

Comfort in the Darkness



John 13 – 14

Where can you find comfort in dark times? In the words of Jesus.

**Carol B. Ghattas
2022**

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will

come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no

hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

“Come now; let us leave.”

John 13:31 – 14:24 (NIV)

Glorified

What is the glory of God? How was Jesus glorified? It begins with the cross.

It was night. Jesus had just given Judas that piece of bread and told him to act quickly. Darkness now surrounded the remaining disciples as they waited to hear the next words from their teacher's mouth.

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. John 13:31-32

From darkness to glory—all in a moment.

Did you see that? One minute he knows a betrayer is in their midst, and the next, he's talking about his glorification.

Not just once but FIVE times.

What does it all mean? *Now the Son of Man is **glorified** and God is **glorified** in him.*

This is the point in Jesus's walk toward the cross where he knows there is no turning back. By sending Judas away into the night, he's set in motion the act necessary to send him to the authorities. He set up his own arrest.

He knows that without the cross, there is no glorification, because without the cross there is no obedience, no sacrifice, no atonement for mankind. Without the cross, God cannot show his power and glory in the resurrection.

The Glorified Christ is the Risen Christ.

Jesus moved one step closer to revealing this to all the world during that dark night with just eleven men. For him, the work was being accomplished even before he uttered his final “it is finished” several hours later.

When the Son of Man is glorified, when his magnificence is revealed, God too is revealed in him, for they are one.

Think about those moments of glory:

- When the disciples had a glimpse during the transfiguration, they fell down in worship.
- When Jesus uttered his last breath, even the centurion guarding him declared, “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54).
- When doubting Thomas saw the risen Christ, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)

The apostle Paul explains this glorification well in his letter to the church in Philippi:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at

*the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and
on earth and under the earth, and every tongue
acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of
God the Father.*

Philippians 2:9-11

The world's ultimate recognition of the Lordship of Christ is what brings glory to God, for God himself has achieved this salvation for us through the sacrifice of his Son on our behalf.

What a glorious wonder is the salvation we receive from the Son of God. We, who should have stayed in the darkness and died in our sin, have through him, now been made free and able to walk in the light as he is in the light.

There are still dark days ahead in this story, but oh, for the glory, we press on in him.

As I have, so you must

How is the darkness dispelled? By children of God loving one another to God's glory.

Through the ages, parents have had these talks with their kids. "You're on your own now. Remember what I've taught you. Don't forget where you've come from."

Sometimes we need that parent-child talk from Jesus.

I need to turn back to his words when the darkness closes in, and I'm forgetting his purposes for my life and this world in general. Thankfully, he understands that and left us with some wonderful words of comfort and encouragement in the last several chapters of John's gospel. We're still moving through chapter thirteen today, where we find these words:

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

John 13:33-35

He is talking to grown men, but Jesus doesn't hesitate to call them his children. After all, he's taken them in, nurtured them, taught them, and basically raised them in the faith for the past three years. They were family—children in the family of God. They were as dear to his heart as children.

We too are dear to the heart of Christ. We are his children.

Even so, there comes the moment when Jesus, like the parent of a high school graduate, must push us to take ownership of our faith and walk into the world on our own two feet. We know, post resurrection, that he doesn't leave us on our own, but I doubt the apostles grasped that yet. Still, we have to live out his command on our own.

AS I have loved you, SO YOU must love one another.

It shouldn't be that complicated. It was easy to spot Jesus's love for his people. He ate with them, laughed with them, cried with them, disciplined them—and died for them.

Now it's our turn.

Why, when the darkness comes, does it seem so hard to let the glory of God reveal itself through our love for the Body of Christ? Maybe, we're letting ourselves get distracted by the world's attempt to cloud our thinking. We prefer isolation to fellowship. We eat alone rather than in the company of others. We hide our tears for fear of ridicule.

No wonder Jesus repeats the word *love* four times.

He wants us to get the message. Remember, he repeated glory five times just before this.

When we love as he loved us, God is glorified through the Son's glory shining through us. Why?

Because we cannot love as Christ loved without recognizing the glory of Christ through his atonement provided by the cross on our behalf.

Yet, when we do and when we show that love to our fellow brother and sister in Christ, the world takes notice and recognizes us as his disciples.

