

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 26, 2019

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Our gospel this morning is taken from St John. It is called the Fourth Gospel because in the Bible it follows Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and also because it was the last one written. Because it benefits from many years of Christian faith, practice, and reflection, this gospel has the deserved reputation of delivering to us a highly theological presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Readers are sometimes intimidated by the fact St John always means more than he says. But don't be put off by that. Remember that the Samaritan woman at Sychar discovered the difference between the drinking water in the well and the Living Water which is Christ. The Living Water has Life in itself and the more we drink the more we desire it. So too we uncover ever deeper riches in St John's Gospel. You can compare it to discovering a new vein of gold in a mineshaft. Such is the Word of God.

But being deeply theological, St John is also immediately accessible. Think of the vivid account of the miracle breakfast by the sea shore where the risen Lord was tending a charcoal fire and preparing fish and bread and calling out to the fishermen to find out what they have caught. What is there not to love? And then there is today's gospel you just heard. It is a Trinitarian passage which proclaims the Father sends the Holy Spirit in the Name of Christ. The Lord's promise is, "If a man loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Again, what is not to love? Here in the highly theological Fourth Gospel is just about as warm and tender a thought of Almighty God as you will find anywhere in the Bible.

To be sure, this passage also contains the Lord's Own practical test of our Christian discipleship. "If you love me you will keep my commandments." Notice the *converse* is also true. If you keep my commandments you will love me. The Lord urges discipleship for both major types of personalities: the lovers and the legalists. Those people temperamentally disposed to obedience get excited about rubrics and canon law. And the whole point of keeping the commandments is so they will come to love Him. Those inclined to love of God and neighbor and doing good works learn the importance of obeying the Lord's commands laid down in

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His gospel and by His Church. By loving Him they are enabled to keep His commandments.

So here is nothing but Good News! Jesus in Heaven is not a dead parent leaving children as orphans. In several weeks we will observe the great day of Pentecost, when the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. You can think of Pentecost as the day of *Jesus' coming*, and every day in which Christ manifests His spiritual presence as Pentecost. For the Lord in Heaven calls down the Father's love and brings a visitation of *both* Father and Son. Christ says not only is He coming to us, but *We* will: the Father and I, Who are One. That is because the light and love of God are fully communicated in the light and love of the Redeemer.

And it is not a transient but *abiding* presence. We are not promised a passing view of God, such as was given to Moses and Elijah, a short and running visit. Rather, God comes not to be distant and temporary, but to make His home with us. *Home*, not dwelling. A dwelling is a building. *A home is where the heart is*. Never underestimate the powerful influence of divine grace and comfort upon souls. Not when God Incarnate talks like this! "*We will make our home with him.*"

Almighty God not only loves obedient believers. That is just for starters! He takes pleasure in them and will rest in love with them. It is St John's Gospel, lofty as it is, which remembers Jesus Christ giving us this promise. That's the Gospel, *and it's good news!*