

May 22, 2022

Acts 15:1-2,22-29; Rev 21:10-14,22-23; Jn 14:23-29

“Love is not a one way street.” You probably could agree with this. Love is something that has to go both ways. But what if I said “Love is also not a one lane street”? Not only does it go in both directions, but it is also not made up of only one pathway. There are parallel pathways in a loving relationship that make it a real and full relationship.

Love is about thoughts and feelings and also about actions. To say I love you and I never speak to you seems odd, to say I love you and never do anything to help you seems selfish, to say I love you and not sacrifice for you seems shallow. In fact, relationships that are based on the emotions and thoughts of love alone tend to drift apart. So it is not strange that Jesus ties the two lanes of emotion/though/desire to the parallel lane of action on the road to loving Him: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.* Keeping Jesus’ word is an act of obedience and respect, an act of self-sacrifice for a mutual benefit that leads to God dwelling in us.

Part of the action of love is to put our own way of doing things second and follow the lead of the other. In our human relationships this means each one gives way to the other at different times. But we cannot expect Jesus to obey us - if we do we forget who we are, and who He is. But He does give in to us sometimes. He will honor our wishes and step aside and let us do it our own way, and so give in to our decisions. However, what Jesus asks of us always leads to a mutual benefit, and what we decide to do sometimes does to work out - because of this Jesus should always be followed. This following is also about being together in love. If we do not follow, if we are unwilling to let go of our way to follow God, we’ll be separated from God - just like if I want to go to McDonalds and you want to go to Burger King, and we both remain stubborn- we’ll be sitting in two different places and not together. The loving act of obeying God brings us closer and we both end up in the place that is best for me together.

But how do we follow Jesus’ Word? How do we put that love into action? How do we drive in the lanes of decision, and emotions, and action at the same time (please don’t apply this principal to your driving your car - stay in one lane in that case). Following the “Word of God” involves us understanding what the “Word of God” is and using this to guide our action in multiple lanes as we go on our journey. But where do we find the “Word”? It is incomplete to

think that the Word of God is contained in the Scriptures alone. We read at the beginning of the Gospel of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (John 1:1, 14). This is a reference to Jesus Himself. We hear in the book of Acts: *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness* (Acts 4:31). This does not mean that they read the Bible aloud, but rather grasped inspired revelation from the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is a teaching, a communication to humans from God's voice some of which is written down in Scripture.

Jesus promised us that He would keep this voice alive to continue to teach us. He said in the Gospel today: *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.* Does this mean that we each read Scripture and examine the situations around us and we will surely find God's Word? If that was the case then there wouldn't be so much disagreement. There will always be questions as to what Our Lord wants from us, there will always be questions as to what His Word really means. How are we to understand how to apply our faith in situations in life and follow where God is leading? Let's look to see what the people who were taught by Jesus did: In our reading from the Acts there was a dispute about a matter of faith that brought up a lot of disagreement, then *it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.* They realized that the Holy Spirit speaks - as it always has - through imperfect persons, first through the prophets and later through the Apostles and evangelists. They had faith in Jesus' words to guide the Apostles, and a sense to defer to them when there was a question of interpreting the Word. Our current Apostles, the Bishops, don't always get everything right - but as a group the Holy Spirit guides them as Jesus did the first Apostles who said: *it is the decision of the Holy Spirit* before they gave their answer.

We love God by decision and thought, we love by emotion, and we love by action - multiple lanes on the same street. On this two-way street God comes to us with the Word like a road map, God comes to us in love, and God comes to us in action in our daily lives. God follows our lead by not interfering when we want to go our own way, and we follow God's lead when we follow the Word that leads to peace and life. God wants to have that smooth two-two-way, multi lane experience of love with us. It is following God in this love that we obtain the peace Jesus spoke of when He said: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.*