

Show Us the Father

John 14:1-14

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Do you look like your parents? Maybe the more appropriate question is "how are you like your parents?" After all it is not necessarily how we look on the outside that truly makes us resemble our parents. Many of you have heard stories about my dad. He was a farmer in Wardell, Missouri. He was a man of great faith who taught his family to have faith. He made his decisions on what he believed were faithful responses based on the circumstances he faced. I will give you just two examples. As a young man, my dad quit baseball when games were moved from Saturdays to Sundays because that interfered with his ability to attend worship services. He also decided not to move his family to Los Angeles, where my uncle could provide him a job, because he did not believe it would be a healthy environment for his children. So, I am like my father in some of the decisions and actions I perform. I can equally say I am like my mother for many of the same reasons.

I am aware many will view this video on Mothers' Day and want to thank and celebrate motherhood and your many contributions. But you may wonder why the sermon title is "Show Us the Father?" According to the church calendar this is the fifth Sunday of Easter. The lectionary readings for the Sundays after Easter are filled with instructions for the disciples about how to live as Jesus taught without his physical presence in their midst. This week's reading is a part of the Farewell Discourse of Jesus, preparing believers to consider not only his journey through death to life, but our own.

The disciples gathered with Jesus for the farewell meal. Their hearts are torn and disquieted as they hear Jesus say a long good-bye. They have been following Jesus since he began his public ministry, but they are, at best, unclear in their understanding of his message, vision, and mission. They are not able to comprehend that their understanding is about to radically change.

Following Judas' departure from the fellowship meal, Jesus informs the disciples that he will be with them only a little longer, which prompts Peter to ask where he is going. Jesus provides assurance that they will have an ongoing relationship with Jesus not severed by death, even though they cannot follow him now. Jesus exhorts them to believe in God and in him. Because they have already witnessed his power as "the resurrection and the life" in the raising of Lazarus, they can trust that though he might go ahead of them into a future they cannot see, they will be empowered to follow. He will be able to secure their identities beyond death. Jesus gives the hope for life after death and the promise that they will be with him.

In the midst of this deeply moving farewell speech about Jesus' going away...the Father having a place for them, that Jesus will go away and prepare a place for them...I so appreciate Thomas and Philip! Thomas says: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ... and Philip asked

Jesus to “show us the Father!” Can you imagine Jesus’ frustration...have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?”

Before we are too hard on Thomas, we must remember that we have the same questions as Thomas voices: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (v. 5). The place of the dead remains a mystery for those of still living; it is an impenetrable realm where God abides, yet a place that has room for all who believe in Jesus' identity with God. It is the essence of God to make space for others, and the assurance is that Jesus accompanies the believer home. Yes, I hear Jesus say he is the way, the truth and the life...I know Jesus said he will go ahead of his beloved followers, traversing the gulf between the earthly and the eternal; he will prepare a place for them to be with him, granting their lives enduring significance because he calls them his own...but I still have questions.

In defense of Philip's query: "Show us the Father" (v. 8): the God of Israel was the unseen presence whose name they approached through indirectness; they were not even allowed to say His name, for fear they might use it in vain. They have been looking for a Messiah and believe that they have found him. They believe the Messiah to be immortal, but Jesus is talking about leaving them. They have a vision of a messianic strongman who will liberate the people from Roman occupation, but he is talking about being defeated by oppression. They believe that the Messiah will usher in an eternal kingdom of peace, but Jesus is talking about a horror beyond their most terrified imaginations.

So...the disciples feast at the banquet table of disappointment and defeat. They do not know it yet, but it is not just Jesus who is saying farewell; his crucifixion will mean the death of how they understand the messianic message and mission. All that they have hoped for throughout their lives, which they have believed has come to fruition in Jesus, will soon be nailed to a cross. It will be a long time

before they realize that the messianic message is eternal, even if the Messiah doesn't seem to be immortal. Death will have neither the last nor the lasting word.

Let's go back to the basics, says Jesus: "whoever has seen me has seen the Father." All along, central to Jesus' mission is the relationship between Jesus and God. Jesus says He reveals the Sending One; one who encountered Jesus encountered God. They were witnesses to the Word made flesh, dwelling among them, full of grace and truth. Through him, they are able to see and know God as never before.

The statement "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" is one of the highest claims of Jesus in all the Gospels. Not only does Jesus not speak on his own he says, he does not perform works on his own, either. It is solely because he is fully indwelt by God that both words and works are revelations of life from above. Jesus speaks the true words of God (8:26; 17:8): his healing touch reveals the compassion of God (4:46-54; 9:4; 11:1-44); above all, his death, as an act of friendship love, reveals God's redemptive love for the world (3:16-17; 15:13; 13:1-2).

Jesus words to the disciples and us are:

- Because you believe on Jesus and have seen the Father in Jesus, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."
- Because you believe on Jesus and have seen the Father in Jesus, we can stand firm, even when our hearts abandon us.
- Because you believe on Jesus and have seen the Father in Jesus you will do greater works because Jesus will be with God, a place of advocacy and intercession.
- Because you believe on Jesus and have seen the Father in Jesus our works will bring glory to God through the Son.
- Because you believe on Jesus and have seen the Father in Jesus we can pray and "ask in [his] name" (v. 13), and he assures us he will grant what is asked. These are not just words to be tacked on to selfish requests: To

pray "in the name of Jesus" is to align our spiritual longing with that of our Lord. When we believe in Jesus, we begin to believe in God with the same depth of trust and hope, out of which mature prayer flows. **Molly T. Marshall, Shannon Michael Pater, Donald Senior**

In this pandemic, in isolation, in time of social distancing, the world has a multitude of answers for our problems. Jesus has only one: *Believe in God, believe also in me* (v. 1). "It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (1:18). Through Jesus we know God's promise to love us, to make room for us, to know and be known by us, will never end (1 Cor. 13:8). Therefore, our hearts need never be troubled, for we know the Father. **Cynthia A. Jarvis**

My brothers and sisters, Jesus has indeed shown us the Father!

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