

The Father Revealed
May 23, 2010
John 14:8-17

Our scripture reading today comes from the 14th Chapter of John's Gospel, verses 8 through 17. Listen now for the reading of God's Word for the people of God.

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹²I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

¹⁵"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

Come, O Spirit of God and make within us your dwelling place and home. May our darkness be dispelled by your light, and our troubles calmed by your peace. May all evils be redeemed by your love, all pain transformed through the suffering of Christ, and all dying glorified by the risen life of Christ. [In meditations of our hearts and through the words of my lips, speak to us today, Oh Lord.] Amen.

A Prayer Book for Australia

Earlier in the Easter Season we read a passage from a few chapters back in John where we heard the account of a group of Jews who came to Jesus and insisted, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, then tell us plainly! (John 10:24) It was our consensus during the sermon entitled, “My Sheep Listen to My Voice,” that we often times allow the distractions of the world to drown out the very voice of God. In essence, the voice of God is forever calling to us, but because we get so accustomed to our distractions, we begin to focus our attention on them and we fail to recognize the God’s voice.

Our scripture reading today echoes this very same message, only this time it is not our sense of hearing that is called into question, but rather our ability to see. As a lectionary text for Pentecost, John 14 works rather well in keeping with the theme of Easter we have experienced this year. That is, that the presence of God is forever working within our lives, if only we give the time to recognize God’s presence, listen for God’s voice and hold strong to God’s Word. Our God is not a God that has placed us into this world and forgotten about us or has left us to fend for ourselves. No! God is an active God, one that seeks desperately to be in fellowship and relationship with us. One that finds pleasure in our worship, joy in our prayers and for lack of a better word, a pride in our accomplishments; most particularly those that are according to God’s will and purpose in our lives.

Some may find the passage today to be more about the Father and the Son, than the Holy Spirit, causing some question about the appropriateness of this reading for a Pentecost Sermon. However, if we look more closely, we begin to understand that it is the attention on the Father and the Son, no matter how transparent their presence may be, that is offered to us through the Holy Spirit, which never tries to call attention to itself. The Spirit is, as Frederick Burner once

put it, “The shy member of the Trinity,” whose job in the economy of salvation is ever and always to point away from itself and toward Jesus alone.”

In the book, *The Shack*, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a mysterious Asian woman named Sarayu, who is always coming and going, always doing several things at once. Sarayu never seems to stop and just be still, though she is very sensitive and highly insightful . . . highly in tune with what is going on in the life of the main character, Mack. Mack has a hard time getting to know the Holy Spirit in the beginning, but as the story progresses, he develops a deep appreciation for her.

I think it is a lot like that for many of us. For many of us, our faith traditions have taught us to focus on our God our Creator and Jesus our Redeemer, but very little was ever discussed about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If anything was mentioned concerning the Holy Spirit it certainly was presented in a way that was as mysterious to us as the very nature of the Holy Spirit itself. It is sort of like trying to explain the importance of the drummer in a band. This analogy was given to me by our very own Ms. Sarah Whitfield. Her analogy is this:

The Father (lead singer)

Gets the most promotion; the most "face time"

Jesus (secondary singer or lead guitarist)

Sparks conversations; often emphasized

Holy Ghost (drummer)

Not talked about as much, but is the one who is felt the most, i.e. the drummer keeps the beat and rhythm and inspires you to dance in much the same way as the Holy Spirit keeps us going and inspires us to move (or dance) and act on God's will.

So to summarize, the Holy Spirit is for many of us a life source, like the very air we breathe, that is taken for granted because it is always with us. The Holy Spirit guides us, directs us, reminds us of the importance of the Sword of the Spirit and to put on the Helmet of our Salvation, but we lack an appreciation for it.

This is where we begin to tie in some connections with the scripture reading today. It's about awareness and appreciation for the role God plays in our lives. God is more than a watchmaker who has set this world into motion to fend for itself; interacting only when a correction or adjustment needs to be made. God is always with us and it is through the presence of the Holy Spirit that we are given council with our Creator.

“Show us the Father,” Phillip and the other disciples said to Jesus in John 14:8. “Show us the Father and it will be enough for us.” I can hear Jesus now given the disciples one of Michael's well known remarks, “Really?” Jesus surely was taken aback by the very question they posed. “What do you mean? Have I been with you so long and still you do not know me? You've been seeing the Father all along. If you've seen me, then you *have* seen the Father.”