Have you stepped out in confident faith, shining with the glory of Christ as you love your fellow believer? If you have, the darkness has no power in your life and is dispelled in the wake of your love, modeled on that of your Master.

But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

1 John 2:5-6.

Walk on, oh child of God, to his glory.

Will you really?

Does Jesus question our obedience because we're too busy interrupting? What is he saying to you today? Will you really obey?

Who identifies with Simon Peter? Now, who identifies with him before the resurrection? Right, I'm not talking about the bold, fearless Peter, who preached at Pentecost, I'm talking about the dull, speak-before-you-think Peter, who dared to rebuke Jesus.

Now, who identifies with Peter?

Though we may not like to admit it, just like so many other fallible characters in the Bible, God allows us to see Peter's humanity to remind us that Jesus can transform us too.

I feel sorry for Jesus. In this passage we read in John 13, we know his heart is heavy. He's sent Judas out into the darkness to set the stage for his arrest. The crucifixion is right around the corner, and he wants to use these last moments to share important words of comfort and guidance to his disciples.

Peter is far from comic relief, but just another reminder to the Messiah of why he had to come.

Without Christ, we are hopelessly doomed in our ignorance.

He had just talked to them about the importance of loving each other, when Peter breaks in:

Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" John 13:36-38

Peter starts with the question: "Where are you going?" Jesus had already told them they couldn't come where he was going. It seems obvious to us that Peter would have realized he was talking about his death; after all, he'd spoken about it just after coming to Jerusalem.

Again, with patience, Jesus tells him that he can't follow him where he is going. This time, however, he does add: "but you will follow me later." Though Peter didn't know it, Jesus knew that this bold disciple would ultimately follow his Lord, martyred for his faith.

Still clueless, Peter rashly claims he'd lay down his life for Jesus.

Will you really, Peter?

Instead of dying for his Master, Peter would, that very night, deny him three times.

I feel the heart of Jesus in this statement, and it draws me to the tears he wept on the day of his triumphal entry to the City of David:

If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

Luke 19:42

“Oh, Peter, if you had only known what I am facing on your behalf, you would not say such rash things.”

What is Jesus trying to say to you today that you’re not hearing, because you keep interrupting him and plying him with questions and rash statements?

Is he reminding you that the days are short?

Is he telling you to show your love for him by loving your brother and sister in Christ?

Is he telling you that you will follow him in sacrifice for your faith?

Or is he asking, “Will you really?” because you’re not listening?

Peter came to a point of confession for his sin and was restored and used in wonderful service to the Kingdom. Because we serve a Lord who forgives, we can too.

Trouble vs. Trust

What do you do when your heart is troubled? Trust.
And make sure it's in Jesus.

Peter was probably still reeling over what Jesus had just told him: "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." John 13:38

He was probably hearing roosters everywhere! Poor Peter. He couldn't win for losing. But Jesus knew that, and I'm glad he did, because his words that begin the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel are just what I need:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. John 14:1

We're going to sit on this one verse today, because I need it, and I have the feeling you do too. Either way, Peter did, and so did the other disciples sitting around the table that night. Jesus had spoken about his betrayal and his death, though I know, without the Spirit, they really didn't grasp it all. Still their hearts were burdened.

What does Jesus tell us to do when our hearts are troubled? Trust.

Do we just throw our trust anywhere or on anyone? No, we trust in the God who loved us so much that he sent

his only Son to make the way for our salvation, and we trust in Jesus, whose obedience to God and love for us led him to give his life in place of our own.

They alone are worthy of our trust.

However, have we forgotten that? Have we let our troubled hearts shift our trust to things that “seem” more tangible?

- Our family
- Home
- Job
- Money or savings
- Government
- Health
- A vaccine
- Self?

Are you trying all these things, but finding your heart remains troubled and disturbed?

Your trust is misplaced.

Pray through this verse in confession to the Lord, returning your trust where it belongs:

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. Isaiah 30:15

Don't let your heart be troubled, trust in Christ and let him quiet your spirit and renew your strength. The

world has enough troubles of its own, let Jesus have yours.

A Place for You

Feel misplaced on this earth? You don't have to. Jesus prepares a place for each person who puts their trust in him. Find your place in Christ.

