting strength. **The Holy Spirit is what God gives us, at the promise of Jesus, to keep us close to him through this life until we too shall be raised.**

Yet we too may wonder how God is accessible when he is seemingly so far away in the heavenly places. Is God really amongst us in all this mess, or is he keeping out of the way?

That description of God's Holy Spirit as *advocate* is sometimes also translated as *comforter, counsellor or helper*. It literally means someone who will stand with you and will help you in times of challenge or trouble.

It is a promise of God's abiding presence in the most difficult of times. We might think of it in terms of power and strength, to fight for us and protect us.

That same strong bond of the Holy Trinity – The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit – that same eternal bond is also what we can experience in our lives today. Each of us may be *completely* united to God. This may be difficult for us to understand and realise in our lives now, because we live in imperfection. Our relationships with God can wax and wain as our faith waxes and wains. Then there are the times when we are so attuned to God and following well. **But those variable currents of life and faith will be made uniform and unsurpassed in strength when we join him, ascending ourselves also, that we might be with Him in Heaven.**

I think that my message for us all today is to recognise that whoever we are and whatever our state of life, God wishes to become stuck to every part of our lives. He pursues us with undying love, and undisputed strength.

So, please feel the relationship we have with God, feel the company of his power, and feel the reassurance of his constant presence. He is unseen in his Holy Spirit, but never unfelt. God's Holy Spirit is what keeps it all together for this life, until we can finally stand in God's presence.

Amen