

**+ John 14:8-14 + Big Words of Easter: Faith +
+ 6th Sunday of Easter: St. Philip & St. James, Apostles + 1 May 2016 +**

CIR HIRI!¹ Dear Faithful Followers of the Son of God,

It had been a troubling evening to say the least. For weeks, events had been building up towards that night. Opposition from Jesus' enemies had been on the rise, but Jesus did not shy away from facing that opposition with divine wisdom, which only infuriated his enemies more. There were whispers and rumors of plots to harm Jesus or even kill him, yet he took it all in stride. He didn't hide in the shadows. In fact, his entrance into Jerusalem had been anything but a secret. As the donkey carrying the Master slowly clopped his way into Jerusalem, the crowds of Passover pilgrims shouted to the Lord of grace who would save them and sang ancient psalms of victory to the humble King, who was also true God.

As the week went on, there was a growing sense that something big was going to happen soon. Jerusalem buzzed with anticipation because Jewish pilgrims from all over the known world had come for the annual celebration of God's victory over Egypt to set his people free from 400 years of slavery. Unblemished lambs were selected and sacrificed as a reminder of the lambs whose blood was painted on doorposts centuries before so the angel of death would pass over. Little did anyone realize, but the Lamb that all those lambs symbolized would soon be slain to rescue them.

When Jesus woke up Thursday morning there was an uneasy sense that his sacrifice was coming very soon, but Jesus' disciples weren't really paying attention. When everyone gathered to celebrate the Passover, there was no servant to wash their feet as was the custom in Jesus' day. None of the disciples were willing to stoop down and be that servant to his fellow disciples until Jesus, the true God, did it himself.

It was already a troubling evening full of uneasiness, sorrow, and shame, but then Jesus broke the news to his disciples that the whispers were true. One of them was going to betray Jesus to his enemies. He was going to suffer and die. Every one of his disciples feared being that betrayer, yet none of them seemed to get it when Jesus revealed it was going to be Judas Iscariot. When the Lord told Simon Peter that he would deny Jesus three times, Peter proudly vowed that he would even die with Jesus.

It was a troubling evening and Jesus knew how hard it was going to be for his disciples, so he comforted them. ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."*** (John 14:1) He gave them a glimpse of the heavenly home he would prepare for them. ***"I will come back and take you to be with me... You know the way to the place where I am going."*** (John 14:3-4)

...Or did they? Thomas, who was always trying to wrap his mind around what Jesus was teaching, gave voice to what was on the minds of the disciples on that troubling evening. ***"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*** (John 14:5) It seemed like Jesus' words about heaven weren't sinking in. How would they get there? They had no map, no directions. They weren't even sure where Jesus was going.

Yet the Way was right in front of them! Jesus assured his disciples, ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14:6) Jesus was the only Way to heaven. No one would get there apart from him. No one could stand before his holy, heavenly Father apart from Jesus, but here's the amazing truth he revealed. ***"If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*** (John 14:7) If you've seen Jesus, you've seen the Father. If you know Jesus, you know the Father and you know he is true God.

That was a little much for those troubled disciples on that troubling evening. So Philip spoke up—Philip, who had known Jesus since the first days of his public ministry; Philip, who had urged his skeptical friend Nathanael to ***"come and see"*** this Jesus who was surely the promised Messiah (John 1:46); Philip, who leaned a little too much on his human reason when Jesus asked him about feeding over 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, and who again leaned a little too much on it that troubling night. What Jesus had to say was nice and Philip wasn't a doubter like Thomas, but he did believe in the K.I.S.S. principle—"Keep it simple, Silly!" He wanted to cut through all of that "know me, know the Father" and simply have Jesus reveal the glorious God to them. ***"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."***

¹ "Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed!" This is known as the *Paschal Greeting*, one of the oldest and most widespread traditions in the Christian church. Throughout the weeks of the Easter season, whenever the minister says to the people, *"Christ is risen!"*, they automatically respond loudly and boldly, *"He is risen indeed!"*

