

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus 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?’ ¹⁰Do 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. ¹¹Believe 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.

¹²Very 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. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

¹⁵If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

²⁵I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Whenever I have preached on Pentecost Sunday, I’ve always worked with the text from Acts. It is a great story, and there is so much packed into it: the wind, the flames, the speaking in various tongues. Today, however, I feel compelled to not focus on those things and the international audience who heard Peter’s sermon, as told in Acts. Instead, I feel moved to focus our attention on the promises Jesus offers to his closest friends one quiet evening. All who are gathered in this upper room sense that this night won’t be quiet for long, though. In this setting, rather than profound wind

and flames, it is simply Jesus speaking guidance and comfort to his closest companions before he begins the next steps of his arrest and crucifixion.

Jesus has just told them that there is a way for them to follow where he is going. But, given the impending doom they all feel, Philip asks on everyone's behalf, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." I am not going to speak for you, but that request speaks deeply to my faith. Can't we see God? Can't our doubts and our longings for some divine assurance be assuaged for once? Just some kind of validation that all this isn't for naught would be nice. Then we would be satisfied, like Philip says. Like I said, I can't speak for you, but sometimes I long for something more to assure me of the Father's presence. Like the song says *I still haven't found what I'm looking for*. "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied," Philip requests.

Jesus begins his response by saying that he and the Father each dwell in each other. He dwells in the Father, and the Father dwells in him... try diagramming that. Jesus goes on to say that if you don't believe him, then believe the works he does: the care he provides, the healing he offers, the good news he brings of a life lived in community that is centered on service rather than power. To be honest, what Jesus has said to Philip thus far probably hasn't alleviated any of his concerns or his fears on this particular evening. In fact, because what Jesus has said is more than a bit confusing, it's possible that at this very moment Philip's concerns are now compounded.

It is right there – in whatever Philip and the others are feeling at that moment – that the good news comes. Jesus promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. This promise is not given to a group of people who are already examples of stalwart faith, people who are already courageous and ready to take on any challenge, people who are already boldly loving one another and the world. They are none of those things. Yet it is to people who are surrounded that evening by fear, confusion, and the difficulty of comprehending all that Jesus is saying... it is to these people that Jesus promises the Spirit.

As Jesus describes it, the Spirit emerges from the mutual love shared from the Father and Son dwelling in one another. This Spirit is offered to people like you and I simply because of the Divine's love for us. We are invited to open ourselves to this love, which sweeps us into dwelling in the Spirit, as the Spirit dwells in us. Once again, try diagramming that. The point of this, however, is

not to make a schematic of how all that works. The point is that when Philip uttered words that indicated that he and the others felt so far from God, that is when grace was offered. Rather than pointing Philip toward a concrete depiction of God to reassure Philip – “look to the hills” “look to the sky” – Jesus instead turns Philip’s attention to the work that Jesus does and to the love shared between Philip and himself. Jesus says in this love shared Philip will find the encounter with the Divine that he has been longing for, and that encounter will embolden him to love others.

Tied into all of this is a comment about the works Jesus does. He already has said that these works testify to the relationship he has with the Father. But then he goes on to say that people like you and me will do greater works than him. Think of that – the care he provides, the healing he offers, the good news he brings of a life centered on service instead of power – we will do greater work than that. I’m inclined to call his bluff. Me? Us? How? It is by the Spirit. Jesus’ earthly ministry was limited to one place at a time, but when God’s Spirit works through people, a lot more can be accomplished. Yet his comment reveals more than just the breadth of the works being done. Remember that he said his works testify to his relationship with the Father. To follow that by saying that our works will be greater implies that the care, the healing, and the service we do testifies to our relationship with the Father.

In our lesson, Jesus tells us that if we love him, we will obey his commandments. So... I suppose it would be wise if we could name these commandments, right? We are in John’s gospel, and there is surprisingly a lack of commandments given in the whole thing. Except for one section of the final discourse where Jesus offers three commandments. Actually, it is just one commandment, but he states it three times to emphasize it. Love one another... Love one another... Love one another... That is the total of his commandments in John’s gospel. So when he says, if you love me you will obey my commandments, he is reminding us to love one another. We are not always going to see eye-to-eye, but love one another. We are not going to always get it right, but love one another. We are probably going to upset one another somehow at some point in time, but love one another. How do we do that? It’s not by our own power, that’s for sure. It is by the Spirit at work in us, compelling us to do the hard work of being loving people even when we disagree.

So this whole response to Philip – all that Jesus has said in today’s gospel – directs us to two truths. First, we are somehow wrapped up into the mystery of God is a love that invites us in to experience the Divine, and that experience is wrapped up with our love for one another. Second, the works of care, healing, and service that we do testimony to this love.

Obviously, this gospel lesson isn’t as mind-boggling as a story with wind, flames, and speaking in tongues. Instead, it is an invitation by Jesus to live into the Spirit. To allow this Spirit to dwell in us, to allow the Spirit to advocate for us, and to allow the Spirit to flow through us and into the world. For those today who are affirming their baptism, I’m so very proud of each of you and the work you’ve put into this process. This day is a milestone, but it is not an ending. There is plenty more to question, grow into, wrestle with, and learn about God. It is a lifetime of exploration. It is an exploration of how this mysterious God draws close to us, dwells in us, and compels us to share love, care, and compassion to this world. I look forward to seeing how that unfolds in your lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.