

Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Pentecost

John 14:8-17  
“Doing Greater Things”

The way we might sing some well-known hymns if we were being honest:

1. I Surrender Some
4. Oh, How I Like Jesus
6. I Love to Talk About Telling the Story
7. Take My Life and Let Me Be
8. It is My Secret What God Can Do
9. There is Scattered Cloudiness in My Soul Today
10. Where He Leads Me, I Will Consider Following
11. Just As I Pretend to Be
  
2. Joyful, Joyful, We Kinda Like Thee
3. Above Average is Thy Faithfulness
4. Lord, Keep Us Loosely Connected to Your Word
5. All Hail the Influence of Jesus’ Name
6. My Hope is Built on Nothing Much
  
7. Amazing Grace, How Interesting the Sound
8. My Faith Looks Around for Thee
9. Be Thou My Hobby
10. O God, Our Enabler in Ages Past
11. Blest Be the Tie That Doesn’t Cramp My Style
  
17. I Surrender Some
19. I’m Fairly Certain That My Redeemer Lives
23. Spirit of the Living God, Fall Somewhere Near Me
25. Take My Life and Let Me Be
26. There is Scattered Cloudiness in My Soul Today
  
28. What an Acquaintance We Have in Jesus
29. When Peace, Like a Trickle. . .
31. Where He Leads Me, I Will Consider Following

These hymn titles reimagined, remind us of how fickle our faith is and how mediocre our commitment can be. Once again for this morning’s gospel, we have a small excerpt selected from a much longer, richer, and more complex lesson which is the whole of John Chapter 14. These verses are part of an address by Jesus to his followers (then and now) on why they should not let their hearts be troubled (See Verses 1 and 27) even though he is about to leave them.

The Chapter consists of three exchanges in the pattern:

1. Jesus explains why they should not let their hearts be troubled.
2. One of the disciples, Thomas, then Philip, then Judas (not Iscariot), misunderstands.
3. Jesus adds further clarifications.

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Our attention today is on Philip who is not depicted as a major player among the disciples of Jesus. He raises his hand a few times, makes a couple of statements, asks a question or two. It is then, and only then, that we take notice of him, when we see his name in print. But at other times he just doesn't come to mind. We certainly don't think of him as a top-tier disciple of Jesus, do we? He wasn't a starter on the A-team, not like James and John or Simon Peter.

He wasn't invited to be in on the Transfiguration, and when Jesus went to the garden to pray the night before he yielded his life on a cross, Philip wasn't asked to join him. Why not? He could have slept through the whole thing just as easily as those who did accompany Jesus.

If you were asked to name the disciples of Jesus, you might be hard-pressed to remember Philip. But there is one thing Philip did. He bought wholeheartedly into Jesus and his mission. He believed in the Nazarene carpenter and gave himself wholly and completely to Christ. In the first chapter of John's gospel, immediately after Jesus calls on him to be his disciple, Philip introduces his rather cynical friend Nathanael to Jesus, and Nathanael becomes a disciple too.

And there was the time the men from Greece came to see Jesus. They approached Philip to see if he could arrange an introduction. Andrew, Simon's brother, has a reputation for introducing people to Jesus, but he really doesn't have anything over Philip in that department. Yet, Philip is not that familiar to us when it comes to having been a follower of Jesus. But give Philip his due. He gave himself, and his life, to the Nazarene.

Yet even good folk like Philip, finally lose their patience. He, along with all the others, has watched as Jesus made water into wine, healed the sick and crippled, cleansed the lepers, and brought the dead back to life. Surely these wonderful miracles were signs of even greater things to come. And just as the disciples are prepared to put this traveling show into high gear, to reveal to the people what they're capable of doing, Jesus tells them he is about to leave them.

You are not surprised, are you, that this leaves his disciples confused and sad? "Where are you going?" they want to know. "Can we go with you?" they ask. "Will we ever be together again?" they inquire. "What's going on?" Jesus patiently, but indirectly – did you notice? – answers each of their probing questions. It is a tactic he has used before on several occasions. Earlier, when representatives of the religious establishment had tried to pin him down and discover the source of his obvious power, Jesus used symbols to describe himself.

"I am," he said repeatedly, which, of course is the name God gave for himself when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. "I am... I am the bread of life, I am the true vine, I am the door, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the water of life. I am."

Now, he's talking about leaving them and going to prepare them a place, that where he was going, they would be also. In that place are many rooms – mansions, the King James Version says, mansions! – and he would come again and take them there himself. Let me ask you... Do you think that answers all their questions?

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Of course not. You can almost hear the disciples thinking, "That just doesn't make sense. And it doesn't square with our wishes and dreams and hopes.

We're ready for the kingdom to come, and how can that happen if you're not with us?" It wasn't enough for them, you see, what Jesus has said to them. It's all just a bunch of promises. And they don't want promises, they want proof. Finally, resolved to the fact that they cannot change his mind or get a straight answer out of him, Philip says, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

The text for today follows the question / misunderstanding by Philip who makes the request (Verse 8): *Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied*. It is a questions skeptical people have thrown at Christians for centuries. I would love to have been a fly on the wall and heard Jesus' tone of voice as he responds to Philip: *Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?*

Do you think there might be just a tad of exasperation in Jesus' voice? Hasn't Jesus in fact been with Philip all this time? Yes, Jesus has. And Philip **STILL** does not know / does not **SEE** who Jesus is? Yes, Philip **STILL** does not know. Jesus has been with Philip, but apparently Philip - or Philip's attention - has been somewhere else. So before quickly skimming on through the rest of this passage, stop and take 20 minutes - or twenty years - and ponder Jesus' question to Philip as one he asks you.