Now let's not be too hard on the disciples just yet. I mean, let's consider what they've seen and experienced during their time with Jesus. In John 11, they witnessed Jesus weeping at a friend's grave. That doesn't look like the powerful, almighty God that they had been raised to revere. Other times, the disciples saw Jesus laughing with children, possibly expressing surprise when they would question him and rubbing sunburn on his arm. Certainly this could not possibly be the God of heaven. In course of their time with Jesus they'd seen him fall asleep under the power of sheer exhaustion and used his pinkie to pick a morsel of food from between his teeth after a good meal at some tax collectors home. Was what they had seen in Jesus really expected to be a reflection of God the Father?

If we widen our scope to just the 13th and 14th Chapter of John, we see that just moments before this discussion two very important events have occurred. While in the upper room with the disciples the night before Jesus' death, Judas has just fled the scene, having been singled out by Jesus as *the wolf of betrayal in their midst*, and Peter had just been declared the darkest shadow of denial in their presence. So in John 14:1 and again in verse 14:27, when Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled" he does so because there is currently enough trouble to go around. It is not the kind of word we get from some televangelist who stand before their congregations declaring, "Let not your hearts be trouble because with God it is always smooth sailing (provided you send in your check, lay off the booze and love who we tell you to love). No, the word that Jesus is giving here is this: Things are falling apart. Jesus knows that the cross is not far away and things are going to go downhill pretty quickly from here. There is trouble enough to go around; however Jesus is insisting that they remain focused on the mission. "Let not your hearts be troubled," in other words "do not let the trouble you are experiencing become your focus and take root in your hearts."

Jesus soothes their angst by pointing to the Father; to the very Creator who has been with them all along. Sure, their walk along the way with Jesus had hardly felt like heaven on earth. Dusty days of footsore travels, rumbling stomach, and ungrateful crowds did not feel like paradise. Rambling parables that confused their minds, miracles that Jesus had kept hidden from public view and religious leaders who kept threatening them with physical harm did not feel like the spiritual equivalent of the Father's presence. But it was. (Scott Hoezee, May 17, 2010). We are not called to self glorification, self gratification or even greatness in the eyes of mankind. We are, however, called to humble ourselves, to serve those in need and to be obedient to God's will and way for our lives . . . we are called to be different and set apart for the purpose of

bringing God to a lost and dying world. Now we begin to see, just as the disciples did only later after the death and the resurrection of Christ that their journey, our journey with Jesus, is a sacred one; one that has always been and will always be with our Creator by our side. It is only through the Holy Spirit that this revelation was made known to the disciples and is likewise made known to each of us. We are told that the Holy Spirit lives with us and is in us and so we, as children of the light, are led by the Spirit of Truth, however meek and mysterious it may appear to many of us.

So what does a truly Spirit-filled person look like? Well, perhaps more earthly than we think. You see, Jesus says in John 14 that the Spirit will help the disciples recognize the presence of the Father – the presence of the Father that had been there all along though had been overlooked by the disciple due to the seemingly ordinary nature of Jesus. The role of the Spirit would also remind them (and us) of everything Jesus had taught them. It is clear that the role of the Holy Spirit is to come along each of us and to open our eyes, to catch our attention by jabbing us in the ribs and reminding us of all that Jesus had said and to remind us that the larger truth about Jesus is that God had been, though the life, ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ, been revealed to this world in a way that had never been seen before. With the Holy Spirit of Pentecost at our side, all of life is transformed. Some of those transformations may be very subtle, but that in no ways undercuts their almighty power.

Furthermore, it seems the Spirit cannot be recognized by the wider world because, apparently, you have to have the Spirit to discern the Spirit. All of which seems to mean that even people who are overflowing with the Holy Spirit of may end up looking fairly ordinary to the unsuspecting.

Have you ever been driving somewhere or taking a walk and get so wrapped up in the experience that you suddenly realize that you don't know how you got to where you are but you managed to do so safely. That is how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. That is how the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us. As we let the Spirit help us to lose ourselves in Jesus and in begin this disciple, we find that our ordinary day-to-day activities are combined together with a deeper sense of meaning and purpose as the Spirit transforms from no longer just being with us, but as Jesus says in John 14, the Spirit also begins to dwell within us.

So I challenge each of us today to consider the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and seek more and more to see the Father the presence of our ordinary, sometimes mundane lives. For it is through the Holy Spirit that our Creator and our God is revealed to each of us. The altar is open today, as it is each Sunday, if you would like to pray. I am happy to pray with you or you may pray alone or with someone of your choosing, but please don't leave here today without making a conscious decision to come to the Father through the saving power of Jesus Christ revealed to each of us by the Holy Spirit. Amen.