You can imagine Jesus patiently looking at Philip with a quiet sigh. This wasn't a hostile enemy denying Jesus' divinity across the table from him. This wasn't a Pharisee trying to prove that Jesus was just another sinful human being. Yes, Philip and those troubled disciples had it coming. The true God was sitting at their table and they didn't get it, but Jesus didn't treat Philip or the others as they deserved. No, he patiently treated them as his beloved followers and gently reminded them who he was. ***"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'? Don'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. Believe 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."***

Jesus reminded them of all they had seen and heard in the past three years. "Remember, Philip, what you have seen from the beginning?" Jesus reminded them of his words. "They're not my own!" He reminded them of what they had seen. Jesus had given his disciples reason to trust him when he fed the crowd of over 5,000 people with so much food they even had leftovers! They had seen Jesus heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. Surely he was the true God himself!

Now Jesus was on his way to fulfill God's promise of rescuing sinners from the angel of death as God's sacrificial lamb. Jesus even promised to bless all who trusted in him. ***"I 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. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."***

After Jesus died and rose again and ascended into heaven, his disciples performed miracles as his good news went to the ends of the earth. Yet as amazing as those physical miracles were, his followers would do ***"even greater things"*** as they shared the message that would change hearts and lives forever—the good news of Jesus forgiving sin, providing peace, and opening heaven forever. Jesus was the true God—and they trusted in him.

How can you know God? Where can you find him? How can you know what God thinks of you? Those aren't just the questions of someone who denies God or who isn't sure if he exists. They are questions that rise up in the hearts of Christians. You yourself may have even asked questions like these at one point in time. Maybe it was during a difficult time in your life—a time full of emotion and trouble. Maybe it was during a time when you were straying from Christ and his Word. Maybe it was during a time when you were struggling with the guilt of a particular sin or the persistence of a sin of weakness or when life seemed overwhelming—and how did you react?

Was it like the disciples? A little doubt, a little fear, a little pessimistic wisdom? You heard the words of Jesus. You heard Christ speaking to you through his Word making promises and trying to encourage your overwhelmed soul, but you ignored him. You were like Philip, wanting to brush aside all that "know me, know the Father" and just seek God in heaven above. Maybe you even tried to crawl up into God's mind looking for answers, even as Jesus looked at you with his patient eyes and said, ***"Trust me!"***

Yes, you and I have been like Philip. We've tried to find God in our hearts, in our heads, in our hands. We've tried to bring God down from heaven to answer for himself. We've sought his glory on our own, all while forgetting that Christ alone is the only way to the Father.

...And yet Jesus still treats you and me not as hostile enemies or plotting Pharisees. No, with eyes full of unconditional love, with hands bearing the marks of love he received on the cross, he calls you back. He looks at you as his beloved follower and says to you and me, ***"Don't you know me...? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."*** With undying patience, Jesus bears with our constant desire to find something in ourselves by which we can come to the Father without him—and he turns us back to him. He shows us mercy and reminds us who he is and says, ***"Trust me!"***

Trust doesn't come easily to skeptical, cynical people like us living in a skeptical, cynical world that sees trust as naïve, yet Jesus calls us to trust him because he is true God, because he is the long-promised Savior, because he did live the life you could not! He did die the death you deserved! He did abandon the grave for you!

So he turns those questions on their head. How do you know what God thinks of you? Look to Jesus—not your heart, not your thoughts, not the wind or sunshine, not to Moses and the impossible Law, but to Jesus—your

Savior, your Sacrifice, your Servant who came to help and rescue you! See Christ reveal himself to you and rest assured that God sees you through Jesus! Where do you find God? Look to Jesus! You don't have to climb up into heaven or down into the depths. Just look to Jesus and see the true God with eyes of faith. Where do you find Christ? Not in your heart or your thoughts or in nature, but in the Gospel—in the Word spoken and read, in the waters of Baptism, in the bread and wine and body and blood of the Supper. There you find Jesus and where you find Jesus, you find God.

Isn't it amazing that even at our lowest, Jesus in his mercy still lets us see God through the Gospel? He even gives us the privilege to do greater things than his miracles as we speak that Gospel into the lives of other people. Know God by knowing Jesus, and in him alone we trust! **CIR HIRI!** Amen.