“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. John 14:23

Do ou ever wish you knew Jesus better? ‘Experiential religion’! Wish you experienced God more. There’s the old songs that we sometimes sing – but I think sometimes struggle with (and not just because of the high notes!) ‘You ask me how I know he lives; he lives within my heart’ But then know that actually that’s a bit like gibberish Christian talk that you’ve been taught but don’t really experience!

Well, actually it’s not gibberish – he does live in our hearts, by the H/S! There can/should indeed be a resonance in our hearts that gives us a certainty and an intimate and personal sense of the Lord being real and with us.

Our passage tonight speaks directly into this and reveals how it can be so.

**Rd John 14:15-31**

I’m going to focus in on v18-23. What we have here is Jesus talking to his disciples, explaining to them and preparing them for his impending departure and death.

It’s important to remember this context as it helps explain what he says. They are sad, disappointed, confused; Jesus isn’t trying to be clever or profound (though he is the latter) here – he has one thing in mind: to encourage and strengthen these men who are so dear to him. Basically what he’s saying is that actually his going from them was for their good because things will get even better, and here’s the secret: *If anyone loves me, they will obey me. Then my Father will love them, and we will come to them and live in them.* 14:23. Let’s take it phrase by phase

* 1. *‘If anyone loves me’*Let’s just remind ourselves of what is it to love Jesus?

Many of you will instinctively guess that this is the agape love Jesus refers to – and you’d be right! That’s important because we know that agape is not about being emotional and feelings. To agape Jesus is not to have pulses racing but it is simply to hold him as precious, to think well of him, to highly esteem and value him, to delight in him.

This is important because this addresses the ‘well I don’t feel like it’ culture that is so much part of the world these days. If we don’t feel like it we don’t do it! It’s the danger of having church and faith sustained by feelings and emotions – if singing isn’t any good or the preaching doesn’t move us, or people don’t talk to us then we’ll give it up! (I’ve been deeply saddened recently by what feels like a whole host of people who have ‘given up’ on God – largely because their expectations haven’t been met in one way or another. That’s so sad, but shows that those people haven’t had, or have lost, the proper understanding of who he is. This is why it’s so important that we don’t build on emotions – though I hope emotions get touched!!

Loving Jesus isn’t about feelings – it’s much more basic that that. It’s about what we believe about Jesus, who we believe he is and his authority, etc, etc. If we get that right then the rest will follow.

1. **The Evidence of loving Jesus is obeying him**

There are generally three reasons for obedience: fear of punishment if we fail to do what we’re told; payment – we’ve been paid to do something someone has told us to do; or love – because we love the person and want to please them.

For Xian’s it should always be the latter. And it was Jesus himself who set us the example - out of love for the Father and for us Jesus was obedient – he became a man, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross. Phil 2.

Obedience is the way we show our love to him – not giving, not sacrifice, not words, not activity, but obedience. Over and over Jesus says this in this passage to the disciples - v15, 21, 23, and 24, and again in Ch 15 – v7, 10, 14.

**There is an obvious thing here – that to obey Christ’s commandments, we first must *have* them – v21.** We can’t obey what we don’t know.

I’ll admit that I consistently surprised, and challenged by how little knowledge people come into church with now. I hear and see and am told of behaviour that makes my hair stand up on end – but in truth they don’t know that those words aren’t right for Xians, that such and such behaviour isn’t good, etc. It’s why the need to get the Bible message out to those outside is so urgent. It’s why it’s so important to do all we can reach the children and YP or things will only get worse and worse.

It’s why also Bible study is so important with new believers – to get them started and grounded. Real conversion and love for God will show in a love for his word; so we need to pray for those with no hunger!

But it’s not just new believers – we older ones are prone to forget! So we need the Bible regularly too to keep it in our minds – and to continue to learn new things! Storing away scripture so its available for our recall and the H/S to use will help us when tempted he’ll bring a passage or verse to mind to guide, arrest, encourage, prompt us as to what we say, feel, watch or do.

**What about when we don’t obey him?** We all know that one don’t we! Does it mean that we don’t love Jesus? Of course not! Think about these disciples for a moment! Within hours they’d scattered, Peter had denied him and a couple of days later Thomas refused to believe the story of the res. And yet, knowing all this, Jesus assessment of them, as he prayed to his Father was that ‘they have kept your word’ (17:6). He wasn’t And isn’t looking for perfection, but at the overall trajectory of our lives. I came across these words by the old teacher AW Pink

*Two things are true of every Christian: deep down in his heart there is an intense, steady longing and yearning to please God, to do His will, to walk in full accord with His Word. This yearning may be stronger in some than in others, and in each of us it is stronger at some times than at others; nevertheless, it is there! But in the second place, no real Christian fully realizes this desire. Every genuine Christian has to say with the apostle Paul, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may lay hold of that for which I am laid hold of by Christ Jesus”* ([Phil. 3:12](javascript:%7b%7d)).

And that leads us into

1. **The consequences of obedience -** Jesus says three things:
2. God will love us – **v21** & **23**. But isn’t God’s love unconditional? Yes it is, totally – but like any relationship there is a growing a developing. And that’s what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus is talking about a deeper experience of His love. It’s parallel to what Paul prays in [Ephesians 3:17-19](javascript:%7b%7d): *Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong.****18****And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.****19****May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.…*

If we have trusted Jesus, He already dwells in our hearts and we already know His love. But Paul prays that we will experience His presence and His love on deeper and deeper levels. Jesus is saying that we will experience these things by obeying Him.

1. Jesus revealing Himself to us- **v21**.He’s not talking about a mystical vision or appearance where we see Him physically, but simply revealing Himself by giving us deeper insight into knowing Him through His Word.

*We see the principle that Jesus states and live in our relationships with others. You don’t reveal yourself to just anybody, but only to those whom you trust. You only share the personal stuff with those you trust.* That’s what Jesus is saying here. The more we show the genuineness of our love to him by obeying him the more He will share more of Himself with us. Again, this isn’t mystical, extra-biblical knowledge, but rather the knowledge of Him through His Word.

This was the great comfort to these disciples who were afraid of him going. Here was the secret to continuing to know and experience Jesus – and it’s the same for us. Time and again the people that say they have given up on God – when I dig and probe I find they haven’t been obeying him – it’s not surprising that they have little experience of him! The two things go together. What about you tonight?

1. We’ll enjoy the presence of God – v23. ‘*Make our home with him’* – yes, HS is with us, always. But this is about relationship, fellowship, knowing God, experientially; and brings us full circle to where we started with that song: - you ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart! Want to know the reality of that? Then glad and happy obedience is the way.

Here’s why the world can’t see or know Jesus. Its why people think we’re stark crazy – no idea. They cannot know him, experience him – but we can and do. We know his joy and peace and comfort and reassurance, his sill calm voice. Obedient believers enjoy a relationship with God that the world cannot know.

So if you want to grow to know Christ more intimately in the coming year, figure out where you’re not obeying Him and begin to obey Him at those points. You may have some dirty closets that you need to let Him clean out. You may need to prioritize your list and begin with one or two changes before you tackle others. It sounds simplistic, but Jesus promises that we will grow to know Him more intimately by obeying Him.