As Christians, we worship one God who reveals himself in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And, of all these three Persons, the Holy Spirit might be the hardest for us to get our heads around. We can have a picture in our head of God the Father, because we have earthly fathers as a sort of model of how a heavenly Father might be or might not be. We can have a picture in our head of God the Son, because Jesus was fully human, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have all the wonderful stories about Jesus that we know from the Gospels in the Bible. But God the Holy Spirit we don’t really have an image of this that we can draw on in our imaginations.

God the Holy Spirit seems to be too abstract, too conceptual for us to imagine and if that is the case, how are we to interact with God as Holy Spirit? But whilst that may be the case, Jesus did speak of the Holy Spirit in very concrete terms, actually, in terms of what the Holy Spirit will do in our lives. And the Bible writers talk of the Holy Spirit in concrete terms.  So, who is the Holy Spirit, and why is he important to us?

The reading we heard from John’s Gospel comes from the Last Supper at which Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. He has been telling his disciples that the time has come for him to leave them but he is saying that they don’t need to be despondent about that because God will still be with them, just in a different form, through the Holy Spirit.

 And that is true for us today, of course. The physical Jesus is no longer here, he returned to heaven at the Ascension, where he is constantly praying for us. But the absence of the physical Jesus in our lives does not mean the absence of God because he is still with us, through his Holy Spirit. God is here today, he is ever-present in our lives. As Jesus embodied God during his time on earth, bringing comfort and help and guidance and healing to the people he met, so God is embodied to us today, bringing us comfort and help and guidance and healing. So we can be confident in his presence with us. The Holy Spirit is the embodiment of God dwelling within each one of us, God physically within us and if God dwells within us, then we will notice a change in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is God-present with us in the here and now, transforming us and growing us so that we can be a blessing to others and to the world. Someone once described the Holy Spirit as ‘the Present Tense of God not the God of history, not the God of the future, but the God of the here and now, active in the world and active in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us experience God on a day-to-day basis, the one who gives us faith, the one who sustains us, the one who keeps us in the presence of God every moment of every day, with us as a Christian community, empowering us and growing us in the faith.

Notice what Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments”. Love for Jesus is not about our emotions. Love for Jesus is about following his call on our lives, and living in obedience to him. Love for Jesus is shown by how we live to him and how we live with each other. But how do we obey Jesus, how do we live a life of devotion to him? Surely not on our own strength! Because none of us are capable of doing that ourselves because all of us are spiritually weak.

Instead, we must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us, changing us, transforming us, drawing us closer to God. The more we let go of our own lives and allow God to work in us, the more devoted to Jesus we will become. The more we stop trying to control our own lives and hand over that control to the Holy Spirit within us, the more obedient to Jesus we will become.

The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.