



Easter 5

10 May 2020

John 14:8

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

John 14:9-11

Jesus said to him, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?' 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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me

If we know Jesus we know God. As we look at who he was and what he did then we find God. The risen life of Christ brings us the eternal radiance of the Divine in our world.

In the moments of celebration, at the high points of life, God is there

God celebrates with us.

In the dark moments, at the low points of life, God is there.

God sustains us.

In the moments of doubt, when decisions challenge us, God is there,

God unfolds the way forward.

In the certainty of the life of faith, when we are inspired by the way of belief, God is there.

God treads the path with us.

For we are the people of God and the living Christ is our guide.

Jesus 'living presence makes our prayers real and our faith understandings true.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Hymn 470

*Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days:
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer
their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share*

*Rejoice in those saints, unpraised and unknown,
who bear someone's cross, or shoulder their own;
they shame our complaining, our comforts our cares:
what patience in caring, what courage is theirs!*

*Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days:
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
In loving, in living, they prove it is true:
their way of self-giving, Lord, leads us to you.*

Confession

O God of all creation, we admit that we are sometimes self-righteous when we encounter people of other faiths, simply assuming that you belong to us alone and our experiences of the Godly in life.

Recall us, then, to your truth, O God, the truth beyond human parochialism.

Help us to own our fragile humanness before you and before those around us, we pray.

O God, we know how easily we are over-critical of our sisters and brothers, even those in our own faith communities, more complacent in our own certainties than we have any right to be.

We become rigid in our own life directions as though we ourselves are the embodiment of the divine and its realisation. Recall us, then, to your truth, O God, truth beyond our inward-looking human understanding.

Help us to own our fragile humanness before you and before those around us, we pray.

When we push away the ideas and insights of others as though we have fully realised your intended future in our faith community and our personal journeying: recall us, then, to your truth, O God, truth beyond our experience and desire.

Help us to own our fragile humanness before you and before those around us, we pray.

Assurance

In God we find truth and grace greater than any human understanding. When we give up on ourselves and on others in our life encounters God restores our hope, again and again and we are embraced by God's truth. So we are forgiven for our limitations and our limiting of life and enter into God's renewal, knowing the power of Resurrection.

Thanks be to God.

We catch a glimpse of God's beauty and truth and we hear an echo of God's loving voice. Then we see the life of Jesus the Christ among us and, in each other, goodness and love with its unbounded consequences as we are enabled to walk together in Jesus' way, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We bring you our thanks and praise and our self-commitment in faithful living: In the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Acts 7:55-60

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Gospel John 14:1-14

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going". Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

Hymn 745

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness
and all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu alleluia.*

*Ask and it shall be given unto you seek and you shall find,
knock and it shall be opened unto you. Allelu alleluia.*

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia

Reflection

When life becomes tough and puzzling, most of us are like Thomas and Philip. We are always hoping that someone will come up with definitive answers and conclusive arguments. But then, if all that they then offer is their own conviction and particular commitment we can so easily turn against them in anger and disappointment. As happened with Stephen that only confirms our doubts and confusion drawing frustration and anger that anyone should be claiming superior knowledge in **their** human existence. Yes, their **human** existence. And that is surely the ultimate act of blasphemy and deception or so thought the mob that stoned Stephen and with whom Saul had identified in his youth. Yet right from the beginning of his risen reality Jesus had been pointing his followers in quite a different direction.

Jesus had given **himself** not merely his ideas. His human revelation of God as the One whom we are invited to engage with, was not to be described and wrapped up in the clothes of dogma and rules. For what he wanted of the followers who would be his people and his witnesses henceforth was doers and be-ers. The Jesus who is **the way, and the truth, and the life** and the guarantor of all faith in action- Yes, the one who promises **Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it** -is the true revelation and articulation of God. This is what being faith people means. And thus it was that Stephen was the first Christian martyr-saint. The one who first identified with the call to be one with Jesus, regardless of the cost, beyond mere ideology.

Hymn 552

*Come, my way ,my truth, my life
such a way as gives us breath,
such a truth as ends all strife,
such a life as killeth death.*

*Come, my joy, my love, my heart,
such a joy as none can move,
such a love as none can part,
such a heart as joys in love.*

George Herbert

O God whose life is a mystery of love, not dogma, we can never fully know your will or the completeness of your Divine person. Yet, in confidence, we bring you our prayers for ourselves, for others, for the church and for the world. We stand in awe for the power of creative change, the profound wisdom and inspiring courage which lies within your Holy Spirit active within us. In our very human frailty, transformed by resurrection life beyond mere human dogma, we offer you our prayers and commitment.

Hear us loving Christ; be with us, Holy Spirit and hold us in the hollow of your hand, Father God.

We would bear witness to the love and goodness which lives in your Being revealed in completeness in Jesus the Christ your Son. Our lives are never more than but pale echoes of your grandeur, our actions but brief glimpses of your passion for justice and truth. But we know that you have no other hands but ours for the doing of your will in our generation. As we pray for the peoples of the world of today and those of the future to come for this planet for which we are but temporary custodians and carers

Hear us loving Christ; be with us, Holy Spirit and hold us in the hollow of your hand, Father God.

Touch our minds and hearts with an ever deeper awareness of the demands on us for proper stewardship and deeper awareness of the signs of our profligacy and injustice. May we have an ever more abundant dream for all those whose lives we touch, for those whose future is in our hands. Break into our narrow perceptions of reality as if our present fears and challenging dilemmas are only important if resolved for our immediate needs and specific future, not as steps towards a world for our children and our children's children. Warm our hearts and souls with the fire and determination of your love for all creation, Lord Jesus Christ, so that we transform the way we live together.

Hear us loving Christ; be with us, Holy Spirit and hold us in the hollow of your hand, Father God. Thus we pray in the words that Jesus taught us;

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

Hymn 157

*O Lord of every shining constellation
that wheels in splendour through the midnight sky
grant us your Spirit's true illumination
to read the secrets of your work on high.*

*You, Lord, have made the atom's hidden forces
your laws its mighty energies fulfil;
teach us, to whom you give such resources,
in all we use, to serve your holy will.*

*O life, awaking life in cell and tissue,
from flower to bird, from beast to human brain
O help us trace, from birth to final issue,
the sure unfolding of your ageless plan.*

*You, Lord have stamped your image on your creatures
and, though they marred that image, love them still;
uplift our eyes to Christ, that in his features
we may discern the beauty of your will.*

*Great Lord of nature, shaping and renewing,
who made us more than nature's heirs to be,
us to tread, with grace our souls enduing,
the road to life and immortality.*

Benediction May Christ walk with us in our living,
the Holy Spirit light the road ahead
and the Creator expand the horizons before us as we go.
In the eternal name of God.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr