

Introduction

- Promises are easily made, and sadly easily broken.
 - "I'll give you a phone..." - how easily said!
 - "I'll bring that with me next week!"; "I'll get it done tonight!"
- None of us could put our hands on our hearts and say we've never broken a promise!
 - (even promises we really, really did mean to keep...)
- But Jesus' last words in Matthew's gospel provide a promise that can never be broken.
- Its a fundamental law of the spiritual universe and, as such, it's among the most precious and comforting things Jesus ever said.
- Every word counts:
 - I will be with you always - Jesus himself makes the promise
 - I will be with you always - nothing can keep Jesus from us; he is always there
 - I will be with you always - Jesus promised to be with each of us; no-one is excluded
 - I will be with you always - "all the days" in the Greek; every day Jesus is with us, wherever we go, whatever we do! Our future with Jesus is guaranteed; he will never withdraw his presence

Jesus makes the promise

- Before she died, Mother Theresa said, "The greatest disease today is not starvation. The greatest killer is loneliness"
 - and this from a woman who spent her life bringing food to the starving and shelter to the friendless in some of India's worst slums!
- I guess we wouldn't disagree, looking round our own world and the damage done by loneliness and broken relationships.
- Before resurrection, Jesus would sometimes withdraw from his disciples. Before the crucifixion he talked of leaving them and coming back.
 - however, this promise is given after the resurrection!
 - physical restrictions, being only in one place at a time, have been done away with!
- So Jesus will always be with us, whether we can "feel" his presence or not.
 - never shouts from a distance, even when we have done something that makes us tremble with shame, but draws near!
- What's more, his presence is by definition that of the Lord of the Universe.
 - not a ghost, something insubstantial;
 - his presence is a powerful intervention.

The promise leads to action

- *Story: Little boy, afraid of the dark; one day mum asked him to get the broom in from the back porch; it was dark, and he didn't want to go; mum said "You don't have to be frightened; Jesus is out there; he'll look after you and protect you." Little boy wasn't convinced - "Are you sure?" Mum replied, "Yes, I'm sure. Jesus is everywhere and he's always ready to help you when you need him."*
- *Grudgingly went... opened back door a crack, and shouted, "Jesus, if you're out there, please pass me the broom!"*
- Maybe that's how we respond to Jesus' promise:
 - saying we believe it, but not acting as if we really do!
- Jesus doesn't promise to be with us always just in order to comfort us, although he does comfort us.
 - he gives it in the context of the great commission to take the gospel into all the world;
 - in other words, the promise is given to equip us for service - and his vision is nothing if not big!

- The task of mission in our community and our world seems great - and it is!
 - (how many of us really feel we can make a difference in the lives of the community around us, in our parish here in Fintry? We have a siege mentality!)
- **But the presence of God is with us!**
 - its not God who is slow to act in mission, but we who are slow to take his promise and the confidence it gives.
- Task:
 - **GO** - beyond own country, own friends, own comfort zone
 - **BAPTISE** - call to public response, not a private belief
 - **TEACH** - more than individual converts, but changed people - a new lifestyle!
- A big task - but not impossible, because God is with us.

This is what we are engaged on in Mains of Fintry!!

- prayer meetings, alternate Thursday evenings and each Tuesday morning
- Lost for Words
- Church, Community and Change
- 2x Sunday sermons on "Life after Death" at end of November
- Reaching out with the compassionate love of Jesus to people lost and lonely, who are "like sheep without a shepherd..." (Mark 6:34)
 - in **everything** that we do... (Girls Brigade, Holiday Club)

Conclusion

- So important is this link between the **promise** and the **action** that we should remember that Jesus does **NOT** promise to be with us in **spiritual idleness and self-indulgence...**
 - ...but only as we go!
- If we try to enjoy his presence without obeying his command, then we'll find that in a sense he does withdraw from us:
 - we won't see him doing much among us;
 - it'll be like that time he visited Nazareth, and couldn't do as many miracles because of their lack of faith (**Matthew 13:58**)
- Two thousand years after the end of Jesus' earthly life, worldwide one person in three is estimated to owe allegiance to Christ in some measure.
 - even that optimistic assessment that leaves two out of three who remain disobedient!
 - many millions of these have never even heard of God's love for them in Christ.
 - *(the rapt attention you get in the school when you tell a simple Bible story - eg Jairus' daughter - because they have never heard!!)*
 - maybe 80 folk here on a Sunday, even allowing for the same again in the RCs, and same again in other churches, only just hitting **3% of Fintry folk** are in worship each Sunday!!
- **Story:** *Years ago a boy sat in a crowded missionary meeting. When the offering was taken he was embarrassed because he had no money. But in his pocket he found a scrap of paper and the stub of a pencil. So he **wrote his name** on the paper, and put it in the plate. God accepted his offering. When he grew up he went overseas as a missionary.*
- Christ's command and Christ's promise are as real today as when he met his disciples on the mountain.
 - **so let's obey his call** - personal witness, **Lost for Words**, **prayer**, engagement with our community, **Church, Community and Change...**
 - **and in the process enjoy his companionship on the journey to the end of the age.**