

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

To keep the Lord's commandments is the natural response of one who loves Jesus.

If you love Jesus, then you do what He says.

You keep the Law, you treasure it, you delight in it, just as it says in the Psalms,
**"But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on His law he meditates day and night"** (Ps 1:2).

When the Lord says in the 9th commandment,

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house" (Exod 20:17),
you rejoice in this!

And out of **"fear and love for God"**

you **"help and be of service to [your neighbor] in keeping [that house]."**¹

So you gladly send whatever donations you're able to those in Joplin,
whose houses are in need of repair.

In the same way, when the Lord says in the 3rd commandment,

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exod 20:8),
you say, "well, of course!"

And again, out of **"fear and love for God"**

you don't **"despise preaching or God's Word, but hold it sacred and gladly
hear and learn it!"**²

You look forward to coming to church and Bible study,
and perk up when the sermon gets started!

If you love God, then you gladly listen and obey and do everything He commands you and more!

You don't think twice about it;

you don't struggle to find good works to do;

and you don't complain when the Lord asks something from you.

You witness freely;

You give 10% of your income *before* taxes and still put in more when needed!

Again, Jesus says in today's Gospel,

"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15).

But if we don't keep His commandments...

if we refuse to pray because we're lazy,

or if we lust after someone else's spouse,

or if we get our money in a dishonest way,

or if we hurt someone's reputation at school,

then what?

¹ Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, 9th Commandment.

² Luther, *SC*, 3rd Commandment.

If we don't keep the law, if we don't delight in our Lord's word and direction,
then that means we must not love Jesus.

And if we don't love Jesus, then who do we love?

Well, to find out who you love, simply look at what commandments you keep—
we tend to do what seems right *to us*.
Whatever feels good *to us* at the moment—
whatever is easy and enjoyable and what *we* can make sense of.

The commandments we keep are our own.

We justify everything we do, good or bad, based on what *we* like, how *we* feel, and what will
best serve *us*.

By doing this, we find that we love ourselves.

We fear losing our life, our money, our possessions, our house.
We love feeling good, acting in the moment, and giving into what pleases us.
And on top of it all, we trust ourselves to keep it all up.

And so we make ourselves a god; we become our own idol.
As Luther says in his large catechism,
“Whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god.”³

But what promise is there for having the wrong god, an idol god?

In today's Gospel Jesus considers those not having God with them as “**orphans**” (Jn 14:18).
To have the wrong god is to be left as an orphan,
to be lonely, alone, without any protection or companionship,
to be scared and *defenseless*.

There's nothing safe about being an orphan,
nothing to delight in,
nothing comforting or relaxing.

As an orphan, you must fight:
for your life,
for your food,
for your respect
and your dignity.

And when you die, that's all you are: an orphan,
with no family and nothing to show but what *your* hands have done for you.

³ Luther, *LC I.1*.

But our Lord doesn't want any of that!

No, in today's reading He pleads for the orphans!

He says, "**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you**" (Jn 14:18).

Everything in the Christian life hinges on our Lord *coming to us*!

He first came as the man, Jesus, from Nazareth, the baby born of Mary, the Christ-child.

This Jesus then came to the Jordan, entering the waters of baptism: both yours and mine!

And from there He came to the lepers, the poor, the sick, and the lame,
the demon-possessed, the prostitutes, the tax-collectors and the sinners!

He came as one who kept the Father's commandments,

who delighted in loving God and neighbor perfectly,

who kept the law by "**fear, love, and trust in God above all things!**"

This Jesus then came to the cross prepared for the criminal,

for the one who *didn't* keep the law,

who *didn't* fear, love, and trust in God above all things—

He came to the cross *for you*!

It's by His *coming to us* in life, death, and resurrection that Jesus *came* as our *Paraclete*—

our "**Helper**" (Jn 14:16), comforter, intercessor, and advocate (1 Jn 2:1).

That's what "Paraclete" means—

one who stands up for us, defends us, and fights for us.

Jesus is our Paraclete.

He helps us in our weakness, in our fear, and in our shame.

He comforts us in our loneliness and sadness.

He defends us, speaks well of us, and stands in our place before the Heavenly Father!

He says to His Father,

"No, don't send your wrath on them,

don't stretch out your destroying hand against them,

don't give them the cross—

give it to Me."

Without Jesus as our *Paraclete*, our helper and defender,

we'd be left as orphans—crucified, condemned, and utterly destroyed orphans.

And this same Jesus, our *Paraclete*,

after His own death and resurrection,

promises "**another Paraclete**,"

another helper, comforter, defender—

even the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit will continue our defense.

He'll always speak well of us,
 always defend us against the attacks of the devil,
 always preach to us the Word of Christ and Him Crucified,
 and in so doing, always call us into His Church,
 His place where sins are forgiven,
 death is destroyed,
 and where orphans always find a home, a family, and safety.

But what is it that He defends us from?
 He defends us from the punishment of our sin.

When we love ourselves and not Jesus,
 when we do what we want and not what Christ wants,
 when we fail to keep His commands—

The Spirit calls us to repent:
 to turn from our wickedness,
 from our self-love,
 from our false gods,
 and to live!

He shows us how misguided our love has been.
 And as we see this,
 as we recognize how we've failed to love Jesus—
 the Holy Spirit speaks that word of forgiveness, of life, of salvation in Christ's work alone.

And then we rejoice.

For it's at that moment we realize we aren't orphans,
 we aren't left to ourselves—
 to fight our own fights,
 to defend our own case,
 to stand up in the judgment on our own.

We have a *Paraclete*, a helper, advocate, defender,
 who is God Himself for us.

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