

Gospel: John 14:6-14

Holy God, may our hearts be open to your word and our lives reflect your way. Amen.

Greetings to you all as we celebrate the Feast of Phillip and James. I am sad that we can't gather in person today, but in these unprecedented times it is more important to stay safe and protect one another from Covid-19. I look forward to being with you in person later in the year.

Today we gather 'together, yet apart' to give thanks for St Phillip, and to celebrate how his example has influenced the life and ministry of this parish.

As I am sure you are aware, not a lot is recorded about Phillips life and ministry. However, his quiet faithfulness, his gentle care and his courage to speak out records how he opened doors for others to engage with Jesus. He was a true Apostle and Disciple.

John's Gospel tells us that at the feeding of the five thousand Jesus tested Phillip, asking the seemingly impossible question of him; 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' as he laid the foundation for a miracle of hospitality.

Then we hear of Phillip extending hospitality to some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. While scripture does not record that the Greeks actually do see Jesus, what follows is a different sort of revelation, a greater depth of 'seeing'. A profound truth was revealed to them as Jesus spoke of the relationship between God the Father and the Son.

And, in today's Gospel, we see Phillip's naïve curiosity giving Jesus the opportunity to remind the disciples what is at the heart of his mission, and his unique relationship with God the Father.

To put todays Gospel reading into context we need to take a step back to earlier in chapter 14 of John's Gospel.

Jesus and the disciples are gathered at what we have come to know as The Last Supper. Jesus has been speaking about what is to come, it is his farewell speech.

The disciples are understandably troubled. Their beloved leader is telling them something they don't want to hear, let alone understand. Jesus has tried to reassure them with those wonderful words of comfort '*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe in me also.*'

He has tried to tell them that he is not abandoning them, rather it is time for him to return to the Father. In doing so, he will be preparing a place for them to follow. Their journey with him,

their precious relationship isn't concluding, rather, there is still more to come and his time with them has equipped them for the journey.

Another familiar voice is then heard as Thomas says to him, *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"*

And Jesus replies, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

The language Jesus uses in this statement would have had a particular significance to the disciples gathered that night. You may recall in Exodus that God had revealed himself to Moses with the words 'I Am!' and now Jesus is using those same words to describe himself.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

These two words, I Am, explicitly link the Father and the Son. Jesus has offered words of comfort promise and revelation.

And yet Phillip still asks *"Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied"*

I can almost hear the frustration in Jesus voice at this point. A deep breath, a heavy sigh, and Jesus responds, *'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?'*

Have you noticed how many times we hear a similar response from Jesus? The disciples have been close companions to him for some time. He has taught them well. They have had enough faith in his message and his Way to leave behind homes, families and businesses yet they continue to seek affirmation of who he is.

But Jesus, despite his frustration, persists. Because what he is trying to explain is so important. This has been his lifelong Mission and his earthly life is drawing to a close.

Somehow, Jesus must find a way to help these faithful followers to understand that his entire life's purpose has been to make God the Father known; to reveal the very nature of God, and that he, Jesus is the greatest revelation of the person and character of God.

He reminds them, *(7) If you know me (and they did) you will know the father.*

I think Jesus was unbelievably patient, because we know the disciples left that meal, and within days were mourning his death, perplexed at what appeared to be the mixed messages he gave them.

At this stage the resurrection was beyond comprehension. All that was familiar had come to an end.

But we know differently, we know that Jesus' patience and perseverance ultimately allowed his mission to be fulfilled.

The disciples finally 'heard' and 'understood' what it was that Jesus had been telling them and continued his work; to make God the Father known.

The Season of Easter is a Season of Revelation. A time when our doubt is turned to faith.

- We hear of Mary at the tomb. Her grief turned to joy as she exclaims 'Rabbouni'
- We hear of Thomas and his exclamation of belief 'My lord and My God'
- We hear how the risen Christ was revealed in the breaking of the bread.

And today, we are blessed by the revelation that in knowing the Son we also know the Father.

However, these revelations weren't only for information, or to generally encourage our faith. These revelations were setting the scene for Jesus disciples of every generation to trust in his promises and to have the confidence to continue his Mission; to make God the Father known.

As one commentator wrote

Jesus has made known to us the heart of God, and he has entrusted this mission of "making known" to us. In this mission we are not alone. Jesus promises to be with us through the power of the Spirit, to work in and through us to accomplish his purposes in the world. (Elisabeth Johnson. Commentary on John 14:1-14)

Therefore, we become active partners and participants in this mission and the call to discipleship continues.

At times we might find ourselves frustrated and struggle to see the fruit of our labours, however, revelation also continues if we have eyes to see. Wherever there is healing, reconciling, life-giving work happening, this is the work of God.

Wherever there is life in abundance, this is Jesus' presence in our midst.

Wherever there is a voice, such as Phillip's asking '*show us the Father, and we will be satisfied*' we have a care and a calling to make God the Father known.

I give thanks for the way in which this parish lives out the call to make God the Father known. You are a blessing. I encourage you to continue to be faithful disciples. Amen.

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