

# “NEVER ALONE”

Rev. Becky Stephens

**Text: John 14:15-21 NLT**

**God’s Word: John 1:1-15 NLT**

There’s a story about a rookie baseball player just up from the minor leagues who was sent to bat against a great Hall of Fame pitcher in his prime. Just off the bench and as nervous as someone on his first date, the rookie stepped up to the plate and took a couple of tentative practice swings, as the pitcher glared down at him from the mound. Then, with a great windup and pitch, he blew two fastballs right down the center of the plate, so fast that the poor kid didn’t even have time to swing his bat.

With that, the rookie turned and started back to the dugout. “What are you doing?” his manager shouted at him. “Get back out there. You’ve got another pitch coming.”

“Let him have it,” the rookie said. “I’ve seen enough already! I give up!”

Have you ever felt that way? Outmatched by life? Up against what seems to be impossible odds? Depressed? Downhearted? Hopeless? Helpless? Overpowered by life? What do you do when life bullies you into a corner? Where do you turn when trouble traps you?

## **John 14:15-21 NLT**

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. <sup>17</sup> He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. <sup>18</sup> No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

As those who gather here this morning, as those who believe, we encounter the Resurrected Christ, the One Who has triumphed over the Cross and the grave; the One Who stands eternal before the throne of our Heavenly Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who says to us as He did to His first disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans.” In other words,

“I will not leave you alone. I will not abandon you. You need not feel like a mother-less child!”

To those who love Jesus and obey Jesus’ commands, Jesus promises to send us His own Spirit, His own breath, His own inner life. Jesus tells us that He will never leave us alone, but He will send us the *“Counselor to be with [us] forever—the Spirit of truth.”*

*“I will not leave you as orphans,”* Jesus promises, *“I will come to you.”* This is where we find strength in weakness! We have a Risen Lord! And God lives in us!!!

Take note though that Jesus says, *“The world cannot accept [the Spirit], because it neither sees him nor knows him.”* What a sad, sad world. What a horrible plight, to feel abandoned, alone and without hope, guidance or comfort.

A year or so ago, I was getting ready to leave the house and was trying to get Olivia to “up and adam.” I had called to her several times, from the kitchen. Then, I realized I had forgotten something in the garage I needed to bring in. When I got back in the house, I heard Olivia cry out from the kitchen in the most pitifully sad and terror-filled voice, “My Mommy has left me.” It nearly broke my heart. I ran to her and hugged her and wiped away her crocodile tears assuring her that I would never leave her alone—never!

But to try and imagine what that little helpless 4-year-old brain in a 10-year-old body felt at the moment she thought I had abandoned her, left her in a house all by herself, is almost too painful to think about.

Jesus never leaves us alone. Many do not realize this, but it is true. Long before we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit is Counseling us, comforting us, and pleading with our spirits on our behalf. And if we are spiritually awake and open to “the Spirit of truth” we are being convicted of sin and are beginning to understand our need for the Savior.

But we are told that the world will not realize that God’s Spirit is here. What does Jesus mean by “the world”? Remember back to the 1st Chapter of John? We are told that Jesus *“was in the world, the world was made by him, but the world didn’t know him.”* So, what in the world is the world?

It’s the whole created order, and it’s also the people who live in it, and who have rebelled against their Creator. That’s you and me and everyone else.

Jesus has, however, come *“into the world”* because *“God loved the world so much that God sent His Son to rescue the world.”* We are told that Jesus has come as the Light of the world, but many prefer darkness.

How can that be? How can we become that disillusioned? How can we reject the Love of God which surpasses everything? How can we make the decision to be alone, when we are offered the companionship of Christ? How can we settle for mud when we are being handed the Pearl of Great Price? But so many do just that.

As believers, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to make a plea to the world—through us-- for the sake of the broken hearted. And there is no shortage of broken-hearted people.

Think about a 55-year-old factory worker who is laid off when the plant closes leaving him with no prospect for another job. Feeling too old and too weary to consider re-training for something else, and without skills that can be reworked, this person feels alone. Unemployed and living off pension funds that will soon run out, what is this person to do if he does not know about the abiding love and presence of Christ? Where is the hope for this person?

How many folks are there living like this in the world? How many people do not know that *“because Christ lives, [they] also can live”*?

Or how about the elderly person, alone at home after fifty years of marriage? Her spouse is no longer with her, she nods off in front of the television set, a half-eaten frozen meal sits cold in front of her. She is alone in a house too big for her, she has children with lives of their own living in different towns. What if she knew that *“Jesus will not leave her as an orphan”* ... that *“God will not abandon her”*?

What difference would a relationship with Christ make in her life?

Or what about the person with a terminal illness? Her body is dying and she lies alone in pain. For her and the millions of others throughout the world who face dreaded disease, without a knowledge of Christ, who is there to say to them, *“Jesus has not left you as an orphan. God will never abandon you.”*?

And what about the teenager who is different from the rest, the wife or husband whose spouse has left them, the businessperson whose business is failing, or the parent whose child has rebelled and left home? Or any of the countless others in the world and in the communities which surround us who feel alone and without hope, rejected and orphaned.

Who will tell them? Who will show them the love of God? Who will introduce them to Jesus?

In John 14, Jesus sits with the disciples in the upper room. The candles of the Passover meal have burnt out and it's time to go. One disciple has already fled the gathering. His betrayal is a shock to all of them. Another disciple's denial is predicted, and the pain of the Cross awaits them all. And amid this uncertain gathering, Jesus reaches out to them in love.

In His great love for us, Jesus comes to us. He comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit and reveals Himself to those who will have Him.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit sends us forth as messengers of God's love to the poor, the unemployed, the young and the elderly, the sick and rejected, the unhappy, the sorrowful, the lonely and the dying.

Who is there to say to them, "*God has not left you as orphans? Jesus will never abandon you.*"?

Well, God entrusts us with this Good News!!! We are the ones sent forth into a lost, lonely and fearful world with God's love living in us. We live in a creature comfort culture which is saturated by technology. Technology is powerful, but a computer has no power to heal a broken heart. A smart phone can't fill the void of a loss. A flat screen t-v can't bring the comfort we need in the face of tragedy.

There is no substitute for experiencing the Love of Jesus Christ!!! The Love of Christ has enormous power. It has the power to heal. It has the power to make people well. It has the power to lift drooping heads and fill empty hearts. No wonder people were healed just by coming into the presence of Jesus. And you know what? It's still happening today!!!

We are commissioned to go running from this place, telling everyone we meet, about the Love of God that has found us Christ Jesus our Lord!!! This is what the first disciples did once the Holy Spirit— "*the Spirit of truth*" came down to them and took up residence in their hearts. And the Church grew and grew and grew!!!

O Lord God please, may this be what we do as well for the sake of this community, for the sake of the world, for the sake of our Savior Who died so that all may live!!!

Amen.