Last week Jesus told us to chill and trust. How has that worked for you? Did you find strength in quietness and trust when you laid everything at Christ's feet?

If you're still troubled in heart, press into Jesus, as he continues to speak to us in John's gospel:

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:2-3

The disciples, and especially Peter, were troubled because they couldn't grasp where Jesus was headed or why they couldn't go with him. Little by little, Jesus continued to express for their pre-Spirit-filled minds all he was getting ready to accomplish.

He wanted to show them with these words about God's house that his pending death had both a present and future purpose.

Through his death and resurrection, Christ makes for us a place.

Though God's eternal home is huge, there was a no vacancy sign outside. Sin had locked the door to those he created to be in relationship with him. Jesus came to provide the only way to once sinful men and women to enter into the mansion.

Not only does he make the way, but he prepares a place for every person who accepts his salvation.

So, when the troubles of this world get heavy, we can rest in the knowledge that this place is not the final place.

You have a place with Jesus, and he won't forget to come back to take you there.

After all, we're created for relationship. The family of God may be spread around the globe on this earth, but one day, we'll each have our own room in the House of God for eternity.

I look forward to fellowshiping with Father, Son, and Spirit in that place. What about you?

Close your eyes and meditate on the wonder of having your place in that place one fine day.

Till He Comes.

The Way

Not sure where you're headed? Lost your way in life?
Turn to him who is the Way.

Did you know that Christians have not always been called *Christians*? (Acts 11:26). No, before that, they were called followers of the Way (Acts 9:1-2. See also Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4, 24:4, 14, 22).

Have you ever thought about what that meant or where it came from? We can find the answer in today's reading from John 14. Jesus was having this back-and-forth with his disciples about where he was going and the preparations he was making for them. Then he told them:

"You know the way to where I am going."

"Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." John 14:4-6

Jesus now tells them they know the way to where he's going. Though they couldn't follow him there now, they would eventually, and they apparently knew how.

This was obviously news to the disciples, which leads to Thomas's question. How could they possibly know the way, if they didn't have a clue to where he was even going?

The Way answer was literally looking at them in the face: *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

Where were they going? **To the Father.**

How would they get there? **Through Jesus.**

As Paul later referred to "seeing through a mirror dimly," the disciples were getting a blurred picture of what would be made immensely clearer with the arrival of the Holy Spirit post resurrection. Thankfully, John wrote it all down, so we could understand it as well.

To be a follower of the Way is to be a follower of Christ. What is Christ the way to? God. To know Christ is to know God and live in fellowship with him.

Jesus wasn't leading the disciples to a government overthrow or religious earthly kingdom. He was leading them to a relationship.

Knowing the Way (Jesus), leads us to the Truth of God's message for the nations and Eternal Life in fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Being a follower of the Way does shake the world because we are no longer intimidated, as we live in

security and peace through the hope only Christ can give.

Though I don't mind being called a Christian (a little Christ), I really like the idea of being referred to as a follower of the Way, as it can open doors to more conversations. "The Way to what?" a person might ask. To which I can reply, "Not the Way to what, but to whom. Jesus is the Way to God, and since he's the only way, I choose to follow him."

I find it interesting that in the polytheistic Greek and Roman world of the day, only the beliefs of Christ followers were called the Way. Everything else is just a way to something. Only in Christ do we have The Way to the One God and Father of us all.

May his way be your way today and always, to his glory.

What's Enough for You?

What will it take for you to believe in God? What is enough proof for you?

By the time we're reading the fourteenth chapter of John, the disciples had been with Jesus for three years. They were just days before his arrest and crucifixion. While the tension was thick, Jesus was still trying to leave them with as much comfort and direction as he could.

They were still having trouble getting it, though. Boy, does this show me how much we need the Holy Spirit!

Jesus had just clearly stated that he was the way, the truth, and the life. Only through him could anyone hope to reach the Father. He shared with them:

If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

John 14:7

Peter and Thomas had shown their ignorance, and now it was Philip's turn:

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." John 14:8

Wow, is this how we are without the Holy Spirit? Here he was, standing in front of God Incarnate, and he

couldn't see that by looking at Jesus, he was looking at God.

Yet, how many times have we, post-Pentecost, asked God to show himself or reveal his will?

