



He Qi, *Holy Spirit Coming*, 1998

Farewell as Companionship

以道別來陪伴

約翰福音 John 14:15-21

The Breaking of Relationship

I want to ~~begin~~ by inviting everyone to
imagine:

if today we had to leave this world, what
would we feel most regretful about?

The Breaking of Relationship

In a cancer hospital, death is a forbidden yet unavoidable topic.

Sometimes, when I provide end-of-life care, I ask patients what they find hardest to let go of.

The Breaking of Relationship

Many mothers, even in the final days of life, even when their bodies are in unbearable pain, still say that what they worry about most is whether “their children will be okay.”

The Breaking of Relationship

Today is ~~M~~other's Day. In many people's lives, a mother is the first person through whom we experience "companionship."

And when we speak about separation, the relationship with a mother is often one of the relationships that most deeply touches our hearts.

The Breaking of Relationship

So today, ~~I want to begin from this~~ relationship that is closest to our lives, and listen to how Jesus, before he was about to leave his disciples, promised a presence that death could not cut off.

The Breaking of Relationship

Across ~~many~~ cultures around
the world, there is one
common thread:
we all use different ways to
remember loved ones who
have passed away.

The Breaking of Relationship

For example, there is Qingming Festival in Chinese culture, Obon in Japan, and Día de los Muertos in Mexico

The Breaking of Relationship

Perhaps ~~death~~, for us, is not only the loss of life. Our deeper fear is the **breaking of relationship** between people.

Therefore, in these festivals, we do more than remember their place in our lives.

The Breaking of Relationship

Through ~~different~~ rituals, whether through food, art, or prayer, we create **a connection between the living and the dead**, allowing them to continue participating in our lives in another form.

John 14-~~17~~ is often called
Jesus' Farewell Discourse to his
disciples.

This section takes place after
Jesus foretells Judas's betrayal
and Peter's denial, and before
Jesus is arrested.

One major difference between these three chapters and the long teachings in the other Gospels is that this section speaks extensively about the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' Farewell

Because ~~Jesus~~ Jesus has foretold that he is about to leave the disciples, the disciples urgently want to know where Jesus is going. So Jesus comforts them: **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever”** (14:16).

我要求父，父就賜給你們另外一位保惠

Jesus' Farewell

In the ~~passage~~ we read today, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit because he understands that we all need to be connected.

But he does not merely provide a meaningful ritual or symbolic form; he gives real companionship and presence.

First, when ~~Jesus~~ Jesus says, **“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you”** (14:18), he provides a continuation of this basic relationship.

我不會撇下你們為孤兒，我必到你們這裏來。

This is like the promise of “meeting again” that we often hear in Christian memorial

Jesus' Farewell – Continuation of Relationship

Although ~~Jesus~~ Jesus will be temporarily absent, because of his future coming, we can believe that for now we have only paused seeing one another, not severed the relationship. The sorrow of separation is transformed into the hope of reunion.

Jesus sees ~~our~~ our anxiety about “being abandoned.” Therefore, rather than focusing on the disciples’ curiosity about where exactly he is going, Jesus places greater importance on and responds to their anxiety about separation.

Next, ~~when~~ Jesus says, “**the Father...will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever**” (14:16), he transforms this relationship, in which they will temporarily be unable to see him, into another form of presence.

父就賜給你們另外一位保惠師，使他永遠

Jesus' Farewell –
Transformation of Relationship

This sentence reminds me of the time before I came to the US. Although I knew I would surely see my family again, I still hoped that my mother and sister would not be too lonely because of my leaving.



Jesus' Farewell –
Transformation of Relationship

So I hoped that the dog I
brought home could become
their companion.



Although ~~Jesus~~ Jesus promises that he will return, he also knows that the long loneliness is real. Therefore, the other form of presence provided by the Holy Spirit means that during this time of waiting, we will not only be kept from loneliness, but also, through the Holy Spirit, be accompanied by Jesus in a deeper way, in a way no longer limited by distance.

Finally, ~~Jesus~~ also says, **“On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you”** (14:20).

到那日，你們就會知道我在父裏面，你們在我裏面，我也在你們裏面。

Jesus' Farewell – Elevation of Relationship

This means that through a temporary separation, the relationship between them is elevated.

Many times, only in a brief separation do we begin to understand how deep a relationship originally was.

Jesus' Farewell – Elevation of Relationship

In separation, we are given the opportunity to be still and reflect. And because we come to a deeper understanding of the other person, the relationship can enter another stage.

In a similar way, Jesus lets us know that after this temporary separation, what awaits us is the clear knowledge that God and we are not separate individuals, nor merely beings arranged from above and below, but are in an intimate relationship of mutual existence and indwelling.

Jesus' Farewell – Elevation of Relationship

The disciples will come to recognize that the relationship between Jesus and the Father, between Jesus and the disciples, and even between the Father and the disciples, is not something death can easily cut off.

Jesus' Farewell

In our ~~relationship~~ with our mothers, we can also experience, to a certain degree, this transformation of relationship. Before we were born, we lived inside our mother's body. In infancy, although we and our mother seemed to be two separate individuals, in reality, we were inseparable from our mother.

Jesus' Farewell

Our lives ~~still~~ depended completely on our mother's feeding and care. As we gradually grew up, we began to have our own lives and thoughts, and the relationship between our mother and us gradually transformed into a more mature companionship.

Jesus' Farewell

Until we ~~left~~ our mother and began our own lives, this relationship looked like separation, but it was also a continuation.

Jesus' Farewell

Finally, ~~when~~ our mother leaves this world, our relationship with her becomes integrated into memory. In many unexpected moments of daily life, fragments of memory are triggered. Whether positive or negative, these memories remind us that our connection with our mother has never disappeared.

