

No Claim on Me John 14:23-31

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus says, at the beginning of our text, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.”*

Someone comes in to see the pastor and says, “Pastor, I think I know what you’re going to say, but just hear me out, OK?” They proceed to go on to explain a specific situation to their pastor. And then ask, “So, what do you think?”

Pastor gently asks, “So, do you want what I think? Or what God thinks? But before you answer, Jesus says in John’s Gospel, *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.*” I know that you know what the Bible says about this particular situation you are bringing to my attention, so, I am kind of curious what exactly are you coming to me for?”

“Well, Pastor, I want to know if it is acceptable or not?”

“Do you know what the Bible says about it?”

“I suppose so.”

“So, are you asking if I approve of it? Before I reply, you heard Jesus’ words that I just read from John’s Gospel?”

“Yes.”

“So, I have a question for you. Do you love Christ, and will you keep His word? Specifically then, what does God’s Word say about *this*?”

To this response, the person proceeds to get up and says, “See Pastor, I knew you wouldn’t understand. I don’t even know why I bothered coming in to talk to you.”

Calmly, the pastor encourages the person to sit down so that they can talk a bit more. They talk about God’s Law, but also about the Gospel.

This has been a problem with people since the beginning. What were the first words of Satan temptation of Eve, do you remember? He began his temptation with these words, “did God really say?” “Did God really say, ‘you shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Eve responds that God said they were not to eat of only one tree in middle the garden. Then Satan lies and tells her that if they eat, they will be like God.

Things have not changed much in all the time since then. Even Christians, trying to justify their sinfulness by raising that same age old question in many and various forms. Did God really say? Is that really in God’s Word? How can we know that is really what God wants us to believe, there could be other ideas that are just as valid, or there would not be all those other religions out there. That was only the rule for that day and time, things have changed since then. Pastor, that’s

just your interpretation. As long as they are Christians, this being nitpicky about little theological issues is just silly and petty.

Unfortunately, every single such comment is an attempt to get around what is clearly taught in God's Word. And more to the point, it is done to excuse the fact that we are not keeping that Word.

What is the most amazing, is that instead of keeping God's Word, people try to change it, dance around it, or whatever, just so they can excuse their behavior. People would rather excuse and continue in their sins, than repent and listen to Jesus' Word.

That is truly the scariest and most horrifying thing about this whole problem, for God's Word has the very best response to sinfulness. God's response to sinfulness is called the forgiveness of sins purchased by the innocent suffering and death of God's own Son in human flesh – Jesus, God's Christ.

Those who come into the offices of their pastors trying to excuse their sin, or challenge whether God's Word really says something, or making the claim that what is in Scripture is only just one interpretation, or any other such thing, are simply people trying to justify themselves before God by their own works. This is a form of works righteousness. Works righteousness is people attempting to say that they are acceptable to God just as they are, or that they make themselves acceptable to God by what they do and what they do not do.

Unfortunately the thinking that we can do this ourselves denies a very real truth, the truth that from Adam and Eve, we have all been corrupted by sin. We are all sinful by our very nature. As I like to say it, we are rotten from our core.

Too many people believe that sinfulness is simply the things we do or do not do in violation of God's Law. With this thinking, they try to find a way around their behavior. Some do this by excusing their behavior – it was not their fault, or something. The other way is to deny the validity of the supposed authority which states it is wrong – I know what I believe in my heart, that is just one interpretation, the times have changed, etc...

Unfortunately, when someone thinks of sin only as what one does or doesn't do, they miss the whole truth – that we are by nature, sinful and unclean. There is a reason that we rebel and sin against God's Law, and that is because we are sinners – we are bred and born into sin – it is part and parcel of who and what we are.

Some of you may have a portion of our text as your confirmation verse, one of my boys does; *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

If we are left with only our obedience to God's Word as to how we please God or make him angry, we would have no peace. We could never be sure if we are justified before God or not, we would regularly be terrified and anxious. There would be no comfort and our hearts would be troubled, for we would never know whether we had done enough or not.

