# John 14 23Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

**25**‘All this I have spoken while still with you. **26**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. **27**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

**28**‘You heard me say, “I am going away and I am coming back to you.” If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. **29**I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

**Acts 16 9**During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ **10**After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**11**From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. **12**From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

**13**On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. **14**One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. **15**When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us.

**Revelation 21 10**And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God…

**22**I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **23**The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. **24**The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. **25**On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. **26**The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. **27**Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. **22** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb **2**down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. **3**No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. **4**They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5**There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

*1st May 2016* *A true disciple*  *Moulsford* ***John 14: 23 – 29 Acts 16: 7 – 15***

It’s not always easy being a Christian in today’s world. Certainly not in the middle-East or parts of Nigeria or parts of China – but even here in England, where it seems fewer and fewer believe as we do - or even share our values based on the teaching of Jesus. And sometimes we feel God is a long way away. How do we know what actions we should take in our complex and secular world ? And even when we do know what we should do, how do we find the strength to do it ?

We may envy those disciples of Jesus who had him right there with them to guide and encourage them – but of course even for them, that was for only 3 short years. In our gospel reading, Jesus is speaking to his disciples as they are beginning to realize that soon they, like us, would have to cope with Jesus no longer being with them. And maybe even more than us they must have been wondering: *How would they know what to do?* And even if they did know what they were meant to do, *how would they have the strength and courage to carry out his will?* After all, they knew how weak their faith was and how often they got it wrong and that was when Jesus was with them. It’s these questions that Jesus is addressing in our gospel reading this morning.

**1. How can we cope when Jesus is not with us?**

Jesus says: *Yes there will be a time when I’m no longer with you* – in fact ***I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.*** *i.e. you will know it’s not a mistake but all part of God’s plan because there is actually something much better than me being with you in the flesh. This much better thing is only possible if* ***I go to the Father, because* *He is much greater than I am.***Therefore you should be glad that I am going to him and will no longer be with you

**What is this much better thing?
*We will come to you and make our home with you…***Isn’t that amazing?! It’s actually much better than Jesus being close to us in the flesh as he was with the disciples, for it means **wherever we go**, Jesus is there – he and the Father are in us – by the Spirit. The trouble is that often it is like we have locked them in the attic, we have shut God away into a small corner of our lives marked *Religion* or *Church.*We need to learn to unlock the door and let them into every area of our lives. And Jesus says if we do that, then **we *will* know what to do**.
*The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*

**Does this mean we just have to do as the Spirit leads?**Well if we were perfectly attuned to the Holy Spirit that might be fine, but we are human and we often get crossed lines *(like an agent in enemy territory trying to get instructions over the radio from HQ at home – a lot of interference and maybe other stations trying to make life difficult.)* Our own pride and appetites have a very loud voice.
The world around us has a very loud voice and sometimes even the prince of this world can be very persuasive  *e.g. Peter telling Jesus he mustn’t go to the cross*)

**How can we be sure we are on the right lines?**

Jesus promised the apostles that HS would lead them into all truth. We have their writings, including Paul – we can trust that they heard correctly.

So the more familiar we are with Scripture the more we shall have the mind of Christ. The more we shall be able to understand what Jesus wants us to do

*viz Paul responding to the “man from Macedonia”*

**3. How will we have the strength or courage to do what Jesus wants us to do?**Jesus says ***anyone who loves me will obey my teaching –***
**NOT**: *“if you obey my teaching this will show that you love me”*this is a promise not an accusation: *anyone who loves me* ***will*** *obey my teaching*
Obedience, right living, flows out of our love for Jesus,
How do I become more obedient ? – *Love Jesus*
how do I become the Christian person I long to be ? *– Love Jesus*how do I stop giving in to temptation? *– Love Jesus*

Sadly, often Christians have got this completely the wrong way round: they feel they have to prove to God they love him by being more obedient (and so somehow earn God’s love). But Jesus says, if it does not *start* with love for him, we ***cannot*** keep his commandments.
It’s not just that we won’t have the strength or motivation to keep his commands. Rather, even if outwardly we appear to be keeping Jesus’s commands, but that doesn’t flow out of our love for Jesus, we won’t actually be keeping his commands at all.
Focusing on obeying commands rather than loving Jesus lead us to *becoming like the Pharisees with a rigid legalism, harsh discipline, laying terrible burdens of guilt and often rank hypocrisy as they have felt they had to cover up their failings and weaknesses.*

This is where Christians or those claiming to be Christians have so often gone wrong – and sometimes it has led to acting in a far from Christ-like way and even outright abuse.

