

Lord Show Us the Father

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[0 : 00] We read from the Gospel of John, the Gospel of John chapter 14, which can be found on page 1082 of the Church Bible. 1082, the Gospel of John chapter 14. We begin at verse 8.

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've 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's 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 me on the evidence of the works themselves.

[1 : 25] 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.

[2 : 41] On that day you will realize that I am in the 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. Thanks be to God.

Well, good morning, St. Silas. If we've not met before, my name is Martin Ayers. I'm the lead pastor here, and it would be great help to me if you could keep your Bibles open. John chapter 14.

In the Church Bibles, it's page 108. Thanks, Malcolm, for reading that for us. And if you'd find it helpful, you'll find an outline inside the notice sheet, and you can follow that just to see where we're going as we look at this portion of the Bible together.

But let's ask for God's help. We're urged by this Bible passage from Jesus to ask. Let's ask for his help. Heavenly Father, we pray that your Spirit will be with us now.

[3 : 57] that he will open our eyes to see you this morning, that he will open our minds to know you, and open our hearts to respond rightly to you.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. So last week, we started a new sermon series. As a church, we're looking at Jesus' teaching of his disciples the night before he died.

He brought the twelve together to eat the Passover meal, and they were in what's sometimes called the upper room. They were in an upper room together as he taught them.

And it's extraordinarily significant for the apostle John, who wrote this gospel. If you think about it, John's gospel is 21 chapters long, and at the end, the last thing he tells us is, Jesus did many other things as well.

If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would need to be written. And yet, he spends five chapters recording for us Jesus' teaching on this single evening.

[4 : 59] It's extraordinary. Why? Why focus so much on this? It's because Jesus is preparing his people for his departure. He's equipping them, and through them, he's equipping us, everyone who

believes, for life when he's gone.

So if we were ever to think to ourselves, you know, I'd find being a Christian much easier if Jesus was still here, then this is teaching we need.

And don't we often think that, or isn't that a way that we would find ourselves thinking, that if Jesus was still here, if he was still at work, then just imagine the difference that would make.

Wouldn't the world be in better shape? Certainly wouldn't the church be in better shape? Maybe my life would be in better shape if he was still around. Imagine if Jesus could come and visit Scotland sometimes.

Imagine if he chose to come here, to St. Silas, physically here. What if he did a daily broadcast?

What if he had a YouTube channel that we could tune in for and get our friends to watch?

[6 : 04] So we just get a sense of how the disciples must have felt as they understood. Jesus is telling them he's going to go. He's going away. And the evening is very troubling for them.

It's very tense. Jesus has said that one of them will betray him, and he's indicated that it will be Judas Iscariot, and Judas Iscariot left, and it was night, John says.

Jesus is the light that's come into the world, and Judas Iscariot leaves. And John remembers, looking back, it was night. It was dark outside. And Jesus says to Peter, Peter's going to deny him. And last week we heard Jesus say to his followers, where I'm going, you cannot come. You cannot come with me. And now Philip asks this big question. If you just have a look at verse 8, he says, Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.

And behind the question is something that lots of us might feel, and people around us might feel. Hasn't God made himself a bit hard to find? Isn't it a bit hard to keep going with God when he's not giving us a big kind of one-off vision that he's really there?

[7 : 12] If there is a God of all this, why hasn't he shown up in a more obvious way? And for those of us who follow God, who are Christians, we might think, well, I believe God is there, but I just wish that I could have a deeper experience of him in my life.

You know, I wish he would just show up once in a dramatic, supernatural way. That would really help me keep going. So what does God say? What does God say? Well, Jesus tells Philip that God is giving us something far greater than what Philip is asking for.

And we're going to see that in three parts. Our first point is we can see the glory of God as we hear Jesus' words. We can see the glory of God as we hear Jesus' words. So let's pick things up again in verse 9.

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? Jesus seems exasperated at the request.

[8 : 31] Exasperated not by willful blindness or willful rejection of Jesus, but by a kind of spiritual blindness. How can he still not get this?

And that's a sobering thing for us to reflect on for any of us who might feel that we've been going to church for a long time. That Philip here wasn't just one of the crowd who'd heard something of Jesus.

He was one of the 12 who'd been with him. He was called by Jesus right in chapter 1 of John's Gospel. He's been there through many events, right up there, up close with Jesus, all through great signs and teaching.

And yet Jesus can say to someone who is that familiar with him, Don't you know me, even after I've been with you such a long time? And it's a moment to ask ourselves, Could that be said of me?

Could that be true of me about Jesus? That for everything I've seen about him and heard about him, that he could say, Don't you know me?

