

⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus 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." ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very 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. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Theological Perspective

If Jesus' first words in chapter 14 assuage the disciples' concerns regarding "the way" forward (by pointing out that through the presence of "the Way" they are already there, 14:4–6), then this discovery of their "dwelling place" pushes on to the question of how God reveals Godself here and now. As Jesus concludes in verse 7: "If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

If there is one thing human beings can never get enough of, according to Scripture, it is knowledge of and deep relationship with God. This, Jesus has just made clear, is our true home, our ultimate "dwelling place." So Philip now follows Thomas with the obvious request: "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" (v. 8). This is indeed a true statement, and speaks well of Philip's priorities and hopes for life. However, these words also reveal, once more, how out of touch and clueless he is with regard to the identity of the one with whom he is talking (another favorite theme in John's Gospel, from Nicodemus in chap. 3 on).

Jesus, as announced at the beginning, has come into the world so that the world may know God, the true life and light that enlightens everyone (1:9). Yes, in Jesus, God was in the world; yet the world, and his disciples, did not know him (1:10). Still, by chapter

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In this New Testament passage, Jesus is clear about who he is and how he is related to the Father. He says that they are so close that seeing and being with Jesus is exactly the same as seeing and being with the Father. Jesus says, "Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do" (v. 11, my trans.).

In the Old Testament, while the Spirit of God led and protected to see the face of God. Only a few seem to have been allowed to communicate with God or develop a personal relationship. We have a much different concept of God through our experience with Jesus. Clearly, in this passage the disciples still have not understood the relationship between the Father and the Son or really gotten a clear picture of the Father as Jesus knows him. Jesus states emphatically that the Father and the Son are one. He explains to his disciples that his very words are not his own but are those of the Father, "who lives in me and does his work through me" (v. 10 NLT).

Jesus knew his Father in a most loving and intimate way. Jesus told of his own experiences with a loving and caring Father, and through stories and parables he described his Father as his own dear father. The love between the Father and the Son is wonderfully and beautifully expressed.

Exegetical Perspective

In the immediately preceding passage, Jesus declares that the disciples know the "way," but Thomas pleads ignorance, causing Jesus to provide a more extended explanation. This is a typical technique in the Fourth Gospel, which scholars have labeled "Johannine misunderstanding." The character is used as a setup so that John may convey necessary teaching to the audience through Jesus (cf. Nicodemus in 3:1–21; the disciples in 4:31–38; the religious authorities in 8:21–30).

Where Thomas lamented lack of knowledge, Philip now demonstrates lack of insight and vision. John 14:7 finds Jesus assuring both that through him, they have all the knowledge and vision they need in order to do greater works than Jesus himself did (v. 12). The multifarious verbs of knowing (*ginōskō, oida*) and seeing (*blepō, theōreō, horaō*) abound in the Fourth Gospel, and the goal of all of this knowing and seeing is, finally, trusting Jesus, in order to seize hold of life in its fullest sense (20:31).

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John considers Philip a main character; he is named twelve times (1:43, 44, 45, 46, 48; 6:5, 7; 12:21, 22), as opposed to once each in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He appears at the beginning of Jesus' ministry; after the brothers Andrew and Peter, who were also from Bethsaida, Philip is the next one to follow. He is the

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I imagine that the longer Jesus talks, the more the disciples feel evil and death hovering over the evening, waiting to pounce. The longer Jesus talks, the harder and harder it becomes to follow, let alone trust, all that Jesus is saying. Philip reaches his breaking point and, in light of the lofty claims that Jesus is making, asks a simple request: "Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" (v. 8).

We can relate. Confronted by the powers of violence and death, we need more than words that are hard to follow and harder still to trust, even if those words come from Jesus. Finding it difficult not to let our hearts be troubled, we ask, "Where is God?" "What is God like?" "What, if anything, is God doing?" In other words, "Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Jesus is a bit frustrated. "Have I been with you all this time, Philip," Jesus asks, "and you still do not know me?" (v. 9). Then, in no uncertain terms, Jesus points us to himself: "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; but the Father who dwells in me does his works" (vv. 9–10). Jesus answers, "God is right here. Whoever sees and knows me has seen and known the Father." Jesus is in the Father, and the

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14, we do not know him; so Jesus, with utmost patience and grace, attempts to explain. He does so with a threefold argument: through sight, and words, and works.

Sight. The first move is mostly a throwaway line. John's Gospel recognizes that the time for seeing God in Jesus is over. This was the gift of God to the apostles and all those blessed with seeing Jesus in the flesh. Jesus is now leaving the scene. Though his leaving allows another's coming (the Paraclete), the time for holding on to Jesus "in the flesh" is gone (see Jesus' words to Mary in the garden when she attempts to "hold on," 20:17). While Jesus is understandably perturbed by those who see him, yet fail to see the Father in him, the Gospel is written primarily, if not exclusively, for those who cannot see Jesus, except in the words and works of the church. "Have you believed [or not believed] because you have *seen* me?" Jesus asks Thomas later. "Blessed are those who have *not seen* and yet have come to believe" (20:29, emphasis added).

Words. It is impossible to hear Jesus' words regarding the source of his own words ("the words I say to you I do not speak on my own," v. 10) without hearing in them the reason for this Gospel and the teaching and preaching of the church that this Gospel will inspire. John writes this Gospel, and preachers preach the gospel, not so much to teach others about God, but in order by the Spirit to make God present. In the words of a recent Directory for Worship from my denomination, the sermon is "a proclamation of Scripture in the conviction that through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ is present to the gathered people, offering grace and calling for obedience."¹

Correctly understood, the words of preachers are not spoken "on our own," but proceed from the lips of him who is there in the Spirit. To hear these words, again with the Spirit's help, is to know God and, through this knowledge, to leave worship "satisfied." We are properly satisfied not with the wisdom or eloquence of the preacher, but with the presence of Christ these words convey. Worship, at its core, is not so much for education or entertainment or even evangelism, but for encounter. They would *hear* Jesus and, through this hearing, come to know the God who has sent him.

Works. James is not the only book that says faith without works is dead. Just as the signs Jesus

1. Directory for Worship, in *Book of Order, 2011/2013* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2011), 89.

Pastoral Perspective

By examining Jesus' life as a model of God, we learn many things about God the Father:

- The Father's love for us is unyielding, magnificent, continual, unconditional, and beyond our knowledge and understanding.
- The Father accepts us as and where we are in life, rather than expecting us to be what we are not.
- The Father wants an intimate relationship with his sons and daughters and has given us that status. We are in the family of God.
- The Father considers all of creation good, sacred, and important.
- The Father wants us to be healthy and mature persons in mind, body, heart, and soul.
- The Father is a living spirit who has chosen to dwell with us in our earthly life.
- The Father provides for our needs and encourages physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth.
- The Father will go to any lengths, including the death of his Son, to convince us of his great love for us.
- The Father has provided the Holy Spirit to be active in our lives as a counselor, companion, advocate, and guide.
- The Father is just and gracious, loving us all equally.
- The Father rushes to meet us as we return to him and forgives us of our failures.
- It is the Father's intent that we should all be his children and live with him in this world and the next.

Jesus also explains that the work he has done while on earth has been done to glorify his Father. He further assures his disciples that they can also bring God glory: "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so the Son can bring glory to the Father" (vv. 12–13 NLT).

This promise is made not only to the disciples but to anyone who believes in Jesus. We then are included in these mysterious words. Can we really do the work that Jesus did? Can we perform miracles in the lives of others and in our own life? What power do we have to heal, teach, preach the word of God, and bring others into the light and love of the Father and the Son?

We have varied and amazing gifts given to us by God to be used to glorify the Father. To begin with, each of us has the potential power to give healthy love to each other. The more we allow the Father and

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first disciple to lead someone else (Nathanael) to Jesus and the second disciple to make a proclamation about Jesus: "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote" (1:45). That encounter ends with Jesus' announcing that he has replaced, in effect, Jacob's ladder (1:51). In chapter 6, Jesus "tests" Philip about feeding the crowds; Philip cannot see his way to the grandiosity of Jesus' works, but the work occurs anyway. Philip also participates in the crucial turning point in the Gospel. The Greeks (perhaps the sheep from another fold mentioned in 10:16) arrive and first consult Philip. After Philip (and Andrew) informs him about this development, Jesus declares: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23). Presumably Philip remains on the scene to witness the exchange between Jesus and God (12:27–28).

While Thomas spoke as a representative of the group, and Jesus answered him as such (using second-person plural verbs), when Philip tries the same move, Jesus gets personal with him: "Have I been with you [plural] all this time, Philip, and you [singular] still do not know me? . . . How can you [singular] say, 'Show us the Father?'" (v. 9). Philip presses Jesus for more so that the disciples may be "satisfied" (*arkeō*, v. 8). This is important: the only other occurrence of this word appears in Jesus' exchange with Philip about feeding the crowd; there Philip again protests that what is available is not sufficient or satisfactory to complete God's work (*arkeō*, 6:7). Philip operates from a theology of scarcity as he stares blindly into the face of the Good Shepherd who makes our cup overflow (Ps. 23:5) and who came that we may have life and have it more abundantly (*perissōs*, 10:10). Philip demands "satisfaction" while Jesus is longing to gift him beyond measure.

How should Philip (and we) know that Jesus and God are unified? By attending to Jesus' words and works: "The words [*rhēma*] that I say to you [plural] I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells [*menō*] in me does his works [*ergon*]" (v. 10). Words and works are not two separate things for John, because, even as we know on our best days, words *are* works. John has numerous words for "words": *logos*, *rhēma*, *lalia*, *entolē*, not to mention verbs for speaking (*legō*, *laleō*, *apokrinomai*).¹ Jesus' words are both authoritative and effective. His words are at least as authoritative as Scripture (2:22), if not more authoritative (5:39–47). Like

1. For a fuller treatment, see Jaime Clark-Soules, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken: The Social Function of the Use of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 294–310.

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Father is in Jesus. We have Jesus'—no, the Father's—word on it.

Philip does not say anything further, but I wonder whether Philip is satisfied with Jesus' words. As a preacher, a Christian, and human being, I am not. I am not satisfied with Jesus' words during those seasons of life when I urgently need to know where God is and what God is like. I am certainly dissatisfied with words, even words of Jesus, during those seasons of life when death and evil rage unexpectedly and uncontrollably, and my community looks to me as someone who speaks for God, demanding to know where God is, what God is like, and what, if anything, God is doing. I know that accepting Jesus' word is the better way, but sometimes I need something a bit more concrete.

In response, Jesus points to his works, saying, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves" (v. 11). The evidence of Jesus' intimate connection to the Father has been there for the first disciples to see—and for subsequent disciples to hear—throughout Jesus' public ministry. When words are too heady, distant, and theoretical, we can look to Jesus' works, because they reveal his intimate connection with the Father. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus repeatedly declares that the works he does are God's work and not his own (5:20, 36; 10:37–38; 14:10) and that his work is to complete God's work (4:34; 17:4). Thus, everything about Jesus—his words, works, and entire person—makes the Father known. More than God working through Jesus, Jesus dwells in God, and God dwells in Jesus and "does his works" (v. 10) in the world. Scripture does not say this about anyone other than Jesus. We have Jesus' works to confirm it.

In the sermon, the preacher might voice Jesus' words and then verify them with Jesus' works. Reviewing John's Book of Signs reminds us of Jesus' works: changing water into wine (2:1–11), healing the royal official's son (4:46–54), healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1–18), feeding five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish (6:5–14), walking on the water (6:16–24), restoring the sight of the man born blind (9:11–17), and calling Lazarus out of the tomb and raising him from the dead (11:1–45).

More than reminding us of his works, Jesus points us to where we might look when we find it hard to believe his words. Wherever joy and abundance replace embarrassment and scarcity, healing occurs unexpectedly, paralysis gives way to

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performs are “starting point” reasons to believe for those for whom Jesus’ presence and words are not enough, so the works that Jesus and the church perform are “starting point” reasons to believe for those for whom the church’s presence and witness are insufficient. According to John’s Gospel, the primary “work” of God is belief in the One whom God has sent (6:29). If this essential “work” is not possible, though, then belief based on the “works themselves” is a beginning. In the next passage (and indeed in the passages before, e.g., 13:35), we will explore the core works to which the church is called. (Hint: they all center in love; cf. 1 John 2:7–11.)

For now, the key, theologically, is to understand the proper function for all such works themselves. They do not secure God’s love in Christ. Rather, they serve as proof that those who perform them are connected to Christ and, through Christ, to the Father. If the church can do nothing regarding “fruits” apart from the “vine,” then if the church produces “fruit,” it demonstrates its connection to the vine (15:5). The works do not establish the relationship; the works help foster belief that the relationship is already established. As the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, we who have been redeemed by grace through Christ must do good works “so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ.”² The fruits are a “sign” of a relationship, not the way to get the relationship going.

