

The Feast of St. Philip and St. James, Apostles  
1 May, Anno Domini 2022  
St. John 14:1-14

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Show us the Father.” Let us see God. Let us know His character and His will. That will be enough. Then we’ll be happy. We’ll be content. We’ll never doubt. We’ll never turn away. Just show us the Father, let us see Him for ourselves. If we can’t see God, how can we endure, how can we be certain?

We certainly aren’t the first to tell God what He needs to do to confirm our faith. We want proof. We want miracles. We want signs. After Jesus fed the five thousand on the mountainside, they asked “What sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” Philip made a pretty simple request of Jesus in the face of promised persecution and Jesus’ impending departure. “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Once we can be sure that the Father is who you say He is, then we can endure what You have told us lies ahead.” Moses made the same request when God commanded him to bring up the people of Israel to the Promised Land. “Please show me your glory.” Show me who you REALLY are and then I will believe.

When times of trouble and hardship settle over you like ominous thunderheads, when one thing after another seems to go wrong, when all your trying and striving seem to only make things worse, it is as though God has been hidden from sight. We ask “Why?” We try to pick God’s brain and figure out what He’s thinking and what He’s doing. “If you’d just show me how this ends or what I’m supposed to do, that would be enough.” When all our confidence lies in a promised outcome, and when our sinful flesh is looking for every excuse under the sun to raise doubt in our hearts, times of affliction and strain come crashing against us and we quickly begin to second-guess the God who has spoken to us. Like Philip we forget that we have seen the perfect image of the Father in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus is God. Jesus is who God is. Jesus is how God wants us to

know Him. There is no difference between Jesus and the Father. Their wills and their words are in perfect unity.

The seeds of discontent and unbelief are planted deep within us. We are constantly wavering, constantly questioning God, doubting His love and His promises. We doubt the Jesus who died and rose from the grave and said "Peace be with you." When affliction and suffering surround us, when our spouse is lying in a hospital bed requiring drastic surgery that will affect us for the rest of our lives, when we are threatened with homelessness, when every rain cloud that passes over fills our hearts with dread and sends us running for shelter, when we are consumed by addictions to control, money, anger, drugs, pornography and every other desire of the sinful flesh then the only thing we can imagine about the Father is that He is angry with us, that He hates us, that He is going to give us exactly what we know we deserve - an eternity of judgment. We believe the imaginations of our heart rather than the life and testimony of Jesus. And it is these seeds of doubt that then lead us to sin, to cast our hearts upon someone or something else to help us, to protect us, to give us joy and peace. But, without fail, these idols fail us. They are empty and powerless. Not only do they not help us, they harm us and leave us worse off than we were before.

It's then that we cry out with Philip "Show us the Father! Show me who God REALLY is!" We doubt Jesus. We think that there is something else of God that we need to know, something that Jesus hasn't told us. Or perhaps we begin to pit Jesus against the Father. "Sure Jesus is merciful and He shows love, but is that really who the Father is? Maybe what Jesus promises isn't what God really wants me to have or maybe those promises are only for other people.

Repent. Stop trying to find God in ways and places He doesn't want you to. When you do that, you don't see God as He wants you to know Him, as He truly is. You will only find confusion and uncertainty. You will find every reason to be afraid. "Let not your hearts be troubled." That is the Father. "Come to me all who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." That is the Father. He doesn't want you to be afraid. He doesn't want you to think that He is nothing more than an unpredictable tyrant who cares nothing for you. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is your Father who cares for you. He is the Father who knows everything about

you because He knit you together in your mother's womb. He is the Father who watches over your every breath, every step. He knows every tear that falls from your eyes. He knows how you tremble in fear and uncertainty. He knows how much you hurt. He sees how the world presses its attack against you. He sees how your guilt would blind you from knowing His love and forgiveness.

And to you God your Father says "Dear child, look only to Jesus. That IS who I am. I am the one who sent Him to proclaim my love and mercy. I am the one who desired that your sin be laid on Him and that He should bear your guilt. What He says, I have given Him to say. What He does, I have told Him to do. If you want to know me, look at Jesus, filled with humility and gentleness. Look at Jesus who heals diseases, casts out demons, raises the dead, and takes away sin. Look at Jesus - I don't hold your sin against you until you show me your really sorry and stop doing them. I didn't send Jesus because you are able to save yourself. I sent Jesus to reach down into the mess and the filth of your life and deliver you, to show you that I am the God who delivers, who rescues, who forgives, who reaches out to the weak, the helpless, the broken, the lonely, the outcasts."

Dear people of God, look to Jesus. That is who God is. Looking anywhere else will not bring you comfort or hope. Jesus is the true and pure reflection of the Father. You don't need something else or more. No matter what troubles you, no matter how impossibly far you have fallen, no matter how the world would have you believe that what you believe is wrong, loveless, bigoted, and not Christian, look to Jesus and there you will know the only truth. Jesus is exactly who God is. He has shed His Blood according to the will of the Father to save you. He has conquered death according to the will of the Father so that you might live. He has given you His Body and Blood according to the will of the Father to feed you and nourish you and strengthen you that you would be preserved until the Last Day when you will see Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit with your own eyes.

Pr. Kurt Ulmer