[9 : 34] Do I really know him? But Jesus is saying to Philip and to us that he offers something much greater than a one-off glimpse of God the Father.

through him, we can know God. And knowing God is what we were made for. So the prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 9, he says this, This is what the Lord says, Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this, that they have the understanding to know me.

In other words, imagine you became the richest person in the world. Imagine you were wealthier and more powerful than Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

If you had all of that money and all of that power and you genuinely know God, you would be able to say, Knowing God is more satisfying than all of that.

It's far more joy-giving to know God than to have all of that money and power. So how do we get this relationship with God? Well, Jesus says, When we see Jesus, we see God.

[10:48] He says to Philip, Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. As Jesus is at work in the world, God the Father and God the Son are inseparably working together.

So that as we see Jesus at work, we're seeing the Father at work. Of course, then, we might be thinking, Well, that's all very well for Philip. He was there.

What about us? Well, look at verse 10 again. He says, Don't you believe that I'm 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, what? Wouldn't we expect Jesus to say, I expected Jesus to say, The words I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority.

Rather, it is the Father who is speaking, speaking his words. But he doesn't say that. He says, It's the Father living in me who is doing his work.

[11:52] For us, our words are separate to our works. I might say to someone in our house, Right, I'm going out, and then, I can't find the keys. Can't find the house keys.

So I spend ages rummaging around the house looking for them. Ten minutes later, Kathy says, I thought you were going out. You're still here. Our words and works are separate.

But God's words and his works go together. He says, Let there be light. There's light. He created by speaking powerful words. And when we hear Jesus' words, they come with that same power.

Through the words of Jesus, the words he says, God is at work. And what is that work? His work is that we can see Jesus so that as we see Jesus, we can see God and know God.

And that's a vital thing for our spiritual lives today after Jesus has gone. That though we haven't been with the physical Jesus, we really can see him. And the way we can see him is through his words.

[12:59] We're in a visual age, aren't we? People say that a lot. They say, you know, we're in the age of there's Snapchat and there's TikTok and people are bombarding us with images all the time. Well, God made us.

And we are visual, often in the way we think. And we can see him through seeing Jesus by hearing the words of Jesus. The scriptures.

And Jesus calls on us to believe that claim. So notice it's his words again in verse 11. He says, 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. Jesus is less concerned with why we believe or how we've come to believe, whether it's words or works.

He's more concerned that we do believe, that we trust him. Some people come to believe in Jesus today because they examine the historical evidence and they do lengthy historical research.

[13:59] Others simply just pick up the Bible and they find that it has the ring of truth about it as they read it. Some people come to Jesus because they're moved by his love and his kindness.

Other people come to believe in Jesus because they recognize that they need forgiveness from a holy God. They are fearful of the judgment of God. It doesn't so much concern Jesus why or how we've come to believe.

What concerns him is that we do believe. He calls on us. Believe me. Believe me. Believe that through his words we can see him and in seeing him we can know God.

And folks, what good news it is for our world that Jesus in his words revealed the God of all this to us. You think about John chapter 5.

John told us about there was a man, a paralyzed man who hadn't been able to walk for 38 years and he's sitting on a mat by a pool because there was this superstition that when there was a stirring in the water if you were the first to get into the water you would be healed physically.

[15:09] And he's sitting on his mat and it's a picture of the helplessness of humanity. And Jesus says to him do you want to get well? And the man says sir I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.

And Jesus says get up pick up your mat and walk. And the man gets up and he walks. He had the words of gentleness with the Samaritan woman he meets in John chapter 4.

And he has the words of courage to take on the self-righteous religious leaders in John chapter 5. How wonderful that this is God made known to us.

So that's our first point. Jesus calls us to believe him that we can see God as we hear his words. And then he tells us the benefits for anyone who does believe that we'll actually see God at work. So our second point more briefly is we can see the works of God as we believe Jesus' words. So let's pick things up again in verse 12. He says 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'm going to the Father and I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [16:36] So what are these greater things that every believer who believes in Jesus can do? Well I take it that it can't be that the works are more miraculous or more wonderfully supernaturally powerful.

It's hard even to imagine what that could be like when Jesus could calm a storm with words or call Lazarus out of a tomb where he'd been dead for four days. How could they be greater in that kind of way? It could be though about the scale of the works going on for God by the church today by the Spirit after Jesus has gone. Jesus was one man limited in time and space and now by his Spirit many more works can be going on for God all across the world even in Scotland far away from where Jesus was. So it could be about the more works but Jesus does say greater works doesn't he? they will do even greater things than these and I think he wants us to see the works that we as his people do for him now as greater than the ones the disciples had seen him do because of where we now stand in salvation history.