When will what we have ever be enough?

Does God not show himself in the universe? In creation?

Has he not revealed himself in his Word, in Christ?

Does he not show us glimpses of himself in the faces of those who follow Christ?

Do the works of the Holy Spirit in our life and churches not give us enough of God?

When is enough enough?

Maybe we can say Philip had an excuse, but we do not. God clearly reveals himself in his Word, through Christ, and by the conviction of the Holy Spirit on every heart who seeks him.

That is enough. It was for me, and I pray it is for you.

If it is—believe. That will be enough for God.

The Evidence

How much evidence does it take to make a clear judgement in a case? How much does it take you to believe that Jesus is the Christ? How much does it take to keep you following him?

Almost immediately when I wrote the title, I thought of the great book by Josh McDowell: *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. That's what is basically happening in this extended conversation between Jesus and his disciples in the fourteen chapter of John. Pre-Holy Spirit, Simon, Thomas, and now Philip were all having trouble understanding and believing.

Philip had just confessed that if Jesus would just show them the Father, that would be enough, when Jesus basically let him have it:

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. John 14:9-11

Again, they'd been with Jesus for three years. They'd heard him speak in ways and with authority no one had

ever spoken, and they'd seen miracles by the number. What more would it take?

This encounter drove me back to an earlier one recorded in the same book, from the earliest of days in his ministry. With a few of his early followers, Jesus had gone to a wedding and now was clearing the Temple of those buying and selling animals. He prophesied of the ultimate sign that would reveal his authority to all.

John tells us these miracles led many to believe in his name, "but Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men." John 2:24

Those who believed just on the miracles alone, would have a shallow faith that would not last. We know this, because many of these who followed him as a miracle worker would later cry out for his crucifixion.

Over the course of three years, however, his close disciples had so much more than just the miracles. They had the Word of God. This is why Jesus is so indignant at Philip's request to see the Father, for he tells him that every word he spoke was not his own, but that of the Father, living in him.

Yet, he pushes Philip to at least have the faith that those from the crowd had: "At least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

What does it take for us to believe Jesus is the Christ?
What will it take for you to believe that he is one with
the Father?

Will you believe his words? His miracles? What more
evidence do you need?

If you're reading this, and you're already a follower of
Christ, don't ignore the questions. Sometimes,
especially in hard times, we too forget who we've been
following. We doubt his plan. We doubt his presence.
We doubt God sees and hears.

Jesus asks us today as well: Don't you believe? What
more evidence do you need?

He who was with us yesterday is with us today and for
eternity. May our faith rest confidently in the evidence
he's richly provided. It is more than enough for a clear
verdict.

Greater Things

What does belief in Christ, prayer to the Father, and the presence of the Spirit produce? Greater things.

Jesus knew what his disciples needed. After a long conversation, where they'd expressed both their stupidity and doubts, he was still patient with them and wanted to let them know that there was so much more to come post resurrection.

He knew they would look back on this conversation and be embarrassed and yet grateful that their teacher had used their ignorance to reveal some exciting truths. At the time, though, I think these next words from his mouth would have greatly confused them:

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:12-14

The faith Jesus was telling Philip to have would lead him to do even greater things than they'd witnessed over the past three years. How could that be?

Because I am going to the Father.

We will hear in just a few more verses that by going to the Father, Jesus would be able to send the Holy Spirit.

Only then would those who believe have the same empowerment to make requests that would be heard and answered by God the Father.

I love the intertwined relationship of the Trinity with that of the believer in these few short verses. The relationship that brought the world into being, is the same one that must be called upon to do great things.

- It requires faith in Jesus as the Son of God.
- Filling of the Spirit, given upon faith in Christ.
- Spirit-guided prayer to the Father in Jesus's name.
- With the goal of all the glory going to God.

While we can be tempted to think of the greater things as amazing miracles, like healing the sick or giving sight to the blind, as we look at these verses, there is a deeper sense of the word.

Sometimes, it's in the smallest act done in Christ's name and to God's glory that mountains are moved for the Kingdom. No miracle compares to that of a person coming to faith in Christ as Savior. As we pray for God to work in their life, use us as witness, or draw them to Christ, God hears and responds, because in this, we are asking according to his will and to his glory.

