

Sixth Sunday of Easter

HOW WILL YOU REVEAL YOURSELF?

John 14: (22) 23-29

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Analysis by Norb E. Kabelitz

22Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world? 23Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 "I 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 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. 28You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."

Note: Contrary to some commentators, but supported by others, verse 22, Judas' (not Iscariot's) question is a key to verses 23-29; this Judas asks, "How does revelation happen? Why is Jesus revealed to some and not the world?" We get the answer in what Jesus said.

DIAGNOSIS: No Love, No Revelation, No Peace, No Life

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Love Is Absent*

The key to knowing or being known by another or by God is love given and received. Karl Menninger said, "Love cures people—both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it." Love not received (for whatever reason) makes knowing another impossible except superficially and usually prejudicially. If we do not receive and return the love of God demonstrated in Jesus, no revelation of God's true nature is possible. Any other "knowing" or "revelation of God" via nature or religion "leaves us in bondage (and ignorance) to beings that by nature are no gods" (Gal. 4:8).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Peace Is Absent*

Jesus refers to a peace the world gives. The world's peace is usually defined as the absence of conflict and an ordered society created primarily from a mix of power and law. The Pax Romana was a left-handed peace effected by political and military control. But Jeremiah would remind us that such a peace is no peace at all because people are subdued with troubled and fearful hearts. We have a "heart problem" (v. 27). It's been said: "If a child remains completely in your power, (freedom and trust being absent) he/she will never be completely in your love." How can we grow out of a child's love based on fear and need, to a mature love that knows the peace of God?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Life Is Absent*

In the Gospel and letters of John we hear that "God is love"; such love is revealed and defined in the person of Jesus sent by the Father (v. 24). All lively relationships derive from that revelation. That's why John says in his letter, "Whoever does

not abide in love abides in death" (1 John 3:14-16)! By coincidence the text numbers of John's letter hurtle us back to the Gospel of John 3:16-18 where unbelief leaves us in a state of condemnation and darkness.

PROGNOSIS: The Advocate Reveals Christ's Love and Life to the Believer

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Spirit Testifies to the Life of God in Jesus*

The Spirit, the Paraclete (the one called to our side), is sent by the Father to mediate the love of God demonstrated in Jesus to the church and the world (v. 26). The Spirit is to the church what Christ was to the disciples. The Holy Spirit confirms, teaches and enrolls the disciples in the story of God's saving word to the world centered in the mission of Jesus Christ who came to "lay down his life for the sheep" (John 10:15). The Gospel of "God so loved" is the story of how God loves. Those who keep, cherish and hold onto that word become "family" with the Father and the Son (v. 23) To go to the Father (vv. 28-29) suggests the Son's victory over the ruler of this world, whose power would be broken by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Confirmation of Peace*

The historical events of Jesus' life that led to his crucifixion and death are not the world's victory through power and law, but the victory of God through sacrificial love and resurrection. God's love is not an emotion but an act of self-giving love enabling us to make a u-turn from self absorption and self fulfillment to self giving. Neither pain nor pleasure, gain nor loss, have the last word. The last word belongs to the one who cried, "It is finished." Peace and joy are received by us from God when we now know and believe that God is for us and not against us. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our

faith" (1 John 5:4).

Step 6: Final Diagnosis (External Solution) : *The Spirit of Love Reveals Christ to Beloved Disciples*

Because we are loved, love is born in us as an expression of God's life. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Graced by God we are able to be "graceful." Picture this: On the Irish coast there are twin lighthouses, set about 500 feet apart on opposite sides of an estuary. There is a powerful light in one, but no light in the other, only prisms and reflectors that mirror the light from the first. Yet from a distance, both seem to shine equally. Just so, our lives are meant to reflect and mirror the love and grace of God (Albert P. Staudermann, p. 114, *Let Me Illustrate*, Augsburg, 1983). In a similar way, Jesus is revealed from faith to faith and love to love. Isn't that what Jesus said? "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 14:35).