

Devotion: May 13, 2020 at 12:29:44 PM EDT

John 14:15-21

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

15 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

18 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

Debbie said to me the other day: “Hey, it’s nice out, wanna go outside?”

“Outside?” I said, do I want to go outside?

If I had a tail, I would be wagging it, I would run around in circles and wait for the door to open. Because being cooped up in this pandemic and with the weather feeling more like Advent than Easter, going outside is a real treat.

“Wanna go outside Jack, huh do you, do you wanna go outside boy?” Where’s my leash?

But, that’s just me on Coronabrain.

You see, dogs during this outbreak must be feeling special. The owners always are at home, taking more walks, paying extra attention. Dogs don’t care if you’re in sweats or pajamas all day. They don’t mind if your hair hasn’t been cut for 3 months. They don’t notice your grey roots, the faraway look in your eye, or that you carry on a full conversation with them.

They’re just dogs.

So, if we were to have the attitude of dogs in our churches and communities, what could that look like?

To answer these questions, let us explore the fundamental nature of dogness, or doghood.

Let me offer you 10 dog-truths that will help us grab hold of them like a dog grabs on to a bone:

1st. Greet loved ones with wagging tail. Nothing is more important than feeling loved, and there's no creature on the planet that I know of that does it better than a dog. The wagging tail tells us that this is where we belong: This is our home, where we live, where we're safe and where we're loved. We are not a stranger in our home.

2nd. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. You know how dogs eat: slobber flying everywhere, and licking the dish clean until every last scent of gravy is gone. Dogs know that eating is a celebration of life. Breaking bread together is holy. To nourish the body is not a chore, but a sacrament. When we break bread together, even if it's on -line, barriers are broken down, friendships renewed and strengthened. So, eat with gusto. Enjoy all the flavors and spices of creation.

3rd. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree. Relax, slow down and enjoy. Give yourself a time out. Opt out, unplug, and get lazy.

4th. Run, romp and play daily. Physical exercise is as important for the soul as it is for the body. Especially now. No disciple of Christ can be as faithful and effective when the body is run down and health is unnecessarily poor. When we learn how to play and stretch and get in some exercise we'll feel better from the inside out.

5th. Be loyal. Loyalty is a good thing, and if your dog is nothing else, he is loyal to fault. Loyalty has fallen on hard times. Loyalty is a critical element of discipleship, for it speaks to our relationship with others: our spouse, our vocation, our community and our friends.

6th. When you're happy, dance around and wag your tail. Thankfulness and celebration are powerful dynamics for successful and healthy living. Gratitude is a gift we give ourselves that enables us to affirm the essential goodness of life. Even when hard times strike, gratitude helps us maintain our perspective and carries us through the low moments of life.

7th. If someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle gently. We all have bad days. That's why we need encouragement and affirmation. When we are depressed, we know that it takes only a quiet word, a gentle touch to bring us around. A dog has this peculiar instinct that tells it when to be dancing and jumping around and when to just be there beside you. Words are not always needed, or even helpful, to convey empathy. A gentle nuzzle will sometimes do.

8th. No matter how harshly you're scolded, don't pout - run back and make friends. Carrying grudges makes life a drudgery. Make friends and keep them. Overlook faults and assume the best. Don't keep a scorecard of rights and wrongs. Don't take offense.

9th. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do. We do not need to injure others by what we say or do. We can be strong with love; firm with kindness.

10th. Bark with your buddies. Barking is an act of commonality. Barking says we belong in this together. We are one.

In the three years the disciples traveled with Jesus, they had incredible experiences together and learned a lot. They had learned something about love, about faith, about affirmation, about friendship, about ministry, about eating together, about acceptance, about patience and humility.

Now, as is states in our Gospel, as Jesus prepares to leave them, he reminds them of what is truly important. He places value on obedience, and he reminds them of the central role the Holy Spirit will play in their lives after he is physically gone from their presence.

So, it's not that we should think of ourselves as Dogs to God as a Master. But God put dogs on earth to remind us of some important truths, for on one level dogs seem to do better at displaying human traits than humans. And much more Christlike. Think about it. Consistently more humble, more loving, more grateful, more joyful, more kindhearted, and so on. Which should compel us to vow - if not to bow wow: I will never let my dog be a better Christian than myself.

Wait, is that a squirrel?

Let us pray;

Help, Lord, help me.

I need a little bit more of your presence right now.

I need some help, a nudge.

I'm kinda tired, worn down, too much stuck in my routines.

Much of my life is ordinary and uninspired.

I need to feel your love and power and enthusiasm,

I need rebirth, a burst of your glory and a reminder again of the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

How about right now?

I guess I could wait longer if that is your will.

But sooner would be better than later!

So, Lord, in my ordinary, everyday living,

Come to me.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Amen. -Wesley Taylor

Shalom

Pastor Jack