

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Fred Weimert "Keeping Your Word"
May 9, 2010

It was one of those perfect late spring days...
The sun was shining
and it was warm,
but not really hot yet.
and everybody that had gathered in the church
that Saturday morning
was dressed in their brightest
and best clothing...

Everything was perfect
the white runner stretched down the aisle
The mothers of the young bride and groom
both had tears in their eyes
as the young couple
who stood in front of the minister
were now turned facing each other.
Even though it wasn't really that hot
there were fine beads of perspiration
on the young man's upper lip
as he repeated
the final words of his vows...
"And thereto I give you my word."

Those words had an old time ring to them...
almost like some magical incantation...
"Thereto I give you my word."
nobody said "thereto" any more...
it was so quaint.

The young man repeated those words
then looked at the minister for a second
seemingly proud of his accomplishment...
and almost with a sense of...
"Now make her pronounce the same enchantment
and the magic spell will be cast."
"Thereto I give you my word."
*"Abracadabra
Presto-change-o"*

There was a time when
"Thereto I give you my word"
really meant something.

"My word is my bond."

That meant something...

It remains, even today,

the motto of the London Stock Exchange

"Dictum Meum Pactum"

That really sounds like an incantation...

something from *"Bedknobs and Broomsticks."*

"Dictum Meum Pactum"

"My word is my bond"

I don't know that the executives at Goldman Sachs

comprehend the significance

of those old words...

the concept of my behavior being bound

by my own words...

my vows...

my promises...

to care for the client

over personal gain.

I don't know that the author of John's Gospel

was familiar with that old saying

"My word is my bond."

But certainly John was concerned

about words being kept.

I am adding a verse to the beginning of the text.

I thought it would be nice if you knew

whose question Jesus was answering

and what the question was

that Jesus was answering...

John 14: 22-29

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him,

*"Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us,
and not to the world?"*

Jesus answered him,

*"Those who love me will **keep my word**,
and my Father will love them,
and we will come to them
and make our home with them.*

Whoever does not love me

*does not **keep my words**;*

***and the word** that you hear is not mine,
but is from the Father who sent me.*

*"I have said these things to you
while I am still with you.*

*But the Advocate,
the Holy Spirit,*

whom the Father will send in my name,

*will teach you everything,
and remind you
of all that I have said to you.*

*Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.*

*You heard me say to you,
'I am going away,
and I am coming to you.'
If you loved me,
you would rejoice that I am going to the Father,
because the Father is greater than I.*

*And now I have told you this before it occurs,
so that when it does occur,
you may believe.*

Here ends the reading.

I doubt that Jesus spoke Greek
So I doubt that Greek words meant anything to him...
And John includes such long speeches of Jesus,
that could probably hardly have been remembered verbatim
40... 50... 60... years after Jesus' death...
when these words of John's gospel
were finally written down.

What I am saying is that I don't know that these words here
are really Jesus' words...
But as I was reading these words of farewell
in the 14th chapter of John's Gospel
I became conscious of a subtle change that took place
in the middle of the chapter...
in verse 15 Jesus said...
"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
Then again in the beginning of verse 21 he says:
*They who have my commandments and keep them
are those who love me;*

But in verses 23 and 24
a subtle change occurs
Here Jesus says:
"Those who love me will keep my word,"
then
*"Whoever does not love me
does not keep my words;"*
finally:
"and the word that you hear is not mine,

but is from the Father who sent me."
 The change from saying "Keeping my commandment..."
 to "keeping my word..."

may appear to be insignificant to you
 but the Greek word for "commandment"
 is "*entolay*"
 and the Greek word for "word"
 is "*logos*"
 and while "*entolay*" is probably unknown to you
 The word "*logos*" should not be...
 you have seen it in words like:
theology, biology, physiology,
psychology,
 All those subjects with "logy"
 are the "word" on that field of study.

And really, you should know the word "logos"
 from reading John's gospel.

To John the word *logos*
 is a crucial theological concept...
 It is the theological concept that gives form
 to John's Gospel's crucial opening words:
In the beginning was the Word, (logos)
and the Word (logos) was with God,
and the Word (logos) was God.
 then in verse 1:14
"And the Word became flesh
and lived among us,"

I think it would be fair to say
 that John is telling us
 we Christians
 are not showing love
 by following commandments any more.
 We follow by allowing God's *logos*... word...
 to come and abide in us.

Jesus is answering Judas, not Iscariot's, question here,
 He is saying
"I am revealing myself to the world,
but I am doing that through you."

Years ago, I was talking with Rabbi Jacob Agus
 about why it was that Jewish people use to rely on the oral tradition.
 Meaning by that:
 Why Jewish people relied
 on their memory of scripture
 rather than writing it down?
 To which Rabbi Agus responded:
"When your Rabbi told you something..."

*you knew what he meant...
 You didn't say to yourself,
 maybe he meant this word and not that word.
 You knew what he was telling you...
 because you knew how he lived his life,
 by his life you knew what he believed."*

John is very mystical,
 and what he is talking about here,
 is this mystical relationship between Jesus, God, and us.
 It is much the same thing that Paul is trying to relate
 When he uses the phrase "*in Christ*"...
 and "*Christ in us.*"

A couple of weeks ago
 as Ruth Kulkarni was going through her Ordination Council...
 And she was being questioned...
 Or grilled, as she may have put it.
 As she was defending her thoughts...
 One of the pastors said to her...
"Your theology is very relational, isn't it?"
 I would have to say
 that I really hadn't been that cognoscente
 of the relationality
 in Ruth's theological reflection.
 But as she answered that day
 it became obvious that for Ruth
 God was all about love and relationships...
 and relationships were all about God to her.

I want to read you a couple of sentences
 from Dorothy Lee's book on John's Gospel
Flesh and Glory:
*"Images of love and friendship
 are particularly important for a symbolic reading of the Fourth Gospel.
 The Johannine symbolism
 forms a dynamic picture
 of the deep attachment
 that is the origin and goal of the incarnation."*
 and just a few sentences later:
*"Abiding in love and friendship
 becomes a key Johannine symbol
 that challenges individualism and abusive forms of relationships,
 offering a new way of being in affinity with God and others.
 It is another instance of
 the divine glory
 manifesting itself within the structures of the flesh." pg. 88*

Our Baltimore/Washington community
 and the community of Charlottesville, Virginia...
 Have been consumed this week
 by the story of a horribly abusive relationship...
 between two lacrosse players,
 a boy and girl
 from the University of Virginia.

The murder of Yeardley Love by George Huguely
 spoke volume about the absence of real love
 compassion in their relationship...
 Something was terribly wrong there...
 something crucial was missing there.

*"Those who love me will **keep my word**,*
 When we keep God's word...
 Jesus' word...
 Jesus, the Word of God, comes to abide in us.
 And we don't kick in doors...
 and we don't shake anyone,
 or bang their head repeatedly into the wall.
 The word of God
 transforms our being
 our behavior.
 We cease being abusive...
 And we seek to live in Love
 as God is love.
 So may we live. Amen.