

## NO MORE ORPHANS

(John 14:15-21)

Intro: In St. Louis.

- Largest Lutheran agency.
  - #Lutheran Family and Children's Services.
    - \*Got its start operating an orphanage.
      - +Although the orphanage is now long gone.

When I moved to Tulsa.

- Bishop Floyd ask me if I would be willing to serve on a task force.
  - #To resurrect Lutheran Social Services in:
    - \*Kansas.
    - \*Oklahoma.
  - #What I learned.
    - \*LSS of Kansas-Oklahoma.
      - +Got its start operating orphanages.
        - =Although the orphanages are now long gone.

There are no more orphanages.

- At least not that I know about.

But that doesn't mean there are no more orphans.

- We just don't call them that.
  - #Foster children.
    - \*More modern terminology.

In our Gospel lesson.

- Jesus is talking about creating a situation where there will be:
  - #Not only no more orphanages.
  - #No more orphans.

### I. No More Orphans

#### A. Jesus' Disciples Were Not Left Orphaned.

1. Gospel lesson to today.
  - a. John 14:15-21.
  - b. Follows immediately on last Sunday's Gospel.
    - John 14:1-14.

2. Last Sunday's Gospel.
  - a. Part of Jesus' "Farewell Discourse" in the Gospel of John.
    - John 13:33-17:26.
  - b. Jesus told his disciples:
    - “In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.”
    - #John 14:2.
    - “I go and prepare a place for you.”
    - #John 14:3.
3. Now Jesus tells his disciples:
  - a. “I will not leave you orphaned.”
    - John 14:18.
  - b. “I am coming to you.”
    - John 14:18.
  - c. “I will ask the Father,”
    - “And he will give you another Advocate,”
    - “To be with you forever.”
    - #John 14:16.
4. How can Jesus say?
  - a. In one breath:
    - “I am leaving.”
  - b. And 10-12 breaths later:
    - “I am coming to you.”
  - c. Jesus' departure.
    - His glorification.
    - #John 12:23,28.
    - #John 13:31-32.
    - #John 17:1.
    - Is about to take place in:
      - #Suffering.
      - #Crucifixion.
      - #Resurrection.
      - #Ascension.
  - d. His return.
    - Not simply at the end of time.
    - But:
      - #In his resurrection.
      - #In the gift of the Holy Spirit.
5. Holy Spirit.
  - a. Continuing:
    - Presence.
    - Power.
    - #Of the resurrected Jesus.
    - #In the world.
  - b. Assurance that Jesus' disciples will not be left orphaned.

B. We Are Not Left Orphaned.

1. In the waters of Holy Baptism.
  - a. We receive the Holy Spirit.
  - b. We are made members of:
    - Body of Christ.
    - Family of God.
    - #See also Acts 17: 28-29.
  - c. We have the continuing.
    - Presence.
    - Power.
    - #Of Jesus.
    - \*In our hearts.
2. Holy Spirit is called another paracletos (Paraclete).
  - a. Who was the first paracletos?
    - Jesus.
    - #1 John 2: 1.
  - b. What is a paracletos?
    - Advocate.
    - Counselor.
    - Helper.
    - #I have been asked to be an advocate.
    - \*ELCA Churchwide Assembly.
      - +Last summer.
      - +Adopted a Book of Faith Initiative.
      - =Encourages:
        - Bible reading.
        - Bible study.
        - Bible living.
      - #Among all members of the ELCA.
    - \*Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.
      - +At our assembly a week ago.
      - +Resolved to become a Book of Faith Synod.
      - +I have been asked:
        - =By Bishop Floyd.
        - =To be the Book of Faith Advocate.
          - For our synod.
        - =To encourage:
          - Not only our congregation.
          - But every congregation of our synod.
          - #To become a Book of Faith congregation.
          - #You'll be hearing more about that.
          - \*In the weeks and months to come.
      - =I have accepted that appointment.

#Holy Spirit is the resurrected Jesus':

\*Advocate.

\*Counselor.

\*Helper.

+To encourage us in:

=Faithful living.

=Faithful loving.

-So that there might be no more orphans.

## II. No More Orphans Means That There Is Plenty Of Love To Go Around.

### A. I Have Been On The Receiving End Of That Love, As Have You.

#### 1. God's love.

a. Embodied in the love of other people.

b. Love:

-Inspired by.