Our Farewell

In real-life ~~situations~~, we can also take Jesus' farewell as a model of pastoral theology and discover what we can practice from it. Rather than treating death as an abstract imagination, we need to transform it into concrete preparation, focusing on the continuation and elevation of the relationship between ourselves and the

First, in ~~medical~~ care, we encourage advance directives, DNI/DNR, and hospice care.

Clinically, many family members carry deep trauma in their final memories of being with a patient because they personally witnessed the patient's suffering at the end of life.

Sometimes ~~as~~ this even leaves a traumatic farewell at the end of the relationship. In clinical settings, what many family members find most painful is not only that their loved one is leaving, but that at the final moment they are forced to make decisions for their loved one that feel cruel.

They do ~~not~~ know what the patient truly wants, so they can only choose amid anxiety, guilt, and fear.

Conversations about advance directives, DNR/DNI, or hospice care are absolutely not about giving up treatment or life.

Our Farewell - Medical

Rather, they give us an opportunity to tell the people we love, in a more honest and responsible way, what we need.

And **when the day of farewell comes, they do not have to carry the full burden of those decisions for us.**

Next, ~~while~~ we still have the opportunity, we can also speak our apologies and blessings. At the bedside of the dying, silence often occupies most of the time, and the only sounds left in the room are the ventilator and the vital signs monitor.

There is ~~nothing~~ necessarily wrong with this. But many people, after their loved one has passed away, feel the regret and grief of realizing, “There were still so many things I had not said.”

Jesus' ~~Farewell~~ Discourse reminds us that while there is still time, we should do our best to apologize, reconcile, and bless, so that our relationships with the people around us may continue to grow, and so that the grief of farewell does not have to carry another layer of regret.

Our Farewell - Spiritual

Finally, ~~when~~ we do our best to cultivate our relationships with those around us, our relationships are elevated in another way. Sometimes, Christians are too eager to speak about the heaven to come, while neglecting the fact that Jesus calls us now to love God and to love the people around us.

If we treat ~~at~~ heaven as an imagined escape from real relationships, while making a mess of the relationships right in front of us, then that kind of hope has lost the essence of the gospel.

When we ~~do~~ our best to cultivate human relationships and to love the people around us, we are at the same time experiencing the presence of God.

This effort allows us, as Pastor Grace said in the sermon two weeks ago, to experience the presence of Jesus even in ordinary life.

Mother's Day

Today, in ~~addition~~ to

 celebrating Mother's Day in the ways familiar to us, I also want to encourage everyone to have a deeper spiritual reflection.

Mother's Day

Whether ~~your~~ mother is still by your side or not, whether the memories your mother has given you are mostly positive or mostly negative, whether or not you still have the chance to say one more sentence to her, we can still, in our hearts, give thanks, seek reconciliation, and offer blessing.

Mother's Day

If your ~~relationship~~ with your mother is filled with gratitude, may you have the opportunity today to speak that gratitude aloud.

Mother's Day

If your ~~relationship~~ with your mother carries wounds, may you also know that God has already seen your wounds clearly, and God will continue to accompany you as you slowly sort through emotions you still cannot put into words.

Mother's Day

If your ~~mother~~ has already left this world, may you receive, within memory, the parts for which you can give thanks, and may you entrust the parts that remain heavy to God.

Mother's Day

For some people, Mother's Day is a day filled with gratitude and warmth.

For others, it is a complicated and heavy day, even a day they do not know how to face.

Mother's Day

Whether ~~our~~ relationship with our mother is close or distant, full of gratitude or still marked by wounds, this day reminds us that human life **begins** in relationship and is **shaped** in relationship.

Mother's Day

A mother's ~~love~~, absence, limitations, blessings, and even wounds may all leave traces in our lives, causing us, in many unexpected moments, to sense again that we are **still connected to her** in some way.

Mother's Day

And the ~~promise~~ Jesus gives us in the Gospel of John is a presence and companionship that go beyond memory. He does not merely leave words for the disciples to remember, nor merely leave an example for them to imitate. He promises the **Holy Spirit**, so that when the disciples can no longer see him, they will still not become orphans.

Mother's Day

This allows us to understand farewell in a new way: **farewell** does not necessarily have to be only the end of a relationship. It can also become the moment when a person **entrusts love, blessing, faith**, and the most important things in life to the people they love.

Mother's Day

Because ~~in~~ Christ, death cannot
simply separate love, and
separation cannot cut off every
relationship.

Mother's Day

Therefore, ~~may we begin to learn how to say~~ farewell while we still have time. If there is gratitude that should be spoken, let us speak it while we still can. If there is a relationship that can be repaired, let us take a step while we still have the chance.

Mother's Day

If there ~~are~~ medical decisions, life
arrangements, and blessings that need to be
communicated, let us not leave all that
weight for the people we love to carry.

Mother's Day

True faith is not an ~~escape~~ from death. ~~Rather, in the presence of~~
the Holy Spirit, true faith teaches us to live
more honestly, to love more courageously,
and to prepare more gently for the farewell
that one day we will all face.

Prayer

God who ~~is~~ forever with us, we thank you that in Jesus' farewell, you show us that separation does not mean the end of a relationship, but can become an opportunity for the deepest love, blessing, and entrusting of life.

Prayer

We thank ~~you~~ that, in a mother's —————
companionship, we come to know something
of nurture, burden-bearing, concern, and
love that is not limited by distance.

Prayer

Help us, ~~in~~ these limited and imperfect—
relationships—even relationships that
sometimes carry wounds—to understand
more deeply the real, continuing, and
unforsaking presence of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Lord, ~~while~~ there is still time, help us speak gratitude, seek repair, offer blessing, and honestly entrust our lives, our deaths, and those we love to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.