**How do we deepen our love for Jesus?**Let’s look at those famous words of Jesus: ***27*** *Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*

**What kind of peace does the world give?**

Sometimes peace from war - *viz* us under 70 – praise God
However such peace is not guaranteed

Peace on idyllic holidays - However such peace is not permanent

Peace through drugs or alcohol - such peace is neither permanent nor real and often leads to far greater problems

**What is the peace that Jesus gives?**Paul tells us *where* Jesus made this peace: it was on the cross. So this peace is primarily about reconciliation – with God:
Jesus bringing you back into a close loving relationship with God, where you **know** you are **deeply beloved**. God loves you so much that He gave his only begotten Son - that which was most precious to him - to die on the cross that you might be his children and He might make his home in you.

If you want to know just how much God loves you, look into the face of Christ on the cross - into the face of Jesus who says *I will never leave you - You will not be on your own.* We have God the Father and Jesus the Son making their home in us. They are with us *(Holly after Elias)*

The more we realise just how much and how deeply Jesus loves us, the more we will love Jesus in return, and we will find it becomes our deepest desire to do the things he wants us to do, to obey his teaching. Not to earn his love, but because He already loves us so much.

If we live like that, we will have that peace which Jesus promises - *Stories from the Lebanon of refugees coming to discover the love of Jesus*
not only with God but with others, peace in our marriages, peace in our homes, and often, peace even in our communities
*viz street pastors*.

**PCC away day 7th May**

**Yes**

1. Andrew Petit
2. Alice Penney
3. Christopher Greenhalgh
4. Malcolm Singh
5. Richard Price

**TBD**

1. Val Gibbons
2. Michael Wolf
3. Ben Chapman
4. Joan Gander
5. Graham McClure
6. David Newbold
7. Thea Price
8. Margaret Richards

**No**
9. Rebecca Thomasson
10. Mary Ruston
11. Susie Weatherley

**Intro** During this month we are looking at the *Living Faith* priorities that Bishop John is encouraging the churches in Oxford Diocese to focus on. These are *Sustaining the sacred centre* (which we looked at two weeks ago), *Making disciples, Making a difference in the world, Creating vibrant Christian communites, and Shaping confident collaborative leadership.* Today we are thinking about the 2nd of these priorities, *Making disciples:*  the *Living faith* literature says: *This is about the core task left to us by Jesus. viz* what is known as the great commission of the risen Lord Jesus right at the end of Matthew’s gospel in *Ch. 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you –* which of course includes the command to make disciples. If you are like me, you might well feel in this present age and in our present culture, this is a daunting task…

The two readings we have just heard, which are set for today very conveniently help us to answer two important questions:
1. *What is a disciple ? What does it mean to be a disciple ?*2. *How do we go about making others disciples ?*

Let’s begin by looking at the gospel passage: *John 14:23 – 29 on p.1082-3*The first thing this passage tells us is that **a disciple is someone who loves Jesus**. *23Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.* A disciple is not just a convert, or someone who goes to church, or ticks Christian in the census, but first and foremost someone who loves Jesus, who delights in Jesus, who has a personal relationship with Jesus.

This means that if we are to make disciples, we need to *be* disciples i.e. people who love Jesus. There is no way we can encourage someone else to love Jesus, if we don’t really love him ourselves. Are you excited by Jesus, do you delight in Jesus, are you filled with joy and hope at the thought of Jesus, do you like to spend time with Jesus ? If the answer to those questions is *No* then not only will you find it almost impossible to help others to love Jesus, but you need to ask yourself to what extent are *you* a disciple of Jesus.

Do you remember how in *Revelation 2* Jesus speaks to the big and lively church in Ephesus and says: *Yet I hold this against you: you have left your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen and repent – have a change of heart.*

Sometimes if we have been Christians for a very long time, we forget the most important thing of all: *It is about loving Jesus.*This leads us to the 2nd thing I want to say:

**A disciple is someone whose heart welcomes Jesus…& the Father** *My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.* If you feel you have lost your first love, then don’t despair but open your heart to Jesus and the Father. They are already there, by the Holy Spirit, they have made their home in us, but sometimes it is like we have locked them in the attic, we have shut them away into a small corner of our lives marked *Religion* or *Church.*

How amazing, how wonderful is it the God of all creation, that Jesus the most wonderful, loving, forgiving, person who has ever walked this earth want to live in me ! to enjoy the most intimate relationship with me. Sometimes we lose sight of that. If so then once again – maybe for the first time - open up your heart to Jesus.