-Guided by.

-Empowered by.

#Holy Spirit.

#### 2. One of the people who channeled God's love to me was Florence Waterson.

a. When I was 10-11 years old.

-My mom became deathly ill.

#She was hospitalized.

\*At St. Michael's Hospital.

+In Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

#But the doctors there.

\*Could not figure out what was wrong with my mom.

#They thought she might have hepatitis.

\*She was put in isolation.

\*I wasn't allowed to visit.

#But it wasn't hepatitis.

-My mom almost died.

#Before she was med-evaced.

\*To the University of Wisconsin Hospital.

+In Madison.

#Where she was finally diagnosed with lupus.

\*Disease in which she became allergic.

+To her own antibodies.

#There was no cure.

\*But she was treated.

+She got well enough.

=Eventually to come home.

\*She lived with lupus the rest of her life.

+Another 26 years.

- b. My brother, sister, and I were quasi-orphaned.
  - My mom was hospitalized for months.
  - My dad was busy.
    - #Serving as a parish pastor.
    - #Running back and forth to Madison.
    - \*To be with my mom.
- c. But my dad gave us a helper.
  - Mrs. Waterson.
    - #Grandmother.
    - #Member of our congregation.
  - She was more than a baby sitter.
    - #She cooked for us.
    - #She washed for us.
    - #She cleaned for us.
    - #She even spent the night with us.
- d. Sometimes we weren't very helpful to her.
  - I still remember a "talking to" we kids got from our school principal.
    - #Because we had given Mrs. Waterson a hard time.
- e. But she:
  - Loved us anyway.
  - Helped us anyway.
    - #I think I told you the story of the kite string.
      - \*500'.
      - \*1000'.
      - +Kite string.
        - =I managed to get all tangled up.
      - \*Mrs. Waterson helped me get it untangled.
        - +So that the next day.
          - =At the Cub Scout Kite-o-Ree.
          - =I won the prize.
            - For the highest flying kite.
            - =I won.
              - With a lot of help from my helper.
      - #She took us shopping.
        - \*I still remember a new yellow jacket.
          - +I got that spring.
        - \*Courtesy of Mrs. Waterson.
      - #This morning I brought along one of the bears.
        - \*From my teddy bear collection.
          - +I call him Homer.
            - =Because he was homemade.
          - +Made by Mrs. Waterson.
            - =Gift from my helper.
  - f. I have been on the receiving end of God's love—no more orphans.

B. I Have Been On The Giving End Of That Love, As Have You.

1. Sometimes it's easy.
  - a. Years later.
    - When I was a little more mature.
    - When Mrs. Waterson's husband was in failing health.
  - b. I would:
    - Ride my bicycle down to her house.
    - Help her with the yard work.
  - c. We would laugh.
    - As we retold the story.
      - #About that ball of string.
      - #Mess I had made.
  - d. It was easy to love her.
    - She had been so loving.
      - #To me.
      - #To my family.
2. Sometimes it's not so easy.
  - a. How do we love?
    - Those who haven't loved us.
    - Those who are strangers to us.
    - Those who don't speak our language.
  - b. When I was at the old St. Louis County Jail.
    - I had my Bible classes on Tuesday evenings.
      - #We had no program space.
        - \*For Bible study.
        - \*For worship services.
      - #So I would use:
        - \*Social worker's office.
        - \*Laundry room.
        - \*Sally port.
        - \*Visiting room.
      - #On Tuesday evenings.
        - \*Social workers were gone.
        - \*Attorneys seldom appeared after 5:00.
        - \*There was no visiting that evening.
      - #I would have 2 or 3 Bible classes.
        - \*To give everyone a chance to come.
          - +Who wanted to come.
      - One Tuesday evening in July.
        - #I had finished my classes.
          - \*It was probably about 9:00.
          - \*I was ready to go home.

#But before I got out of the jail.

\*I happened to glance into one of the intake holding cells.

+It had a steel door.

=With a large window in the door.

\*Through the window.

+I could see a woman.

=Visibly upset.

-Her body shaking.

=Crying.

\*Correctional officer at the bonding window said to me:

+“Rev. Dake.”

+“Would you have time to talk with this woman?”

+“She seems to be upset.”

\*I said:

+“Sure, I’ll talk with her.”

