

Sermon on 10/5/2026 (John 14:15–21 and Acts 17:22–31) Premkumar Immanuel

Today is a beautiful day as we celebrate Mother's Day, a day to remember love expressed through sacrifice, care, patience, and presence. We all know that mothers are not perfect. Yet when we think about a mother's love, we often think about the closest human reflection of unconditional love. A mother wakes up in the middle of the night without complaint. A mother worries even when the child has grown old. A mother carries burdens silently. Even when exhausted, she continues to care.

Over the past few days, I have been watching a small bird that has built a nest near the porch lamp. From early morning until evening, that mother bird keeps flying back and forth bringing food to her chicks. Again and again, without rest, without reward, without applause. The chicks open their mouths in trust, and the mother keeps returning.

As I watched that little bird, I thought: perhaps this is one of God's quiet sermons to us. Love is not merely spoken. Love stays. Love returns. Love gives itself.

And perhaps that is why Mother's Day and today's Gospel reading fit together so beautifully.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." At first, these words may sound demanding. However, Jesus is speaking about a relationship. He is speaking about love that remains alive through closeness.

How does a child truly know the love of a mother? Not merely by receiving gifts. A child comes to know a mother's love by living with her, listening to her, walking with her, trusting her, and loving her in return.

Love becomes real through relationships. Jesus says something very similar. If we love him, we will remain close to him. We will live according to his way. And when we do, something extraordinary happens: we begin to know God. Not merely know about God. But know God

personally. Jesus promises his disciples that they will not be left alone. He says, “I will not leave you orphaned.” Imagine how comforting those words must have been. The disciples knew Jesus was preparing to leave them physically. Fear and uncertainty filled their hearts. Perhaps they wondered: “What will happen to us now?”

But Jesus promises another Advocate — the Holy Spirit. The word used there is *Paraclete*. It means helper, counselor, comforter, advocate, companion. It means that someone stands beside you. In other words, Jesus says: “Even when you cannot see me physically, my presence will remain with you.” This is deeply important for us today.

There are moments in life when people feel spiritually orphaned. Some feel abandoned by family. Some feel forgotten by society. Some feel alone in grief, illness, depression, or fear. But the promise of Christ is this: you are not alone. The Holy Spirit walks beside you. And how do we become aware of this presence? Jesus says: through love. “If you love me... you will know.” Notice how often the Gospel speaks about “abiding,” “remaining,” “being in.” Jesus says, “I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.” This is one of the most beautiful mysteries of Christian faith. God is not distant. God is not merely seated somewhere far away beyond the stars. God dwells within us.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit exist in a relationship of perfect love, and through Christ, we are invited into that relationship.

That is why love is not simply a moral rule. Love is the very life of God. It should also be the very life of ourselves. And when love fills our hearts — when compassion, forgiveness, trust, care, and hope begin to grow within us — God becomes visible through us.

The Roman Empire during the time of John believed power came through armies, weapons, domination, and fear. But Jesus offered another kind of power: the power of love. Empire can

force Obedience. But only love can create belonging. Love creates relationships that violence never can.

A mother understands this better than most people. A child may obey out of fear for a moment, but a child grows through love. Love shapes the soul. And this brings us to the reading from Acts.

Paul stands before the intellectuals of Athens at the Areopagus. Everywhere he looks, he sees temples and idols. Then he notices an altar with the inscription: “To an Unknown God.”

The Greeks were brilliant thinkers. They explored philosophy, science, politics, and art. Yet even with all their intelligence, they still sensed there was something beyond their understanding. Paul tells them: “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” And then Paul says something extraordinary about God: “In him we live and move and have our being.” It means that God is not merely an object to study. God is the ground of our being. Therefore, Paul points toward another way of knowing God — through relationship, experience, and love. And this is where I want to bring us to the final thought of today’s sermon. There is within every human soul an infinite abyss — a deep inner space, a longing that nothing in this world can fully satisfy. People try to fill it with success, possessions, achievements, distractions, and endless busyness. Yet the soul still longs for something more.

That infinite abyss within us was created for God. And God enters that space through love.

When we love Christ, when we allow compassion, forgiveness, mercy, and faith to grow within us, God dwells in that deepest place of the soul.

That means, as Paul says, “In him we live and move and have our being.” Then God is no longer unknown because the soul knows that it rests in God. And perhaps mothers teach us this truth better than anyone else. A loving mother creates space in her heart for her children.

She carries them within her thoughts, prayers, worries, sacrifices, and hopes. In a similar way, God carries us. God makes room for us. And when we return that love, we discover that God has already made a home within us.

So today, on this Mother's Day, may we give thanks for all those who have reflected God's nurturing love in our lives. And may we also hear Christ's invitation: "Love me. Abide in me. Do not be afraid. You are not orphaned." For when love fills the soul, the infinite abyss within us becomes the dwelling place of God. Amen.