Pastor Sue has already announced that this is the 6th Sunday of the Easter Season. This is a time for the Church to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus; “The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. Therefore, we are focusing on what it means to have a Savior, as the risen Jesus continues explains to his followers why he had to die and rise to life again.

This Thursday will mark 40 days since Resurrection Sunday. On the Church’s calendar, it is the Ascension of our Lord. And just ten days after that we will remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday.

Today, Jesus is addressing the shift from focusing on him being our Savior to him being our Lord. And the everyday relationship Christians live out, while being his presence in the world today.

Keeping this in mind I would like to turn to the first verse of today’s Gospel reading. John 14:15 reads: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

It would be easy to stop here and assume that we know exactly what commandments Jesus is talking about. Those Ten Commandments that are found on wall hangings, and plates, and pot holders etc. The Ten Commandments that many of us were asked to memorize in our youth. The Ten that were first given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. However, in doing that we would be making a mistake. Whenever Jesus refers to those rules and regulations of the Old Testament he speaks of the “law”. Here he says: “my commandments”. Here he is referring to directives he, himself, has given his disciples.

To find specific commands of Jesus we have to search the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; looking for clear statements or directives. Statements that the Advocate (the Spirit of Truth) brought to mind for these Gospel writers.

The first such directive, found in all the Gospels, is only two words: “Follow me”! This command, to be a follower, is new every day. This challenges us to be constantly listening to Jesus’ words and watching Jesus’ actions. All in order for us to pattern our lives after his. It is not that Jesus was taking his disciples to a certain destination, when he says “follow me”. Instead, he leads them to where he teaches them the ways of showing grace, mercy and love. To where he models the godly life for them.

Some of those teachings were in the form of a command. “Love your enemies”. “Take heart, do not be afraid”. “Do good to those who hate you”. “Love one another as I have loved you…”. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”.

And, Jesus’ last word to them: “Go, and make disciples…”.

You will note that these are direct and simple commandments. Although there are many other things that Jesus taught his followers, using parables, and images, and life situations. These statements cannot be seen as anything but commands.

Although, they may be clear, these commands are not easy to fulfill. In the first place, when push comes to shove, our sinful nature is to do whatever is in our own personal interest; before meeting the needs of anyone else. In the second place, Jesus’ voice is not the only voice we hear. Jesus’ voice is not the only voice asking us to trust and follow. And Jesus’ voice is not the only voice offering promises of blessings.

Without naming names, I can refer to sources that demand our attention, and attempt to direct our words and our deeds. Traditions, ideologies, politics, schools of philosophy and even theology, all call us to follow their lead; or to be loyal to their ways. And all promise that they have our best interest in mind; playing to our human nature to serve self, first. All would offer cover for our failures and mistakes. All would offer rationale for the hurt we have caused.

In this Season of the Resurrection, we are reminded that the truth can set us free. We are called to believe in God’s grace and mercy; and in the sacrifice of Jesus, as the reason that our sins need not be denied or covered up, but are, in reality, forgiven.

This is a time to allow the Holy Spirt of Truth to lead us in the way of peace. A time to allow the Spirit to bring to mind all that Jesus said and did. What will be revealed is how Jesus lived a life that expressed divine love. A life that placed the best interest of others first. A life of unconditional service and devotion.

Today we face the challenge to live in troubling times without fear. The only way we will be able to do that is if the Spirit replaces our fear with Faith! We need to listen to Jesus’ command; “Do not let our hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid”.

Only the love of Jesus can lead us beyond our fear, to living the life God has prepared for us. Fear would have us flee the scene (or) fight for our lives; but faith, supplied by the Spirit of Truth, will allow us to live actively sharing the grace and mercy of God. As we live the life of a disciple, as we share the love of God, (even with those who would make themselves our enemy), doors will open for the Spirit to make new disciples.

Let there never be any doubt that we love Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

Let us follow his lead in gracious, merciful and loving words and actions.

Amen!