\*Correctional officer said:

+“Good!”

+“Because she doesn’t speak any English.”

+“And none of us speaks Spanish.”

\*Now it would take about 30 seconds.

+To tell you how much Spanish I know.

=I can count to ten.

=Por favor.

-Please.

=Gracias.

-Thank you.

=Cerveza.

-Beer.

=Donde esta la Playa?

-Where is the beach?

+That’s my Spanish.

#How was I supposed to help this woman?

\*I could have said:

+“It’s late.”

+“I’m tired.”

+“I don’t know the language.”

+“It’s not my problem.”

\*Instead I said:

+“Yes.”

+“I’ll talk with her.”

=But how?

- #I had a pastor friend.
  - \*Whose church was a sanctuary.
    - +For refugees fleeing persecution in El Salvador.
  - \*Who was always trying to impress us.
    - +By throwing around Spanish words.
  - \*I called him up.
    - +Asked him for his help.
  - \*He said:
    - + "I just got back from El Salvador."
    - + "I realize that my Spanish is not fluent enough."
      - = "To keep up with a conversation."
    - + "But I'll give you the names and numbers,"
      - = "Of some people who can help you better than I can."
- #I had:
  - \*Five names.
  - \*Five phone numbers.
- #I began to call.
  - \*No answer.
  - \*Busy.
  - \*No answer.
  - \*Busy.
- #I was down to the last number.
  - \*Woman answered the phone.
    - +She didn't know me.
    - +I didn't know her.
    - +It was late.
    - +I had caught her unawares.
  - \*But I finally persuaded her to help me.
    - +I told the translator.
      - =What I wanted to learn from the inmate.
    - +Then I handed over the phone.
      - =Inmate and the translator talked.
    - +Then I got the phone back.
      - = "What did she say?"
    - +Back and forth went the phone.
- #What I learned.
  - \*This woman and her husband.
    - +Were from Mexico.
    - +Were in the United States illegally.
    - +Had come to St. Louis for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fair.
    - +Had gotten busted.
      - =I think for drugs.

- \*This woman had a baby.
  - +Baby had been taken from her.
  - +She wanted to know where her baby was.
- #This woman kept pointing at her chest.
  - \*I wondered:
    - +If she has a baby.
      - =Is she breast feeding?
      - =Does she need to pump breast milk?
  - \*Back and forth went the phone.
    - +What I discovered:
      - =She was not breast feeding.
      - =She was asthmatic.
      - =She was having an asthma attack.
- Now we might say:
  - #"If only she hadn't been in the country illegally,"
  - #"If only she and her husband hadn't gotten arrested,"
  - \*"She wouldn't have had her baby taken away."
  - \*"She wouldn't have been in jail."
  - \*"Maybe she wouldn't have had an asthma attack."
  - #All true enough.
    - \*And if "ifs" and "buts" were candy and nuts,
    - \*We'd all have a very merry Christmas.
- But the facts are:
  - #She was in the United States.
  - #She was in the St. Louis County Jail.
  - #She had had her baby taken from her.
  - #She was having an asthma attack.
- c. So how do we, as the people of God, embody God's love for people like her?
  - For those we don't know.
  - For those who are strangers to us.
  - For those who don't speak our language.
- d. What if?
  - Mother was Mary.
    - #Baby was Jesus.
  - You were in jail.
    - #You didn't know where your baby was.
  - You were having a medical emergency.
    - #No one spoke your language.
    - #No one was correctly interpreting your charades.
- e. How do we embody God's love?
  - How would you like to be treated?
  - I immediately got the jail nurse.
    - #Who gave her a breathing treatment.

- It was the next day.
  - #But we found the baby.
    - \*Mom and dad and baby were reunited.
      - +Before they were deported.
- Before I went home that night.
  - #I went back into main confinement.
  - #I got a Spanish Bible.
    - \*When I gave her the Bible.
      - +She got a tiny, tiny smile on her face.
      - +She said:
        - = "Gracias, Pastor."

Concl: Gracias, Holy Spirit.

- Advocate.
- Counselor.
- Helper.
  - #To open our hearts to receive God's love.
  - #To open our hearts to share it.

When God's love:

- Fills our hands and our hearts with:
  - #Mercy.
  - #Forgiveness.
- Gets passed all around.
  - #There are no more orphans.