There is nothing greater than seeing a life transformed in Christ.

Faith in Christ, prayers to the Father, and the work of the Holy Spirit enables that to happen and for us to be a part.

What could be greater? Nothing.

Do You Love Me?

How does the world know we love Christ? By loving each other. That, after all, is what he commands.

Today, we're going to look at one verse in our study of the fourteenth chapter of John:

If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:15

This verse is so straight forward, that even in multiple English translations, it doesn't change.

IF you love ME...YOU WILL obey what I command or my commandments.

This got me thinking of a song my husband and I loved from the movie "Fiddler on the Roof." It centers around Tevye's question to his wife: "Do you love me?"

In her response to her husband's question, Golda lists all the things she's "done" for her husband: milked his cow, raised his children, cleaned his house, etc. It was in her actions that she realized when asked that she did love her husband after twenty-five years together.

Jesus made it just as simple for his disciples.

What will show their love for God? Their obedience to the things that please him.

If you're asking what the commands of Jesus are, you don't have to look far to find the answer. We've actually already talked about it in the previous chapter:

*A new command I give you: **Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** John 13:34-35*

Again, sounds simple enough. Then why do we make following Christ so hard? Because just like the Pharisees of his day and of the days after Moses, we pile *extras* onto the simple commands of God.

We say things like:

- If you love Christ, you'll be in church every Sunday.
- If you love Christ, you will not miss a Bible study or prayer meeting.
- If you love Christ, you will read your Bible EVERY morning at 5 a.m.
- If you love Christ, you will pray for a solid hour.
- If you love Christ, you will never make a mistake.
- If you love Christ....well, I think you get the picture.

All he said was, if you love me, you'll obey what I command.

John, the "beloved disciple" got it. He, after all, stuck to Jesus like glue during his three years of training. He

watched and listened and soaked it all up. I think that's why he was so able to repeat his Master's words so well and add some extra words of comfort. See if you catch them here:

This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:2-4

Jesus is not asking his disciples anything hard, and John confirms that: "his commands are not burdensome." He gives his Spirit to help us to love. This is the same Spirit that in concert with the Father, sent the Son to save the world "while we were still sinners." If God can love us, as broken and sinful as we are, then we can love "sinners saved by grace" to show that we love God.

Do you love Jesus? Show it by your love, for that is what he commands.

Unacceptable

He who is unacceptable to the world is perfectly acceptable to those who follow Christ. Who is he? The Holy Spirit.

Jesus knows we can't do life alone. It's so clear in these verses from John 14, that he knew his disciples were still pretty clueless about what lay ahead for him and them. Life was not going to get any easier.

That's why they needed the Holy Spirit.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:16-18

The Holy Spirit serves as our advocate, standing up for us before God. When we put our trust in Christ, he places his Spirit in our lives, never to leave or forsake us. He is the down payment or guarantee of our salvation.

The world, however, Jesus says, cannot accept him.

Why is the Spirit unacceptable to the world? Because they can't see him. Remember the conversation Jesus had with the Pharisee Nicodemus? (John 3). It was under the cover of darkness, because this highly

intelligent Jewish leader was afraid of what people might say if they saw him talking to the rebel rabbi.

Jesus described the work of the Spirit like the wind. It's obviously there, but you can't see it. You can feel it or hear it but are not sure where it comes from or where it's going. For those who deny the presence of God in this world and who deny the work of Jesus on the cross, the Spirit is meaningless.

They may get a sense of him when they hear Scripture read, are around a group of Christians, or experiencing nature in a wondrous way, but they can't grasp or accept the fact that he is real and an important part of the Holy Trinity in whose nature we're allowed to share through Christ.

Why should they believe something they can't see?
Unacceptable!

But we know him. We, who have put our trust in Christ and accepted his saving work on the cross. The Holy Spirit is perfectly acceptable to us, because he lives in us. His presence is fully known in our heart and minds.

Because of that, we are never alone, never orphans. The world may abandon us, persecute us, drive us to the wilderness and leave us, but God will not, because his Spirit is with us always.

Have you accepted the one who is unacceptable to the world? May he fill you more and more with the

overwhelming knowledge of his presence in your life.
Alone no more! Alive in Him.

Because He Lives

What keeps you going after grief and loss? Faith in the Living Lord, the One who holds the future.