What we human beings most yearn for is knowledge of and a relationship with God and God’s people. Ask after these things “in Jesus’ name” (v. 14), and the Father will be glorified and we will be satisfied, no matter what else does or does not come our way.

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2. Heidelberg Catechism, Question 86, in *The Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2002), 43.

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Son to live within us, the more this powerful love can grow and flow out to others. We can be focused and intentional about identifying, growing, and sharing the particular abilities we have to teach, educate, heal, affirm, and generously share material possessions and spiritual insights with those whom God brings into our lives. We can live with an open heart and mind to see what is given to us every day to do for the glorification of God.

A woman was once asked by a friend what she was doing in her retirement. Her reply was, “Oh, I am a handy woman for God. I do what he provides for me to do each day.” If we are to be available to do God’s work each day, we must be open to a partnership with God and pray continually for an intimate relationship so that we are constantly aware of the presence of God’s Spirit.

Hafiz, the fourteenth-century Persian poet, was amazingly aware of a most intimate relationship with God. In his poem “The Seed Cracked Open” he writes:

There are two of us housed
In this body.¹

Being open daily to the love and guidance of the Spirit allows us to use the power Jesus has promised us, so that we can partner with God to do the work that God has planned for us to accomplish in this world.

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1. Hafiz, *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*, trans. Daniel Ladinsky (New York: Penguin Compass, 1999), 35.

Exegetical Perspective

Scripture, Jesus’ words are said to be fulfilled (*pleroō*) and are to be kept and observed (*tereō*) and believed or trusted (*pisteuō*). Jesus speaks efficaciously. At 4:50–51, he heals by a word, from a distance: “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son will live.’ The man believed the word [*logos*] that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive.” At 5:8–9, “Jesus said, . . . ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk.’ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.”

The language of works (*ergazomai*; *ergon*) appears heavily in the Gospel, not to mention verbs of doing (*poieō*) and the occurrences of signs (*sēmeia*). The Father works and Jesus works, indistinguishably and vitally: “The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; he will show him [even] greater works than these [*kai megas toutōn*], so that you will be astonished” (5:20). Note how 14:12 parallels 5:20, using the same language. That is, as impressive as it may be for Jesus to do the very works of God, even more captivating is Jesus’ claim that whoever trusts in Jesus will also do the very works (*ergon*) that Jesus and God do. Further, the one who trusts will do even greater² works than these (*kai megas toutōn*).

Astonishing indeed. Christians can do what Jesus did and more, and many have over these two thousand years (from the mundane to the miraculous). Whether we will do them is up to us; the fact that we can do them is due to the fact that Jesus completed the very work God sent him to do (19:30), such that if we ask anything (Gk. *ti*) in the name of Jesus, he will do it. Jesus appears to have left no room for his disciples to dream small.

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2. It is, finally, immaterial whether the works are “greater” because Jesus was the only one person confined to ministry in one land or because the disciples work in a new era of salvation history post-Easter.

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movement, hungry people are fed and filled, calm overcomes a storm, someone receives new vision, and life triumphs over death, Jesus is still working. The preacher might name some of those places for the congregation, which means the preacher must be on the lookout for them. In the process, the preacher might find her or his own trust strengthened.

Do not stop with naming. The assurance is not so much in the works themselves, but in the powerful way trusting Jesus unlocks signs in a community that trusts Jesus’ words. Jesus’ departure means the disciples will continue God’s work. Jesus’ departure also means we get to continue God’s work. Jesus’ prediction of “greater works than these” (v. 12) is understood in terms of quantity rather than quality. Jesus’ return to the Father makes possible all that could not be accomplished when Jesus was bound by his incarnation. Jesus withdraws so that God’s work can expand. The faith community’s works are also “greater” in that they point to the fullness of God’s love for the world revealed in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

That these are Jesus’ own works, and not merely a faith community’s efforts, is evident in Jesus’ declaration, uttered twice, “I will do” (vv. 13–14). Jesus’ continuing commitment and involvement in the faith community’s works are guaranteed by his promise to do whatever is asked in his name, “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (vv. 13–14). Trusting in Jesus’ word enough to ask in his name, the Christian community’s power is immeasurable. Even more, struggling individuals within the community and people in the world that surrounds it will come to trust because of the works the community does in Jesus’ name. The faith community’s works are Jesus’ works in the same way that Jesus’ works are God’s. More than ends in themselves, the works the faith community does in Jesus’ name are part of Jesus’ own work of making God known to the world. When you do not trust the words, look to the works. Jesus is there.

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