

“Orphans Aren’t Us”
SENIOR SUNDAY
A Sixth Sunday of Easter 10:00 am
John 14:15-21; May 21, 2017
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

I. JESUS’ TOP TEN LIST TO THE DISCIPLES

Jesus was celebrating Senior Sunday one week. Do you remember that time? He was! He was just about to kick the disciples out of the nest—hand them their diplomas and give them a little nudge.

They were going to have to make it on their own. Jesus knew that. The disciples—not so much!

But first, Jesus, like a good, doting parent (which we all appreciate, right?), had some advice to give them. Oh, for about four lonnnnggg chapters in the Gospel of John.

So, Jesus created a kind of “Top Ten List of Things to Keep in Mind” for the guys and gals to follow. And here’s today’s part of that again, in case you missed it. See if you can pick out the top, #1 thing Jesus was trying to get them to remember.

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion,^[a] who will be with you forever. ¹⁷ This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can’t receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

¹⁸ **“I won’t leave you as orphans.** I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

II. TOP 7 LIST FROM CUCC TO YOU

That’s Jesus’ list. We, your church family, wanted to give you a List today, to take you on your way. “Top Ten” seemed overused, so I thought about your being the Class of 2017, but seventeen would be a long list, and we’d be here all day. But 7. Seven is a sacred number—throughout scripture, starting with the Seven Days of Creation.

So here, in no particular order, really, is a Top Seven List of things to keep in mind as you go forth. From me, from us, from some wise ones among us and in the Great Cloud of Witnesses, gone on before.

1) Remember Who you are and Whose you are!

You are Beloved. The God who created you, saves your life in sacred keeping, and guides and advocates for you in every step, and every circumstance you find yourself in.

One of our dearly-departed saints of the church, **Henri Nouwen** puts it best:

“Once I have accepted the truth that I am God’s beloved child, unconditionally loved, I can be sent into the world to speak and to act as Jesus did.

The great spiritual task facing me is to so fully trust that I belong to God that I can be free in the world - free to speak even when my words are not received; free to act even when my actions are

criticized, ridiculed, or considered useless; free also to receive love from people and to be grateful for all the signs of God's presence in the world. I am convinced that I will truly be able to love the world when I fully believe that I am loved far beyond its boundaries.

2) You will not be **orphaned**—ever!

Our scriptures tell us this without a doubt:

“You will not be left as orphans.” A song by Avalon puts it best:
(Orphans of God)

There are no strangers
There are no outcasts
There are no orphans of God

O blessed Creator, look down upon us
We are Your children, we need Your love
We bow before Your throne of mercy
And seek Your face to rise above

There are no orphans of God!

3) God is on your side.

The Advocate is coming! Sounds like a reality TV show! “The Advocate”

God is not a God of Judgment, but an all-embracing Love for all of Creation. “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

4) God is in Creation

God’s presence is not only found in church or in the scriptures, but in the air, the wind-breathing Spirit; in the kiss of the sun on your face, the rolling of the ocean. The singing of the birds, the powder of a ski slope, the thrill of sailing the rapids.

Celtic Christianity out of northern European regions, has a notion of “Two books.” Scriptures and Creation are God’s key way of revealing the Spirit to us. One is not better or more revealing than the other. Two books. Two vast and always-

expanding ways of seeing and learning about God and experiencing God’s presence in our lives.

When life is good and your soul wants to sing—bask in God’s presence in Nature. When you’re having a classic: **“Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day”**

Take your bible (remember to download your Bible App!) and go outside. Commune with the Spirit in the air, the sun, the beauty—let your Creator envelop your soul in the healing presence of creation. And breathe.

Again, a song puts it best:

Just Breathe!

Breathe, just breathe
Come and rest at my feet
And be, just be
Chaos calls but all you really need
Is to just breathe

5) Don’t let anyone look down on you because of your age. (See? I said this message was for ALL seniors! And everyone in between.) Or your size, your gender, your orientation, you

¹² Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers through your speech, behavior, love, faith, and by being sexually pure. ¹³ Until I arrive, pay attention to public reading, preaching, and teaching.

6) Find your peace. Make your peace. With life, with love, with your growing edges, and with others’ imperfections. Make peace by forgiving yourself and others; as you lose some struggles and win others.

“PEACE” (Written by **Anthony Robinson**)

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." (Jesus)- John 14: 27 (King James Version).

The world offers three kinds of peace.

There is the peace of the palace, of having all the stuff, all the best stuff.

There is the peace of the fortress, of having high walls, impregnable defenses.

And there is the peace of escape, of "getting away from it all." All have, to be sure, their attraction.

The peace of God? None of the above.

Robinson quotes a sage named Fred Craddock:

"The peace of God is the confidence that God is God and neither *our* gains nor *our* losses are ultimate. It is the truth that God *loves* the world, is for all creatures, and is present with us in *every* endeavor to make real that love in concrete ways. Hassles as we go through life neither prove nor disprove God's presence and therefore neither create nor void the peace of God."

Oddly enough, the world's three forms of peace — palace, fortress, escape — all take us *out* of the world. The peace of God *sends us into the world, there* to live as ministers of reconciliation and joy.

7) Home is where you are.

Sometimes graduates just can't wait to "get out of Dodge" when they graduate. That might be especially true of a small town with one stoplight. But, never forget who you are, where you've come from, and where home can be found.

You are beloved here, by this community, by this congregation family, by these mountains and rivers and lakes. You always have a home here—to return to when the big wide world is not

so welcoming, or when you just need to be reminded of where you've come from. "We'll leave the Light on for ya!"

Our prayer for you seniors as we celebrate your journey thus far and send you out into the world, is a prayer for each one of us—seniors of any age. No matter where we find ourselves on *our* journey:

You Are Mine –spoken by our Mother/Father/Spirit of God:

I will come to you in the silence

I will lift you from all your fear

You will hear My voice

I claim you as My choice

Be still, and know I am near

I am hope for all who are hopeless

I am eyes for all who long to see

In the shadows of the night,

I will be your light

Come and rest in Me

Do not be afraid, I am with you

I have called you each by name

Come and follow Me

I will bring you home

I love you and you are mine

I am strength for all the despairing

Healing for the ones who dwell in shame

All the blind will see, the lame will all run free

And all will know My name

Do not be afraid, I am with you

I have called you each by name

Come and follow Me

I will bring you home

I love you, and YOU ARE MINE. Amen.

(Song by David Haas)