

“Whoever Has My Commandments” (John 14:21)

For Your Life in Christ the Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 29th, 2011
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: The Problem of “Cheap Grace”

A. In his book *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the tragedy of cheap grace: *“Cheap grace means justification of sin but not of the sinner. Because grace alone does everything, everything can stay in its old ways. ‘Our action is in vain.’ The world remains world and we remain sinners ‘even in the best of lives.’ Thus, the Christian should live the same way the world does...Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord’s Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.”* (43-44) What a great WARNING!

B. The old saying “Talk is cheap” means that it’s easier to say something than do it. It’s easy to say you love someone. It’s really easy to say you love God. But again, talk is cheap. You know it, the people around you know it, and according to today’s Gospel, Jesus knows it. He doesn’t say, “If you love me, then say so,” but he says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (v15). As sinners, we would seem to have a big problem with this. What are we to make of these words? In our Gospel, the Lord describes the relationship that actually does make Jesus’ very difficult – and anything but cheap – “keeping” happen: (much of this outline is taken from *Concordia Pulpit Resources, Volume 21, Part 2 March 13-June 12, 2011 Series A*, the published outline was written by Dr. Espinosa):

Part I: By the Grace of God, Disciples KEEP [through Christ]

A. Disciples who love Jesus keep his commandments (v15).

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1. There are real signs and indicators that we love Jesus, that we are truly born again (Jn 3:3, 7).
 - a. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion
 - b. That we LOVE GOD. *Agape* love made known especially by what you DO!

McGrath: “True knowledge of God moves us to worship, obedience and the hope of eternal life.” (*Roots That Refresh*, 42)

- c. *This is the love that God gave to you in Christ (Jn 3:16). No theoretical love here! He was crucified!*
2. So no love in a vacuum or again, no theoretical love.

John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

- a. Easy to misunderstand. This is NOT a rehashing of the Mosaic Law like a legalistic check-list.
- b. The word “keep” = like keeping a TREASURE!
- c. It is “taking care” of something very important.

Illustration: Raising a child: you don’t do it perfectly, but if you really love your child, you keep them, you take care of them no matter what!

- d. *So Jesus is teaching: because you love Him, you strive to honor him.*
 - i. His commandments are the living out of his gifts of Word, worship, and your neighbor.
 - ii. If you love him, you will TAKE CARE of these with the highest care and devotion.

Part II: Christ Keeps His Disciples in His Care Through The Gift of The Holy Spirit

- A. The problem is that as we strive to honor God, we FALL SHORT on account of our sin!
 1. We neglect devotion in the Word.
 2. We do not rightly hunger and thirst for the Sacrament.
 3. We do not love our neighbor as we should.
- B. The Lord knows! So you must know what He DID ABOUT IT!

John 14:16: “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,*”

1. "Helper" is also translated as "advocate" = like a defender. He helps us in our weakness.

Romans 8:26: *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words."*

2. He especially helps us by bringing to remembrance the words of Jesus. First spoken to the first-century disciples taught by Christ, but the principle applies to us that the Spirit leads us back to the Word!

John 14:26: *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

3. He helps us by giving us the truth, the true knowledge of God, and by actually remaining not only alongside of us, but in us!

John 14:17: *"even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."*

Illustration: Think of a courtroom in which you are the defendant. The prosecuting attorney is the devil, who accuses you of a serious crime, but your attorney is the Holy Spirit. He makes his appeal to the Father for you in the name of Jesus Christ. Guess who wins the case?!

Part III: Christ KEEPS you in His Care

- A. To receive the Holy Spirit means that out of necessity you also receive Jesus Christ and the Father!

John 14:20: *"In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."*

- B. Therefore you have the VICTOR (Christ) over sin, death, and the power of the devil!

Luther: *"From this [disciples] must learn to scorn and despise death, to know and to think of life alone."* (AE 24:137)

- C. So now everything changes:

1. Christ has kept the law for you!
2. Christ has forgiven you for the law you've broken!
3. Christ sends the Holy Spirit who helps you in your weakness.
4. The Holy Spirit keeps the powerful Word of Christ before you to strengthen you in Christ.
5. The Holy Spirit is actually in you and defends your case constantly in Christ!
6. Because you have Him, you have Christ and the Father.
7. And with your Gracious Lord you have the victory over sin, death, and the power of the evil one.

D. Do you see how God has KEPT you? How God KEEPS you? Do you see how incredibly gracious He is to you in spite of your sin? *This is assuredly true since He baptized you into Himself!*

E. From this Gospel, this work of Christ, through HIS keeping, you are now led by the Spirit to keep; to keep the things of God: His love, His worship, His obedience. Don't let anyone fool you, your faith is now active in love!

1st John 4:19: *"We love because he first loved us."*

Conclusion: Let us now rejoice that we are in Christ, filled with the Spirit, and held by our Heavenly Father, so that we are enabled to LOVE God, to LOVE one another, and to LOVE everyone that the Lord has put into our lives. You keep, because Christ keeps you. You are among those who do not live in cheap grace; no, you have the commandments in such a way that the keeping is God's work in your life and the keeping is the work of the Holy Spirit who lives in you and leads you to go beyond just talk, but keeping Christ as your TREASURE in what you say, in what you do, in who you are by one source, one power, one grace: that Christ keeps you; through His blood shed for you He has made you HIS TREASURE!