**Thirdly, a disciple is someone who wants to obey Jesus***If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching* Loving Jesus is not just a warm fuzzy feeling about Jesus, it is wanting to please him and believing with all my heart that Jesus and the Father, both know what’s best for me and want the best for me.

Back in the OT the Lord said this to *Ezekiel:****36 26****I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.****27****And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws* No longer will God’s people being trying to keep God’s commandments out of a sense of duty or because they were frightened of God, but because God’s own Spirit will be in them, moving them, giving them the desire to follow his way.

**How do we know what Jesus wants us to do ?**First and foremost by looking at his word. J says to the disciples: *the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* This is primarily addressed to the disciples who were there on that night *He will remind you of everything I have said to you* This is why we can trust and rely on the gospel accounts of all that Jesus said and did, because J promised he would send the Holy Spirit to remind them, to enable them to set it down accurately.
So if we want to know what Jesus commands, we need to read his Word, and then that same Spirit who reminded the disciples, who was in Jesus when He first said all those wonderful things, will remind us and help us to understand and apply those teachings to our present situation.

**Finally, a disciple is someone who knows the peace of Jesus***27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.* When Jesus spoke these words he was speaking in a country that was part of the *Pax Romana –* the peace of the Roman empire – it was an outward peace, a freedom from war, and a peace enforced by the might of the Roman army – sometimes by violence. You could say everyone in this country enjoys that kind of peace, but many are far from peaceful in their hearts: worried about jobs, pensions, what government we are going to have, worried about family or health or the direction of their lives.
Jesus promises us a deep peace that does not depend on our circumstances, a peace that sustained those first disciples even through the deepest suffering and can sustain us as well. It is a peace that comes from knowing that we are deeply loved, valued, forgiven – by God himself, and assured of a wonderful eternal destiny.

Now I believe that if we can truly grasp what it means to be a disciple we will long to make others disciples – not just because Jesus commanded that we should, but we will long that others should discover this wonderful relationship with Jesus and the deep peace that it brings.

But how do we do it ? Where do we start ? Just very quickly some lessons from the story in Acts 16 on *p. 1111 - 2*

**1. they were sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit**prevented by the Spirit from going both through the centre of Turkey or north to Bithynia and ended up in Troas in the North west (top left hand) corner of Turkey. Paul has this vision of the Macedonian man begging him to come over to Europe and so they go to Philippi. Ask God day by day to lead you to the right place and the right people

**2. they go to a fruitful place.** It seems there was no synagogue in Philippi so they go to the place of prayer down by the river. They realised this would be a good place to find people who were spiritually hungry. We will not find people to make disciples if we only spend our time with fellow Christians. Does your lifestyle include decent time with those who are not yet Christians ? It may be down the pub or a club or hobby or a community association

**3. they found people in whom God was already at work***they went to a place of prayer. Lydia was already a worshipper of God.* God had already started working in her life. *Living Faith re making disciples:*

*It usually takes the form of accompanying people on a journey to faith and then encouraging them to follow Christ in everyday life.*This is again a matter of being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Being aware of the people in whom He is already at work.

**4. Relying on God and not on our own ability***The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.* I am sure that Paul was a very gifted speaker, but often people did not respond at all. It was the Lord who opened Lydia’s heart. The wonderful thing is He opens people’s hearts even when we are terrible speakers and get muddled or don’t know the answers. God is the one who is at work

**5. Be willing at the right time to speak***The Lord opened Lydia’s heart - yes, but it was to respond to Paul's message.* It seems this was the message Lydia was just waiting to hear and like Paul we need to be willing to speak

**6. Finally *making disciples* is not just about bringing someone to faith, but continuing to accompany them on their journey***"If you consider me a believer in the Lord," Lydia said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.* So Paul goes and stays in Lydia’s home and no doubt continues to nurture her in her new found faith

So we are called not just by Bishop John with *Living Faith,* but by Jesus himself to go and make disciples. It is a challenging calling, but it is also a wonderful calling – there is nothing more exciting, more heart-warming than seeing someone come to faith and then grow in that faith.

But we cannot make disciples unless we are *being* disciples: loving Jesus, opening up our hearts to his Holy Spirit, seeking to understand and obey his will and purpose for us and discovering his deep peace in our lives.

Maybe you feel you need to renew your commitment as a disciple of Jesus or to rediscover that first love – then please come forward for prayer ministry at the end of this service.