These verses from the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel have hit a chord with me. I'm writing it in the midst of my grief week, as I'm marking the fifth anniversary of my husband's death. I smile to myself as I realize he passed away on a Wednesday, so by this Friday, I can somehow say, I've gotten over the hump—the hardest day—in this week of remembrance.

That's why I decided I would not lose focus but press on in continuing this deep dive into Jesus's words. Not only have we really needed them because of the year of the pandemic, but also because perhaps, you like me, need to be reminded that when grief does strike, God's right there to give us comfort.

He does not disappoint.

Without further comment, let's see what Jesus has to say about the matter:

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. John 14:19-21

I find it interesting that on my grief day, Jesus is preparing the disciples for theirs. Though they couldn't grasp it yet, soon, they would be hit by a loss of catastrophic magnitude — the crucifixion of their Lord and Master. As if that wasn't bad enough, even though they would have momentary joy over his resurrection, he would soon leave them for good at the ascension.

But that wasn't the end of the story: *Because I live, you also will live.*

Though he would physically leave the earth, he had already told them that his Spirit would come and dwell in them. Remember—no orphans in God's family.

This would enable them to live on—in this world and the next, for through faith in him, they would know that perfect unity of mind and spirit with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They would know his love and live in obedience out of love for him.

Why does this help me today? Because Jesus's words remind me of a song that was beloved by a dear pastor-friend who loved my husband and also went to be with Jesus not long after Raouf. It was required singing whenever he preached:

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.*

(Chorus: Songwriters: Gloria Gaither / William. J. Gaither. Because He Lives Lyrics © Gaither Music Co., Gaither Music Co. Inc., Hanna Street Music).

Jesus's disciples would soon know that Spirit-filled ability to live and courageously face the future. Today, as I pass the five-year mark on my grief journey, I stand confident in the One who holds my future. Life is still worth living...just because He lives.

Are you living today? You can if you put your trust in Jesus, the One who holds your future and makes it all worthwhile.

Shown to the Ones Who Love

Why didn't Jesus show himself to everyone? He did and he still does, and the result is amazing.

I think, though I haven't studied it to prove it, that this passage from the end of John 13 through chapter fourteen enable us to see how open Jesus was to the questions of his disciples, because so many had them in these few short verses. Remember, they were *students* of Jesus. He had called them to follow him but also study, not just under him, but to *study* him.

I think this last dialogue was something of a I-term in college: lots of material crammed in one unending session. Perhaps that's what led to all the questions. They were trying to get it right, trying to understand. They would eventually, but it was going to take a full dose of the Holy Spirit to do so.

In the meantime, it was Judas (also called Thaddeus) up to bat. Here's how it went:

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you

hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” John 14:22-24

The “but Lord” of Judas was a clear indication that he wasn’t quite understanding. The limited perspective of the disciples was still keeping them from grasping the much larger picture of why Jesus had come. Working from the worldly viewpoint of an earthly Messiah, Judas couldn’t figure out why Jesus would show himself to only those who loved and obeyed him. I think the world asks the same today:

Why doesn’t Jesus just make it clear to everyone that he’s the Messiah?

Does that mean we serve an exclusive God? No, because Jesus makes that clear in his response:

If *anyone* loves me...

Jesus doesn’t just make himself available to certain kinds of people, certain races, sexes, or socioeconomic levels of people. No, he says if anyone...from the richest and most powerful to the poorest and most lowly...if they would love him, he will make his home in them.

What a wonderful thought: To know that Jesus has made his home in me.

That’s exactly what he’s offering here. It is made possible because of his willingness to die on the cross for our sins, and then in rising from the dead, gaining

power over death and the grave, he enables us to know a home beyond this life. While, in the meantime, as we wait for that glorious day, he makes his home in us, through the Holy Spirit.

His indwelling Spirit is the down payment on the home that will be paid in full when we meet him in glory.

So, today I'm grateful that Judas didn't get it. I'm grateful he wasn't afraid to ask the question, because now we get to hear the answer and through the Holy Spirit in us, understand the implication for us and all the world.

Do you have the down payment on the heavenly home?
All it takes is the deposit of love for Jesus.

Grace and Peace

Originally published in lifeinexile.net