

Pentecost C, 2010

Text: John 14:23-31

Title: Be a Keeper

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Are you a packrat? Are you a saver? Do you hold on to things for years and years and years knowing that there's always a chance that you might need them one day? Do you have boxes and boxes of sentimental items or possibly useful items that fill your basement, attic and garage?

Or do you like to throw things away, get rid of them when you're done, knowing that you can always replace them if you really need to?

Which one are you? A saver or a tosser?

I must confess that I tend to be a saver. If in doubt, I save, file, wait, make a new pile.

In our gospel lesson for today, Jesus urges us to be packrats. Jesus wants you to be a saver, a keeper. Jesus says, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word... Whoever does not love me does not keep my words." Love Jesus- keep His words; don't love Jesus- don't keep His words.

When it comes to Jesus' words, they are something to keep, to hold on to. Not to pack away and forget, but to keep and to treasure, and to have as a regular part of your life. You can never have too much of Jesus' words.

Why? Why is it so important to keep Jesus' words?

As you keep Jesus' words, Jesus Himself dwells in you. He makes His home with you. And not just Jesus, but the Father, too. They're not just Jesus' words, they are the Father's words, too, so if you have Jesus' words, you have Jesus and you have the Father.

If you throw away Jesus' words, you are throwing away Jesus himself. You are evicting Jesus and the Father from your life.

Many people have thrown away Jesus' words, discarded them like an old newspaper. It was good and interesting at the time, but has no lasting value. I can always get another if I need to.

When you stay away from the Divine Service, when you don't come for Bible Class, when you don't read God's Word as your daily devotions, you are throwing away Jesus Christ Himself. You are throwing away God the Father.

Some folks think that they'll just throw away God's Word, and come back to it if they ever need it. God's Word was useful at the time, but they've got limited space in their life, and they feel that they're doing fine without it, and so they're happy to just get rid of God's Word.

Instead, be a packrat. Keep all of God's Word that you can find. Make the most of every opportunity to hear and read God's Word. Study it, talk about it with your friends and family, use it in your prayers and your songs. Saturate your life with God's Word. In doing so, you will keep, treasure up, store up God's Word within you. Jesus will make His home with you, and God the Father, too.

You never know when you're going to need God's Word. You never know when you will go through a time in your life and need to rely on God's Word to get you through. You never know when you will meet someone who is ready to hear God's Word and use you to deliver it. You never know when all God's Word is going to be useful.

And God's Word is not just for emergencies, it guides us every day, it tells us who we are and what God has done for us. It's not just for emergencies.

And so that's why you're here, week after week, to get filled up with Jesus' words. Some may be familiar words, some may be new words. Some words you speak, some words you sing. Some words you hear, some words you join in.

The whole point of this service is to fill you full of Jesus' words, and thereby you are filled with Jesus' Himself.

When you get home today, you have a choice. You can either throw out all the words that you've heard today, and act as though you are the same person, or you can keep these words.

To keep these words means to remember them, to meditate on them, to pray them, to sing them, to speak about them with your friends and family, to put these words to work in your life.

Now today is Pentecost, and so we should probably talk a little about the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come and teach His disciples everything and that He will remind them of all Jesus' words.

That's the Holy Spirit's job, to keep you in mind of Jesus' words and bring them to life in you.

Look at what happened with the disciples on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit filled Peter and the rest of the disciples, and they proclaimed Jesus' words. Some of the words were from the mouths of the prophets, who spoke about Jesus- from Joel and from David. They proclaimed Jesus' own words about His death and His resurrection, about repentance, Baptism and forgiveness.

Even though Jesus had ascended to heaven, He was still there, speaking through the apostles, as the Holy Spirit inspired them.

Jesus' words are like no other words. You've heard speakers who were engaging and inspiring, whose words moved you deeply. You've had a teacher or mentor whose words inspired you to change your life.

But only Jesus' words are special. Jesus' words bear the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus' words make you holy. Only Jesus' words are alive.

Jesus' words bring you peace. "My peace I give to you." Jesus' words drive out fear. Jesus' words create faith and lead to salvation.

Jesus' words are precious. They are something to keep and treasure and pass on from generation to generation.

Not just to sit up on a shelf somewhere collecting dust, but to be put to good use.

The word translated here "keep" is often translated "obey". Now that's probably too much of a law word, but the point is that in keeping, treasuring, holding on to Jesus' words, there will be a change in your life.

To keep Jesus' words is not simply to remember them with your mind, but to remember them with your actions, to conform and change all of your life to fit with Jesus' words. To live a holy, obedient life, not out of fear, but out of love.

Jesus says, "If anyone loves me, He will keep my word."

We keep Jesus' words because we love Him and we want Him to make His home with us.

It's not something that we can do on our own. On our own, we want to get rid of Jesus' and His words. We want to do things our way. But it's only through the Holy Spirit, that we can love Jesus and keep His words.

Look at the change that happened to the disciples. Before they received the Holy Spirit, they were hiding in fear. They were only concerned with themselves. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, they were out in the midst of the crowds, boldly proclaiming the good news.

Through the Holy Spirit, they kept Jesus' words, they obeyed Jesus' commands, and they became witnesses to everything that Jesus had said and done.

Now you can always toss away Jesus' words. You can ignore the working of the Holy Spirit, and you can tell Jesus and God the Father that there's no room for them in your life. Or you can love Jesus, keep His word, listen to Him and let His word and His Spirit come to life in you.

On this Pentecost, don't be a tosser. Be a keeper.