

John 14:8-17, 25-27

June 5, 2022

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

For week in and week out, our lectionary has been leading us through Jesus' "farewell" discourse in John's gospel giving us a front row seat with the disciples on their last evening with Jesus prior to His death and resurrection. For John, Jesus is the true revelation of God in human flesh. As Fred Craddock writes, "He is the tangible presence of God in the world and that God the Father can be known only through that incarnate presence."ⁱ In His teaching, healing, and preaching Jesus has testified to this fact. To know God is to know the Son, Jesus Christ who just prior to our assigned gospel text this morning states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him." (John 14:6-7 NRSV) It is to this that Philip responds to Jesus questioning, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied?"

You can almost picture the look on Jesus' face as He responds. I imagine him rolling his eyes while scratching and turning his head from one side to the other as He looks at Philip and says, "Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me?" How much more thick-headed can these disciples get? Why can't they grasp that He is the very presence of God in their midst? What more does He need to do to convince them? His teaching has not simply been something He made up. No, He speaks for the One who sent Him. He speaks on behalf of God. And not only does God speak through the Son but God acts through the Son. They are intimately connected in a divine relationship those first followers simply could not grasp at that point in their journey. Jesus seems to soften and be empathetic to their struggles to comprehend His final exhortations. He senses the challenge of His words and thus tells them that if they do not believe through the words the Father has equipped Him to speak then believe in the works the Father has performed through Him.

Is it really any wonder Philip questions Jesus at this point in the gospel? The disciples were about to experience a radical lifestyle change. Their world was about to be turned upside down. They were dealing with a lot and it's safe to say were under a great deal of anxiety and stress as Jesus has told them once again in the opening verses of Chapter 14 that He is departing them to go be with His Father. He is going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house and in time Jesus says that He will come again and take the disciples also. As so many of us do under a great deal of stress, worrying about the future, and about the fate of a loved one I can only imagine the disciples' memory or ability to recall and trust Jesus' teaching and actions may have been diminished. Their cognitive ability to function and interpret Jesus' final teaching may have been limited due to all they were dealing with. Perhaps, I am giving the disciples somewhat of a pass. Perhaps, I am searching for an excuse for the fact they just don't seem to get it. Yet, if we are all truthful and honest, haven't we all asked the same question as Philip at one point or another. Haven't we all questioned

God at some point in our journey of faith seeking a sign – some visual or audio – expression of God’s presence and that God is really real?

To Philip’s question, to the disciples’ anxiety and fears about what lies ahead, to their continued disbelief in the presence of the incarnate God, and to the questions, fears, doubts, and anxieties those that follow will most certainly have Jesus gives 3 promises.

1. They will be enabled not only to continue Jesus’ work, but also to do greater works (v.12).
2. They will be heard and their prayers answered to meet the needs involved in their life and mission (vv. 13-14).
3. They will be accompanied in their life and mission in the world by another Counselor or Helper, the Spirit of truth (vv. 16-17).ⁱⁱ

Now I certainly can’t speak for the disciples but I can only suspect they found the last 2 promises comforting and helpful – somehow, somehow their prayers will be heard and answered and their needs will be met and that also though Jesus is departing He will send another to accompany them which will be the same Spirit of God that descended upon Jesus after His baptism. Yet, it’s that first promise that would seem to cloud already murky waters. Yes, Jesus has been teaching them and guiding them to carry out His work and bear fruit. OK, they can possibly get their heads around that but now moments before He is to depart them He tells them they will do greater works than He performed in their sight. But not only the disciples gathered with Jesus on that final night before His death but also “the one who believes in me” as He clarifies in verse 12. So, now this is hitting home. We are included in this promise.

As stated earlier Jesus has declared throughout His ministry that the works He does are God’s works, not His own and that ultimately His work is to complete God’s work as He says in 17:4, “I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.” Now Jesus has included the disciples’ and those who believe in the mutuality of that work. “The disciples’ works will be Jesus’ works in the same way that Jesus’ works are God’s.”ⁱⁱⁱ In John Jesus’ works are all acts of ministry that ultimately and always make known the power and character of God. They and those who follow and believe will be agents of revealing God to the world. Their works will be “greater” because they will come after the events of Jesus’ final hour, his death, resurrection, and ascension and therefore will “reveal the completed story of the Word made flesh and hence the fullness of God’s love.”^{iv}

Through the giving of the Spirit that first Pentecost and through the continued presence of the Holy Spirit - God’s people are equipped for a fruitful life after Jesus’ leaving. The Spirit will be with them forever. The Spirit will be with us forever breaking into our lives and into our communities of faith

guiding us in understanding and helping us in our disbelief come to belief that Jesus is “the truth, the way, and the life.”

The Spirit will bind us to the intricate dance of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and be with us as we are sent into the world as agents of revelation bearing witness to God’s love that runs so deep for all of humanity and all of creation that, “God sent God’s only Son into the world so that all who believe in Him may not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) The promises remain: (1) As Jesus is in the Father so He is in us and as God worked in Him so God works in us, (2) Jesus hears us when we call, and (3) He continues to pour out upon us His Spirit, the Advocate, to be with us forever. It is this Spirit that equips us to go forth glorifying God in all we do and making known the work of God in Jesus Christ proclaiming the Easter message, “He has died. He has risen. He will come again.” Amen.

ⁱ *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. IX (Abingdon Press, 1995) 743.

ⁱⁱ Craddock, Fred B., *Preaching Through the Christian Year C* (Trinity Press International, 1994) 277.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. IX (Abingdon Press, 1995) 746.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 746