One of Satan's biggest temptations is his first one, it has worked for countless generations just as it did in the garden, "Did God really say?" Doubt of Scripture, and therefore doubt of God creeps in. Following doubt, we are open to sin.

Unfortunately, our conscience bothers us. Once there is sin, you can either excuse it away as not your fault, or claim that somehow, God's Word does not apply, or that it does not call that action sin.

No matter which, then Satan creeps in with his second attack. Your conscience is already feeling guilty, and then Satan tells you how bad you are – that you are guilty and nothing can be done for you.

It is at this point that many try even harder to come up with the right excuse to mollify and tone down the guilt. Why do people do this rather than fall to their knees in repentance? Because people want to do it on their own!

Satan is the ruler of this world, and has no claim on Jesus. He also has no claim on you. Sin has no claim on you. Sinfulness has no claim on you. All this law talk for us is kind of scary. Who can do all that God's Law commands? Who could accomplish it and love God as God desires us to love Him – perfectly? Who can love all their neighbors as they love themselves – who can even love himself?

Along comes Jesus. Conceived by the Holy Spirit is why Jesus is born without sin. He isn't like the rest of us, for He is conceived *and* born in sinlessness. Jesus loves the Father, for He keeps the Father's Word. Jesus loves every neighbor, even those who betray Him, lie about Him, shame Him, and who crucify Him. His sinlessness is manifest in all His life, in His perfect keeping of the Father's Word.

In our text, Jesus tells His disciples that He is going away. He is going away to be crucified for your sins and mine. He is going away to die. The old evil foe will think that he's won a victory, but he has no claim on Jesus, for there is no sin in Him. Three days later Christ rises from the dead.

Dearly beloved of God, there's your answer in regard to keeping the word of Christ. Yes, it is true, you have failed! Welcome to my world! You are a sinner, just like I am! Admit it! Shout it to the mountaintops! Proclaim it for all to hear, for it is the absolute truth!

You are a sinner – redeemed, forgiven, cleansed of sin, in Christ Jesus your Lord!

It is true that you are to keep God's Word, we are to obedient to all of God's Word. There are no excuses acceptable.

You have failed and therefore deserve God's wrath and punishment. That is where Satan would like you to stop. He would have that be the last that you believe. He wants you to make excuses.

He wants you to try and talk God's Word out of the equation. He wants you to do whatever you can do to fix the problem yourself – and you are attracted to that thought.

In fact, there are false forms of Christianity – and church bodies out there – that teach exactly such things. They have watered down the Word and made salvation partly dependent upon man's works.

Will you keep Christ's Word?

Dear friends, it does not depend on you. Christ has carried your sins and fulfilled the law to grant you His sinlessness. He has called you by name and made you His own, forgiving you in the very blood which He has shed for you.

So I ask you right now, do you keep Jesus' word? And right now, I am not talking about the Law. I am talking about the Word made flesh – Christ. I am talking about the Word of Christ which is the forgiveness He would dispense to you in Word and Sacrament. In the blessed Means of Grace, Christ sinless death is delivered to you as payment for your sinfulness unto the forgiveness of sin.

Do you keep Jesus' Word – in other words, do you trust that in Christ you are forgiven?

By the water of baptism, sin and death have no claim on you.

By the absolution, guilt and Satan have no claim on you.

By Christ's precious body and His holy blood which you eat and drink, God's wrath is appeased and eternal damnation has no claim on you.

Pentecost is all about that, for it is the Spirit who comes to you and convinces your heart and mind to trust not the Law, but the Word of Christ – that you are forgiven. It is the Spirit who fills you with faith to believe that you have already won the victory over sin and death, removing the terror of the Law. It is the Spirit who moves you to boldly proclaim – Satan, sin, death, and guilt have no claim on me – I am Christ's and He is mine, now and forevermore. Amen.