



# SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING

John 14:21-26

The one who loves me will be loved  
by my Father, and I will love him and  
will reveal myself to him.

John 14:21 [Jesus said:] The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him."

John 14:22 "Lord," Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "what has happened that you are going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him. 24 The person who does not love me does not obey my words. And the word you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.

John 14:25 "I have spoken these things while staying with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This is part of a longer speech in John 14-17, where Jesus prepares his disciples for his absence. It takes place at the Last Supper and corresponds in the Fourth Gospel to the shorter speeches at the Lord's Supper in the other three Gospels.

## KIND OF WRITING

John 13-17 is known as the Farewell Discourse, a well-established as a literary genre in the Old Testament and in the apocryphal books of the intertestamental period. For example, Deuteronomy is the farewell discourse of Moses. The less familiar *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* is also in the form of farewell discourses.

In these chapters of the Fourth Gospel, there are many, as might be expected, allusions to Deuteronomy. This is one way in which the Evangelist sees Moses

as a helpful way of understanding the significance of Jesus.

The common situation in farewell speeches is that of a prominent person (leader, hero, teacher) who gathers his followers (children, disciples, or the entire nation of Israel) just before his death or departure to give them final instructions which will help them after he is gone.

The "tone" is governed by these opening verses:

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him right away. Children, I am still with you for a little while. You will look for me, and just as I said to the Jewish religious leaders, 'Where I am going you cannot come,' now I tell you the same. (John 13:31-33)

## III. THE BOOK OF GLORY (13:1-20:31)

- A. *The Last Discourse* (13:1-17:26)
  - i. Making God known: the foot-wash and the morsel (13:1-38)
  - ii. Departure (14:1-31)
  - iii. To abide, to love, and to be hated (15:1-16:3)
  - iv. Departure (16:4-33)
  - v. Making God known: Jesus' final prayer (17:1-26)

## OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

In the Old Testament, God's Holy Spirit is present in creation, inspires prophets and imparts the gift of Wisdom. This Gospel adds to these functions the roles of "advocacy" (*paraclete* = advocate) and "reminding."

## NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

There are usually three levels when

## Thought for the day

"The greatest things you'll ever learn is to love and be loved in return." The following words, attributed to Pedro Arrupe SJ, may up lift and inspire.

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love, in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evening, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything."

## Prayer

Jesus, you love the human race: let your love of us strike so deep a chord within us that our lives may resound to the music of that grace, drawing others to the leap of faith and to join in the dance of joy.

reading the Fourth Gospel. (a) A "natural" level, often involving misunderstanding. (b) A higher level of perception, with a realisation that Jesus' words have a spiritual and existential reference. (c) A third level, which invites reading across the Gospel. It is also characteristic of the Fourth Gospel that the text is highly self-referential. A look at these cross-references is a commentary in itself.

## *The love commandment*

"I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35) *This commandment comes up again and again. You may like to look up these further references: John 13:34; 14:15, 21, 23-24, 28, 31; 15:9, 12, 17; 17:23-24, 26.*

## *Keep my word*

John 8:31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disc-

ciples; 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. 51 Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.” 55

though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word.

**12:47** I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. **15:7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. **17:6** “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

*The word that you hear is not mine*

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father residing in me performs his miraculous deeds. (John 14:10) Cf. 5:19-23, 30; 6:38; 7:16-18; 8:15-16, 28-29, 38; 12:49; 15:15; 17:7-8:

*The advocate will teach you everything*

Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you. (John 14:16–17) Cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-15.

## ST PAUL

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5:1–5)

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue

A new commandment just as In this way all shall realise	I give to you, I have loved you,	that you love one another, so that you also love one another that you are my disciples insofar as you have love for one another.
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what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Romans 14:17–19)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4–7)

## BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 21** In the Fourth Gospel, there are no ethical instructions with the signal exception of the love commandment. This opening verse explores the importance of love at the centre (see box above, showing the equating of discipleship with love). The disclosure of immanence there should be read in conjunction with 14:2-3, which indicates a transcendent sphere: *There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too.* (John 14:2–3)

**Verse 22** The blunt interruption is one of a series in the Farewell Discourse. The question is based on a previous verse: *In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too.* (John 14:19) It shows a certain level of misunderstanding because Judas is looking back to the past rather than forward to the future.

**Verse 23** The Jesus of John’s Gospel often responds obliquely. Home = “abode”, corresponding to the verb “abide”. In the words of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is outlining the mutuality of indwelling which will mark the post-Resurrection period. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15) If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. (John 15:10)

**Verse 24** The mutuality is available only for those who are obedient to the love commandment. Jesus mediates the word of the Father: “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not

my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 5:30) Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. (John 7:28)

**Verse 25** The tone is that of “farewell discourse” and the time is short. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. (John 14:19) Cf. 16:16-19.

**Verse 26** Remembering and understanding later are part of the theology of the Fourth Gospel. Only in the light of the resurrection and by the power of the Holy Spirit (unique here in the NT) can true insight into Jesus’ ministry and identity be reached. See for example 2:22 or 20:9. On the Holy Spirit, see 14:15-17.

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

**1.** Jesus seeks to reassure his followers in the face of his imminent death. Although he will be leaving them he promises them the gift of the Spirit. How have you been aware of the gift of the Spirit of God in your life?

**2.** Remember times of separation from a loved one through change of residence or other circumstances. How has the love between you been a support after the separation?

**3.** To his followers Jesus, promises ‘we will come and make our home with them’. Our God is not a distant God but one who lives in us. What has helped you to be aware of the closeness of God to you?

## PRAYER

Faithful God who loves us in Christ Jesus, send your Spirit of truth to dwell within us, that we may always reject what is false, live by the commands of Christ, and be true to the love you have shown us.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.