 Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is easy to be fearful and anxious and worried by what we see going around us-political division, massive life taking storms, mass killings, being on the edge of war, uncertainty about the economy, etc. etc. as have always had things gong on beyond our control, yet---- today hear of vision for a future filled with promise—the promise that God will make a home with us. This is a promise of an ultimate future home—a New Jerusalem! —but also the promise of a loving God’s presence in the hearts of all who believe. In Revelation is the seer’s vision of the new Jerusalem at the end of time, the temple is replaced by the presence of God and the Lamb. Realistic details of the royal city’s streets, gates and are interspersed by no sun or moon and everyone reigning forever. The tree of life, described in Genesis 3:22-24 **22**Then the Lord God said, “See, the humans have become like one of us, knowing good and evil, and now they might reach out their hands and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever”— **23**therefore the Lord God sent them forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which they were taken. **24**He drove out the humans, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life. This tree of life is now available with twelve different fruits and miraculous leaves. Ancient Jewish belief that no mortal could look at God and survive is countered with the Christian hope that everyone will see God’s very face. This new Jerusalem is open to all people, in contrast to human cities or countries where gates tried to protect residents from enemy outsiders. We have already begun to live here during our weekly worship: the cross we

see is our tree of life, the font is the river of life, and the cross of Christ is emblazoned on the forehead of all the saints and sinners who are baptized. At the same time our doors are not to keep people out but to be open so we can be a safe place to gather with all who are welcome here.

Today’s story is a continuation of last week where Jesus commands us to love one another (agape love) as he loves us for the glory of God. Jesus continues his final night’s conversation with his disciples where he makes it clear he is about to leave them. Imagine how they are processing this news both conceptually and emotionally in the same way we would with a loved one on their death bed. To comfort them Jesus tells them he will not leave them alone when he told them in verse 18 before this text **18**“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. Jesus tells us and them God will continue to love them. This is an important promise, since God’s love (*agape* love) is unconditional. God set the standard for *agape*love in sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners. **16**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Judas (not that Judas) asks Jesus the question everyone in this small group is waiting to ask. How are you going to reveal yourself. In this new age we can see animations and pyrotechnics, and light shows and loud music and huge cheering crowds or perhaps parachuting in or riding in on the sky in a ball of fire or huge crowds singing loud praises. Perhaps George Lucas could be involved with Star Wars vision and would involve galaxies far, far away. But the answer may disappoint because this self-revelation is through love. Jesus reveals himself through love – not just any love but *agape* love.

This *agape* love does not wait for the disciples to love first. An important part of the Incarnation is God loves us up close. So both the Father and the Son will come to make a new home with Jesus’ disciples. The only time home is used this way in the New Testament is John 14:2, Jesus assures the disciples that his Father’s house has many “dwelling places” and that Jesus goes to the Father to prepare a place for them. I have used this at funerals or memorials because it brings the family and friends comfort to know, even though they are no longer with us, they have a place with God and many visualize what that room is like. Then this is turned upon it's head when Jesus says “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. It is the Father and the Son will make their “dwelling place” with the disciples. This noun is related to the far more frequently used verb in John, “remain” or “abide.” Disciples are those who “abide” in Jesus, in his love, and in his word.

Jesus tells us God will continue to love them. This is an important promise, since God’s love (*agape* love) is unconditional. God set the standard for *agape*love in sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners. **16**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” In the meantime… Jesus says he will leave the Advocate, God’s very Spirit who was with Jesus from the beginning and will be forever, who is sent in is name to teach us in his absence to help us remember these words where we are to love one another and serve one another. I really like when Jesus tells us “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. Words that can bring comfort in a fearful world. Jesus wanted to tell us, just before his death, like a last will and testament, 28 You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ When we love Christ, we should not be saddened but rejoice he going to the Father, because the Father is greater than Christ. Jesus disclosed this so we may believe. Each time the Spirit calls us together to receive Christ’s word and sacrament this is a foretaste of that New Jerusalem, where God will finally and ultimately be at home with us, even as the Holy Trinity makes a home now in the hearts of all who believe. Into the anxieties and uncertainties of our everyday life we are offered both a vision of a glorious future when God will be at home with us and we will be at home with God, and a living foretaste of that same future: “We will come to them and make our home with them. . . . Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”