

### Reading for the Day – John 14.1-14

<sup>1</sup> ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>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? 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. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going. <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ <sup>9</sup>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”? <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

### Jesus the Way to the Father

An address by Revd Fiona Brampton

This week’s meditation is using Jesus’ words ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’, so I’m going to look at the later part of the Gospel reading.

Philip says to Jesus ‘Show us the Father; then we’ll be content.’

I wonder how we learn things? I’m probably a ‘learner by doing’ or kinesthetic learner. That’s certainly true of the learning I’ve had to do over the past few months. Looking at IKEA instructions and trying to make sense of them doesn’t work – instead, I’ve got to have the pieces in front of me, to look and handle them, and then to try to sort out what the picture is trying to say about them. Or, during these times of restrictions, as I’m having to stretch what I know about using the computer, the conversation in the house will go ‘Nicole, how do you....’ ‘But I told you how to....’ ‘Yes, but you didn’t show me (or, you took over from me, so I don’t know how to do it.’ Doubtless, if I don’t use some of these new found skills for a while, I’ll forget what to do.

And how do we recognise people? I guess I have a fairly unremarkable face, given the number of people who don’t remember me, whereas I remember faces, and names if I’ve been told them, very well. Last year, I read a novel ‘The Colour of Bee Larkham’s Murder’. The main protagonist, a teenager called Jasper, has a particular form of autism, where he cannot remember people’s faces at all. He doesn’t even recognise his own father’s face – or his own. He recognises people by the way they behave and by the colour of clothes they wear. Those close to him always wear the same kind and colour of clothes. He also expects people to behave consistently, and in ways that accord with their words – and that’s how the story gets its shape.

There's always that rush, when a baby is born, for people to say 'oh, they've got their father's eyes, mother's smile.....', young people are quick to say 'oh, I'm nothing like my parents.' And then, as we get older still we find connections with past relatives in the way we look, or the things we do, or, we often notice how we behave, or do things in very similar ways to a parent, or someone we've spent a lot of time with.

So let's turn to the Gospel. It was the night before Jesus died. He'd been with the disciples for 3 years. This was the last chance he had to share his message with them – and here was Philip, asking the most basic question. This is the question that John answers right at the beginning of his gospel. 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.' 'Show us the Father.'

John differs from Matthew Mark and Luke in the way he orders his material. John starts out with the statements of his prologue, which we read every Christmas time, and then goes on to illustrate it with what happened in Jesus' life. So, John starts out with the premise that Jesus is the Son of God, there from the beginning. We're familiar with the verse in John 1 which is the culmination of that 'prologue' – 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. For John, we will fully see the glory of the Father's only son on the cross. The Father's glory is shown in the Son's willing sacrifice to save the world.

The other Gospels do a sort of 'slow reveal' of who the Son is – with a crucial moment coming when Peter says 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.'

But let's come back to here. Jesus has been living with his disciples for 3 years, showing them by word and by sign that he was God's Son – one with him.

And Philip says - 'Show us the Father'.

So Jesus replies – to see me is to see the Father. Hadn't Philip, or any of the others actually been listening? Hadn't they been watching? Didn't they understand anything from the Scriptures? It's interesting that it's Philip who, in the book of Acts, is shown explaining the Scriptures to the Ethiopian eunuch, and showing how they point directly to Jesus. But that's to come much later.

Actually, it was quite an audacious question from Philip. For you couldn't see the face of God and live, according to Jewish belief. So to ask to see the Father was risking a lot.

It's why Stephen, in our Acts reading, is deemed to have blasphemed – his final vision seals his fate, as he sees the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

But it's not surprising that the disciples didn't recognise the Father in Jesus. Just before this, Jesus had knelt down before each of them and washed their feet. This was the action of a servant. It's not exactly the actions of the Lord most high

Jesus goes on to talk – in the next chapters – about love. That's how you know the Father, that's how you recognise Jesus as the Father's son, that's how people will recognise you as being friends and heirs.

It's going to take a bit longer for the disciples to realise that the Father is shown by the Son's humility. Later, Peter will refer to Jesus as 'a living stone though rejected by mortals....and 'a stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' Jesus – God touching the leper, eating with the outcast, washing the disciples feet, hanging on the cross, scarred in resurrection – is too much for some people.

So what about us? I've been asked 'so where is God in all this? Where is the Father? Show us the Father.

I'm just going to read the end of the gospel again, but from 'the Message' translation.

'I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I'll do.'

Not so much 'whatever you ask' I'll do – but 'whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing

For Jesus, he didn't ask the question about why people were ill, or social outcasts, or had tired feet, what was important was that – he – and the father – were there amongst them, reminding the ill, the outcast, the dirty that God was with them, and had not forgotten them. The disciples, who knew the scriptures, began to see that this was the God described in the scriptures – the God of the law and the prophets, the Father shown by Jesus

For us, maybe we're a bit confused at the moment. Maybe we're saying 'show us the Father?' And Jesus says – where are those working in my image – it may be those who are putting their own lives at risk to serve others; those who are trying to keep people in touch – look around you. Look at who is 'washing tired feet' – and ask yourselves 'whose tired feet need washing today.' I can't do it , but I can pray for it – that's along the lines of who Jesus is and what he's doing.