

Pentecost Sunday

THE SPIRITUALITY OF FAITH

John 14:8-17[25-27]

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Analysis by Steven C. Kuhl

8) Philip said to [Jesus], "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9) 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'? 10) 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. 11) 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. 12) Very truly I say to 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. 13) I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14) If in my name you ask for anything, I will do it.

15) "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17) This 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."

[25) "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26) But 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. 27) Peace 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.”]

Diagnosis: Objective Spirituality

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (external Problem) – *“Show us the Father?”* (v. 8)

Philips request (“Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied”) is the spiritual quest of every age. It is a sincere desire to behold-and to see-God as directly, as sensually, and as objectively as we see and know the world around us. The request certainly sounds innocent enough. And yet, as Jesus’ retort reveals (v. 9), Philip’s request and desire is seriously flawed-indeed, dangerous! For all practical purposes, Jesus insists, the Father has already been in front of his nose-in the person of Jesus himself, to wit: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (v. 11). Still, Philip claims that he has not seen God or experienced God as “Father.” Why?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *“Do you not know . . . believe . . . me?”* (vv. 9 and 10)

Philip’s ignorance or blindness is not just about the “Father” whom he cannot see. His problem is also, more fundamentally, an ignorance and blindness about Jesus the Son of the Father, whom he can see, who is standing in front of his very nose, fleshly, objectively, sensually, indeed, just like we stand before the world. The problem with Philip’s spirituality, or lack thereof, has nothing to do with the senses, but with his troubled spirit or “heart” (14:1, 27); it is a clue into his faithlessness. The problem is not that he cannot see Jesus, sensually and objectively, but that he cannot believe IN Jesus. That is, he cannot believe that Jesus is, in his very person, through the works he does (v. 11), showing us the Father. In other words, he

cannot believe Jesus' claim that "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." (v. 11) Philip's unbelief is his stubborn insistence on seeing the Father APART FROM Jesus rather than IN Jesus.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *No "Greater Works" of the Father in Philip! (v. 12)*

Of course, the reason for Jesus' retort at Philip's request and alarm at his faithlessness is that they are signs that Philip is missing out on the "great works" the Father accomplishes: Philip's salvation. Hence, Philip is in grave danger, and he doesn't even realize it. To try to have God apart from Jesus, that is, to simply demand that God "show himself" apart from Jesus, is to have God not as the "Father" of Jesus but God as judge over the world (Cf. 3:17). Philip is unwittingly exacerbating his own condemnable situation, a situation, too, that is under his nose, through the law of Moses and all other law givers (Cf. 1:17, 5:45), if he would but see.

Prognosis: The Spirituality of Faith

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *"I will do whatever you ask in my name" (v. 13), including, sending "the Advocate" (vv. 16, 26)*

Philip is helpless "in himself" at this point, and Jesus knows it. Therefore, he speaks ever so clearly to Philip and his brand of spiritual seekers: "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (v. 13). His generosity is infinite-he will do WHATEVER -but there is this provision: It can only be done "in my name," in relation to me. For only then is God the Father "glorified," only then can God be known not as judge (before whom sinners cannot stand) but as "Father" (whom children embrace). The WHATEVER of which Jesus speaks here is the heart of the Gospel. Jesus takes on the judgment of God that belongs to Philip and the whole world. On

the cross he suffers it out of existence, by taking it onto himself, and by his resurrection he brings forth a new existence: God as Father for all through the Son. This is a Spirituality that the world cannot know apart from Jesus and his work of glorifying the Father. But there is even more. Jesus' one work of salvation is a several act play. He dies, he rises, he ascends (all of which the church has celebrated these past 50 days), but he also "sends." He sends from the Father the Holy Spirit, the Advocate (v. 16 and 25), whose coming we celebrate today, whose mission is to connect Christ's work and the Father's glory to us, intimately.

Step 5 Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Solution) – *"You know him [the Advocate], because he abides in you" (v. 17)*

Philip's request to "see" the Father happens not by an improvement of his senses nor by some kind of additional sensory display beyond what he has and will see and heard from Jesus in the course of the "three days." Rather, it happens by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who mortifies his troubled heart and replaces it with faith in the saving plan of Father and the Son. In other words, he takes what is unholy and unhealed about Philip's spirit or heart (that which obstructs the work of the Father and the Son) and heals it: the result is faith. What is important to remember is that the Spirit is no more detachable from the Son and the Father in this saving plan, than are the Father and the Son from each other. The Spirit doesn't add to the work of Jesus, but connects the work of Jesus to Philip through faith. And yet, as Jesus himself ecstatically proclaims, this act of Philip (and us) coming to believe that "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" counts as an even "greater work" than the filial work he did in his cross and resurrect. Why? Because without it all that saving work (the glory) of the Father and the Son is in vain.

Step 6: Final Diagnosis (External Solution) – *"Love as Keeping*

my Commandments” (v. 15)

Not only does Philip (and all who come to believe) get to “see” by faith the Father as he is shown through the Son by the Holy Spirit, but he is now privileged to become part of the plan of the Father-Son-Holy Spirit to “show” the Father to the world. This he does by “love,” which, as Jesus describes it, is nothing other than “keeping my commandments” (v. 15). “My commandments” refers not to those commandments of Moses which accuse, but to those commandments of Christ which save. This kind of “new commandment” (cf. 13:34-35) keeping is very important. For in the days to come not only will the world not “see” the Father, but it will not see the Son of the Father, Jesus, either. Rather, what the world will see is the Father’s “other sons and daughters” who proclaim the saving deeds of their Father and elder Brother Jesus, who have with them and in them the accompanying work of the Holy Spirit to create faith out of their words of witness to Christ. Through the keeping of “these commandments” (which is the gospel imperative to steer sinners to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit), disciples like Philip and us will lead a world under God’s judgment (a judgment that is scarcely realized, but which is signaled by “troubled hearts”) to a peace with God that the world cannot give or comprehend in itself (v. 27).