



The Ongoing Story – Touchpoint for June 1, 2022

John 14:8-17 (NRSVUE) ⁸ Philip said to him, “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 because of the works themselves. ¹² 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. 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 me 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.”

Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

It seems like a reasonable request, doesn't it?

I dare say, it is what most of us want out of life – to be satisfied. Satisfied with our work life. Satisfied with our home life. Satisfied with our personal life.

And we look to the world or to others to provide that satisfaction, as a reward for what we do and how we act.

So why not ask the same thing of God, or of our religious life?

“Jesus, do this for me and I will be satisfied.” Or, “Church, do this for me and I will be satisfied.”

It seems like a reasonable request, doesn't it?

I was doing a crossword puzzle the other day, and the answer to one of the clues was, “Self-satisfied.” Do you know what the clue was? It was, “Excessively complacent.”

Excessively complacent equals self-satisfied.

“Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

Now if you look at Jesus' answer, Jesus doesn't seem to be all that interested in our self-satisfaction. He's more interested in us continuing his work. Which would really screw up that "excessively complacent, self-satisfied" way of life.

Apparently, Christianity doesn't end with Jesus, and the self-satisfaction that comes with accepting him as my personal Lord and savior.

"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."

Wait a second... I was talking about my being satisfied in my religious state. You know, that smug satisfaction that comes from knowing I'm right and you're wrong if you disagree with me. That self-satisfaction that comes from knowing I have Jesus and you don't. Or if you do, the satisfaction that comes from knowing you agree with me and know that I am right.

"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."

Wait a second... Could it be that I am not the be-all and end-all of my faith life? Could it be that the end goal of my journey of faith is not self-satisfaction, but mission and ministry? Or would it be better to say that there is no end goal to my journey of faith, but that Christ's mission and ministry is the journey itself? The end goal is the journey and the journey is the end goal. They are one and the same.

In other words, "Christ isn't the end goal. Christ is the Way, the Journey, the Life."

So apparently, according to this passage Christianity doesn't end with Jesus, or even my self-satisfaction. There is an ongoing mission and ministry to consider.

Now if this is the case, it really puts a different spin on the verse that follows. Because if there has ever been a verse that has been bastardized into being used for self-satisfaction, it is this one.

*"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."*

That is the perfect self-satisfaction bible verse, isn't it? Jesus will do whatever I want, if I just attach his name to it. Jesus will satisfy my every want and desire.

But that isn't what this verse means at all. We think a name is a noun, a label. We think it is something that is attached to something else. And so, we can simply attach Jesus' name to a prayer and it simply serves as a booster rocket attached to what I want, but it doesn't change what I want, what I'm asking for.

But from a Hebrew perspective, a name is a verb. A name is one's essence. A name is one's way of being in the world. A name is one's spirit. It isn't something to be attached to anything else. It isn't an attachment, but an essence.

And so to pray in Jesus' name or to ask in Jesus' name means to pray in alignment with Jesus' spirit, in alignment with Jesus' essence. When you are praying in Jesus' name, you're praying that what you are asking for be transformed into the spirit and essence of Jesus.

So it is not possible to pray for God to kill our enemies “in Jesus’ name.” See Jesus’ words on how to treat one’s enemies in Matthew 5:44.

It is not possible to pray for God to make us rich “in Jesus’ name.” See Jesus’ attitude towards wealth in Mark 10:25, Luke 12:15, and Matthew 6:15, to name just a few.

It is not possible to pray for self-satisfaction “in Jesus’ name,” ... as this passage from John points out.

I love the way Eugene Peterson puts it in his interpretation, “The Message.”

“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.”

The purpose of prayer then, is not to get God to act in a way which satisfies us, but rather to move us into alignment with the spirit, the essence, of the Divine Mystery.

And to that end, The Divine Mystery sends us the Spirit. Variousy described in John’s gospel as “Advocate,” “Comforter,” “Helper,” “Friend,” and “Paraclete.” It is the Spirit that not only walks alongside us, but abides in us and around us.

It is not so much a possession of ours as much as something that we abide in.

This is the story of Pentecost. The pouring out of Spirit on us all. A Spirit that engulfs us, even overpowers us according to the Book of Acts. It is a Spirit that captures us up into its mission and ministry of reconciliation and restoration, not our desire to be satisfied.

And so, Pentecost is the movement away from self-satisfaction and into communal responsibility. It is the movement away from “Me and Jesus” and into “Us Being Jesus.” It is the movement away from focusing on the Spirit abiding solely in me, and into me abiding in the Spirit that lives in others and all of creation, as well as in me.

This passage is an attack on that now overused statement, “I’m spiritual, just not religious.” That statement is not just an attack on organized religion, it is an attack on the communal nature of Spirit.

As Beverly Gaventa once wrote:

“The statement is revealing, not just for its implied disdain for the life of religious communities, but also for its reduction of ‘spirituality’ to a personality trait. To say that ‘I am ‘spiritual’ here is on par with saying that ‘I am patient or thoughtful or generous; it is a description that is all about ‘me.’ The celebration of Pentecost invites us to reflect on the spirit (or spirituality) as something other than a trait attached to certain individual personalities (and presumably not to others). ...”

And so, Pentecost is the story of a Christianity that doesn’t end with me and Jesus, and my worship of him, but a story that continues on in you and me. A story of us continuing on and doing the works of Jesus, and even greater things, as he has promised.

This is who the Mystery trusts with the ongoing deeds of love in a world deeply hurting. This is who the Mystery trusts with the work of the restoration of the world. It is you and me.

Are you ready for that? It's more than a little intimidating, isn't it?

Yet in John's gospel, the promise of Pentecost does not come to completely faithful, courageous people, already loving one another and the world boldly, already worshiping in spirit and truth. It comes to the disciples in the midst of their confusion and fear, which has made them unable to grasp what he is saying.

And it comes to us, who are often looking for self-satisfaction in our relationship to God, others, and the world.

It comes and shakes us from our excessive complacency, moving us out of ourselves and into alignment with the essence, the spirit, the name of Jesus.

And so this Pentecost we pray...

Come Holy Spirit... in Jesus' name... Jesus' way... and Jesus' truth and life.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Spirit of the Living God

(Celtic Spirits)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Life of Christ Renew Me

(Margaret Rizza)

Life of Christ renew me, Way of Christ direct me,
Truth of Christ restore me, Peace of Christ surround me. *repeat*

Word of Christ instruct me, Prayer of Christ enrich me,
Work of Christ inspire me, Light of Christ shine through me. *repeat*

Cross of Christ redeem me, Pain of Christ be in me.
Bread of Christ sustain me, Fire of Christ enflame me. *repeat*

Breath of Christ flow in me, Strength of Christ support me,
Joy of Christ uplift me, Love of Christ transform me. *repeat*

Peace of Christ surround me, Light of Christ shine through me,
Fire of Christ enflame me, Love of Christ transform me.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Taize Reflections)

Benediction

My Peace

(Keith Duke)

Peace to know, Peace to live,
Peace to show, and a peace to give.
It's a peace to share and a peace that cares.
My peace I give unto you. My peace.