Put your own name in the question: *Have I been with you all this time, \*\*\* your name \*\*\*, and you still do not know me?* But before falling into inescapable despair by facing the truth of how deeply shallow our knowing of Jesus is, take comfort in the fact that Jesus immediately and patiently responds to Philip's great longing. Philip's request: *Show us the Father and we will be satisfied* is our longing and our confusion.

We would like to see God, and **THEN** we would be satisfied. (Cue the Rolling Stones, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction.") However, I suspect that no matter what we see and experience of God's grace, some of us remain unsatisfied. It's like we need a constant flow of proof of God's existence and involvement in our lives. No wonder Jesus is exasperated. What will it take for his disciples to fully believe?

But Jesus' response points us to what we already have experienced and know. There is no further, additional, special, secret, "insider," knowledge / wisdom / insight / enlightenment that is needed. It doesn't get any better than this, folks!

And note again, the repetition of the play on the themes "believe in" and "is in." Have I already mentioned that "believe in" needs to be understood as "believe into?" Bonded into. Trusted into. Jesus has bonded into / trusted into the Father; and the Father has bonded into / trusted into Jesus. So, when Jesus says (Verse 11), "Believe me ...," he is not saying, "Have an opinion about me / agree with me ..."

Jesus is saying, "Bond into me / trust into me as the Father and I are." Jesus then makes an astonishing declaration of what the effect of such bonding / trusting will be. (Verses 12-14)

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Unfortunately, we misunderstand, "whatever you ask in my name". It does not mean that tacking on "in Jesus' name we pray," automatically means that we will get whatever we just asked for. The phrase "in my name" should be more clearly translated, "in my honour," so that it would read: *Whatever you ask for that honours me will be granted.* That's a bit disappointing perhaps.

Just when it sounds like Jesus is offering us a "Get Out of Jail Free" card; a free ticket to all the things we want simply by asking "in his name," it turns out he is asking us to align our needs / requests to be in honour of him / worthy of him. So much for the fancy fishing boat I've been praying for! Jesus must surely be crying - or weeping - or both over all the dishonouring prayers that are offered in Jesus' name.

**Verses 15** needs to be understood as John trying to describe the organic unity - the interconnected relatedness - of Jesus and his followers. To be a follower is to have and keep Jesus' commandments / teachings; to keep Jesus' commandments is to love him; to love Jesus is to also be loved by Jesus.

To be loved by Jesus is to also be loved by the one who loves Jesus - his Father; to be loved by Jesus and the Father is to abide in them; to abide in them is to keep Jesus' commandments. (And remember that here "love" means fully devoted compassion.) There are probably at least 3 ways to misunderstand John. One is to treat each of the above (following, loving, abiding) as if they were separate and distinct pieces.

These things are all a whole; you cannot selectively choose only one part: "I'll have the love of Jesus please but hold the keeping the commandments." Another is to treat these as a linear progression: first you follow, then you love, then you abide. In John, the organic, inter-connected relatedness of our relationship with Jesus means that these things are always fully present. It's true that one may be more prominent at any given time, but all are always present and operative.

And the third is to focus on "keeping my commandments" in a blind obedience, totalitarian way. The holistic, organic unity of inter-connected relatedness is total, but it is not totalitarian. Our freely voluntary participation is essential to John's vision. **Verses 16-17, (25-27)** So let's re-remind ourselves that all of this passage is in response to Jesus saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled," and Philip requesting, "Show us the Father and we will be satisfied."

The whole purpose of John has been that we might **SEE** Jesus, and by bonding into him, come to have within us the life that is in Jesus. And here Jesus assures his followers that the Father will send a Truthful Spirit to abide with them, to be among them. The world is full of many spirits - many of them lying and deceiving spirits - spirits that entrap us, captivate us, and leads us astray. But those who are bonded into Jesus will know a Truthful Spirit who will (Verse 26): *Teach you everything; and remind you of all that I have said to you.*

We, who like Philip, have been with Jesus all this time, and still do not know him, should receive this promise with great joy and thanksgiving at Jesus' generosity. We will not be left alone. We will not be left to manage with our own frail and faulty memory. We will not be left to figure things out with only our own dull imaginations. Thank you, Jesus, for knowing us more truly than we can ever know you.

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**Verses 27** begins the conclusion of the Chapter with final comments by Jesus on "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Jesus leaves and gives his peace to his followers. Leaves and gives all that they (and we) need for their total well-being: truth, light, love, teachings, his way. Jesus gives his peace, not in the way the world gives. But in the way the Father gives: wholeheartedly, freely, totally devoted to the good of the other, nothing held back, nothing expected in return, just because that's the kind of person God is: God **SO** loved the world ...