



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 6

May 10, 2026

You Are Not an Orphan

John 14:15–21

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

¹⁹ "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

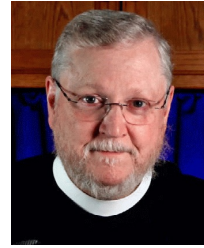
Beloved, are you lonely? Do you feel abandoned? Does it seem like the world – and everyone in it – takes you for granted? Are you pressed down on all sides, longing for an advocate, someone to stand beside you so won't be so alone? If this in any way describes you and how you're feeling, listen to Jesus' words; "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

Maybe such words seem like a mirage. After all, very soon, we will celebrate Christ's Ascension into heaven. The Christ candle will no longer be lit, signifying that the visible presence of Jesus is now hidden from our eyes. The hopeful, festive colors of the church year will change to common green. Like the farmer who has planted a seed in the ground, we will wait patiently – hoping, praying that the seed will sprout, grow, mature, and bring forth fruit. But, as we wait, we have our Lord's promise: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

This our Lord does so preciously – through Water and Word – "In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit." Washed clean and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, you are assured that Jesus is in His Father, and you are in Him, and He is in you (vs 20). What is true then of Jesus is true of you: because He lives, you live.

As God's living, adopted children, you are not left without instructions. Jesus clearly says to you, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (vs 15). Love is the heart of the new, purified relationship your heavenly Father has established with you. Because Jesus lives in you, you live for Him and for others.

As the Holy Spirit led John to write in his first Epistle: "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does



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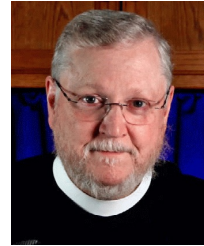
not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:19-21).

Truly, the Holy Spirit whispers in your ears: "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" – deal with it today (Eph 4:26). You're going to have some conversations today. Let your love of God be genuine. Listen to the Holy Spirit: "Don't gossip; say only what will build the other person up according to his or her need" (Eph. 4:29). When you look around today, do you feel animosity toward someone? Will you let the Spirit of truth confront you in your thoughts and melt that bitterness? Will you "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice"? Will you be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, as in Christ God forgave you"? (Eph. 4:32).

At times we have the best of intentions but the worst of actions. So the poor, the widow, the homeless, the prisoner, the hungry, the lonely, and the downtrodden go uncared-for, both physically and spiritually. We harbor sin against our parents, our siblings, our children, our coworkers, and fellow members of our congregation – our very own spiritual body. Oh, how wish we could be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other. We pray God to take away our bitterness and anger, but it remains. We struggle against our flesh and against the powers and principalities of this world. As we "fight the good fight with all our might" (LSB 664), we sense, we feel, we despair that the evil one is winning and we're losing ground and slipping, maybe into hell, for we know the sad truth. We deserve to be orphaned, left behind, and treated like an outsider and outcast. After all, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), is it not?

But dear friends in Christ, the Holy Spirit encourages us to listen. "Listen, God is calling through His Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort, and joy" (LSB 833, Refrain). "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

My friends, Jesus is your Advocate. He argues your case before the Father because He loves you. If you have disabilities, handicaps, gross outward sins, private inward sins, or are simply disinterested in Him, He does His work for you anyway, free of charge. Faith receives the benefit of His work, but He died for your sins long before you believed in Him. He began before the foundation of the world to plead to the Father on your behalf. He wants you to know that when you feel like a number, or when you are lonely, downcast, or downtrodden, you are not an orphan. When Satan tries to take you away from Him, He is there to shout back the armies of hell with the affirmation: "No, I have *not* left that one orphaned." And then He turns to you with the most tender compassion, saying, "You are my child. I have called you by name; you are mine. And I love you."



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So that you may be sure and certain that the Lord Jesus is always present as your Advocate and not your Prosecutor, He has sent you a Helper, a Comforter, who makes His presence known to you through His divinely ordained Word.

This Word was once made flesh and dwelt among us. People could see the Word face to face. The disciples sat at His feet. They had their feet washed by the Word. They saw the Word crucified and die. They witnessed the Word entombed in the belly of earth. They shouted at the top of their voices when He had risen. Finally, they saw the Word ascend to the right hand of the Father. As the Word left, He promised them, "I will not leave you as orphans." He didn't and still doesn't.

This Word still comes to you, though His presence is now hidden, concealed under bread and wine; nonetheless it is a full and loving presence. For the Word of judgment you hear in your ears this day is not a Word of prosecution. Today, the Word speaks to you a word of freedom, declaring you not guilty. To your shackles of sin and death the Word says, "Be undone!" To you the Word says, "You are not an orphan. I love you. I have come to disclose myself to you: Take, eat, this is my body. Take and drink, this is my blood."

Brothers and sisters, we know this to be true, for where the Word of God is spoken, it creates. The Word gives what He speaks. And what the Word speaks to you today is nothing less than His Divine forgiving presence for you. The Word forgives your sins – all of them. You see, every life is precious to Jesus. Why wouldn't it be? He paid the price for it. It was a bloody payment, but it is finished.

And now that the saving work is done, you are shaped and molded by the Word connected to the water "In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit." As Jesus lives, you live. You have your instructions from the lips of Jesus, "Love as you are loved by me."

With the living Word upon your forehead and your heart, your lives are a home and temple, a place of refuge and solace, for those around you who, like you, live in the midst of this threatening world and need to hear, from your lips, your hands, and your lives what Jesus' lips have to say to you and to them: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen