

Easter 6      5/14/23  
John 14:15-21 A

“I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS; I WILL COME TO YOU. YET A LITTLE WHILE AND THE WORLD WILL SEE ME NO MORE, BUT YOU WILL SEE ME. BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU ALSO WILL LIVE. IN THAT DAY YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM IN MY FATHER, AND YOU IN ME, AND I IN YOU.”

In 1922, a couple had a little girl, with a full mop of red hair and tiny, black eyes. They decided they couldn't keep her, so they took her to the Municipal Girls Orphanage and left her on the front stoop with a note pinned to her that said her name was Annie and they'd be back to pick her up.

11 years went by. It was now 1933. Those parents had not come back to pick her up, so little Annie had to face the music -- she was an orphan. And when you're an orphan in the Municipal Girls Orphanage, life is rotten and life is smelly. And a big part of that has to do with the fact that Miss Hannigan runs the orphanage. When it comes to Miss Hannigan, words like loving, kind, compassionate, caring are never, ever, used to describe her. Miss Hannigan hates the girls she cares for at the orphanage. And if that were not bad enough, Miss Hannigan drinks -- a lot of booze. And all of her drinking and all of her hatred makes life absolutely miserable for all the girls at the orphanage. It's so bad, in fact, that they describe it this way,

Don't it feel like the wind is always howl'n?  
Don't it seem like there's never any light  
Once a day, don't you want to throw the towel in?  
It's easier than puttin' up a fight.  
No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy!  
No one cares if you grow ... or if you shrink!  
No one dries when your eyes get wet and weepy  
From all the cryin' you would think this place's a sink!

Empty belly life!  
Rotten smelly life!  
No tomorrow life!  
It's a hard knock life for us!

The girls know they have a creepy, weepy, smelly life. They know that when you're an orphan and no one cares for you, it's a hard knock life.

The interesting thing about that thought is that it's not just true for the girls under the care of Miss Hannigan at the Municipal Girls Orphanage, it's true of everyone who has ever felt abandoned and lonely and destitute, like an orphan.

That even includes us. You've felt as though the wind is always howl'n, your dreams at night are creepy, so you lay there and cry and no one cares enough to wipe your tears away, and there seems to be no tomorrow. You've been there, done that, haven't you? We all have.

Today is Mother's Day. But maybe it's a reminder to you, a sad reminder, that your mom wasn't a very good mom. Maybe she loved the bottle more than she loved you. And, you feel like an orphan.

Your spouse said "I do," that is, until the day, he/she said, "I don't," and packed up and left. And, you feel like an orphan.

You get sick, so there you are stretched out in the MRI machine or hooked up to the chemotherapy drip and you wonder what's going to happen to me? Who's going to see that I get through this? And, you feel like an orphan.

You're in the autumn of life. You think to yourself, "I've outlived my family and friends. If I get sick, there is no one to take care of me. If I go into the nursery home, who is going to visit me?" Now, you are all alone, and you feel like an orphan.

That feeling of a hard knock life isn't just for Annie and the girls at the orphanage, it's how we feel. And that's how the disciples felt.

They knew what it felt like to be an orphan because Jesus announced that He was going away. "Where" Jesus was going wasn't as important to them as the "What?" -- What's going to happen to us when He goes away? We've left everything -- homes, families, careers -- to follow Jesus, and now He's going away. What's going to happen to us? What are we going to do? They felt like Jesus had just pinned a note with their name on it to their chest and dropped them off at the orphanage.

What they know is that Jesus is leaving them ... and that's scary. They know life without Jesus is a creepy, smelly life; a hard knock life.

Look at the world these guys lived in and look at the world you live in. It's a world of devils and demons; a world filled with cares, worries and fears. It's a world that's creepy. It's a world where people hate you and want nothing to do with you because you follow Jesus. As frightening as old, drunk Miss Hannigan is, she's not nearly as scary as the devil and demons, cares and worries, and the people who hate you simply because you love Jesus.

Without Jesus in this world and in your life, you're left to their schemes; you are at their mercy. You're left out there all alone, abandoned in the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death just like an orphan -- and it's scary, it's creepy.

To you, to any who has ever felt abandoned, Jesus says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." No matter how much you may feel abandoned, no matter how many tears you cry, no matter how creepy it is, you are not alone!

Jesus cared for you in a way no one else could ever care for you. Yes, He left His disciples, but He left them carrying all of their sins and all of your sins -- all the things that make life creepy, all your worries, all your concerns, all your fears; all that makes your life rotten and smelly, and He carried them all the way to Calvary's cross. Nailed to the cross for you, He carried all that makes life a hard knock life.

As Jesus hung on that cross, clothed in your sins, the unthinkable happened -- God the Father abandoned His own Son. He turned His back on His only-begotten Son. Jesus was left destitute and alone; Jesus was left to be an orphan for you. He's left to hang there all alone, to die on that cross for you and buried in the grave. But, if you think that means Jesus threw in the towel and stopped fighting for you, you are sorely mistaken. For you see, while Jesus was in that tomb, He descended into hell, to face the devil and all his demons that want you to think and feel that you are an orphan to say to them, "You lose, devil and demons! They win because of Me; because of My suffering, because of My abandonment, because of My death, because of My resurrection. These are the children of God and I and My Father will never leave them, nor forsake them."

And He rises the 3rd day, coming forth from the tomb, to tell you the very same thing. Remember the day He came to you at your baptism, there by water and the Word, He washed away all of your sin, your doubt and all temptation to think that God would ever abandon you; He rescued you from death and the devil. You may gladly say that God is your own Father and you are God's own child.

The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that because God the Father abandoned Jesus, you will never be abandoned by God. Jesus is with you

to the very end of the age. And because He lives, you too, will live -- live forever with Jesus.

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you,” Jesus promises. He comes to us in Word and Sacrament, so that when things get creepy and weepy and smelly, you can boldly and confidently say, “I am not alone. I am not abandoned. I am no orphan.” So much for the hard knock life when you have Jesus. Amen.