[17:53] So in the kind of the point in time we live in as we think about God's saving work in the world. So in Jesus' earthly ministry he is drawing people to believe in him so that they can find life in his name and his works were like signposts they were like a testimony of who he was and that he had this saving power so that people would believe.

But as we look back on Jesus that night with his disciples in this upper room we look at these events and these words from the other side of Jesus' saving work. he died for sins he rose to rule he ascended to heaven he sent the spirit to his church. And living on the other side of those events we can actually testify about Jesus in a fuller way a more complete way than even he did because he condescended not to tell everyone everything at once until he died and risen again.

And through our testimony of that finished rescue mission of Jesus his spirit can call people back to God. So that makes for example this book John's Gospel itself an example of a greater work because John wrote this after Jesus had died and risen and his spirit had come to equip the disciples and John had a deeper understanding of the whole story of Jesus and through that fuller testimony written in John's Gospel countless millions of people have come to believe in Jesus and have life.

And in John's Gospel as we read it we see the disciples on that journey of understanding. So we hear Jesus cleanse the temple in John chapter 2 and he says to his followers destroy this temple and I'll raise it in three days.

[19:48] And they think he's talking about the physical temple. And John tells us in John chapter 2 that it was only after Jesus was raised from the dead that the disciples realized he'd been talking about his own body.

And he says then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. So by Jesus going to die and rise and ask the Father to send the Spirit he makes it possible for his people anyone who believes in him to do greater works than before because we have the privilege of speaking about God in light of Jesus saving death on the cross.

And Jesus urges us to pray for those greater works to be done in our time that people would come to know God through him. So look at verse 14 he says you may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.

So that's it's not a set of magic words it's not that we can ask for anything we want and as long as we add in Jesus name we'll get it but we should hear this as an amazing invitation from Jesus it's going to be a theme in the coming weeks of his teaching for when he's gone that as we go out to work for God in the world today we are to pray boldly our prayers in Jesus name can change the course of history the maker of our world will respond to our prayers in Jesus name as we ask him to do great works and he does them to glorify his son so Jesus says when I'm gone you will still see God by my words and you can see God doing great works and yet I think the disciples might still have been thinking this is still a tragedy that you're going because they'd enjoyed a closeness to

Jesus you see that closeness in verse 33 of chapter 13 just up the page there he said to them 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'm going you cannot come it sounds like a very painful goodbye for them a separation from God having been right with them intimately but wonderfully Jesus promises another way we'll see God a third gift so we've heard we can see the glory of God as we hear his words we can see the works of God as we believe Jesus' words thirdly we can see the presence of God as we obey Jesus' words so now Jesus draws a circle around his disciples they are distinct from the world when he talks about the world it's humanity rejecting God in rebellion against God but Jesus says that people who come out from the world to be his disciples will enjoy a relationship with him so close it will be like a oneness we see that in verse 16 let's pick things up there he says

[23 : 02] I will ask the father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever the spirit of truth so then we get this distinction between the world and Jesus' people he says 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 so by the spirit coming to the disciples Jesus is with them again look at verse 18 he says I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you and referring to his resurrection he says because I live verse 19 you also will live so Jesus is drawing us here into mystery isn't he the mystery of what God is like that there's one God and within that one Godhead there is a father who's always been a father and a son who's always been a son and we heard him say that the father and the son work together inseparably now he introduces the spirit as like another Jesus another counselor another advocate so closely identified with the father and the son that when the spirit comes to them it's Jesus coming he says

I will come to you and he says verse 20 on that day you will realize that I am in my father and you are in me and I am in you in other words the spirit coming to be with us is God the son making his home with us in us Jesus is physically gone but it's better that he's gone physically because he will make his home in his disciples by his spirit what closeness to enjoy with God so what makes you part of this this circle of his disciples who will experience not just seeing God but God manifesting himself among them well Jesus tells us verse 15 he says if you love me keep my commands and then look down at verse 21 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 so we talk about love languages today don't we the ways that we make a particular person feel loved

Jesus love language is obedience that's how he knows we love him a better test of whether I love God isn't how I sing on a Sunday though that's not unimportant but a better test of whether I love God is whether I can control my anger on a Wednesday and let's notice that when Jesus draws this circle around his people the people who will truly know him he says everyone in that circle obeys his commands so we're not saved by our obedience but we can't be saved without obedience keeping Jesus' commands is a necessary demonstration that we do believe in him that we trust him and love him and if we do then just think what an answer Jesus has given to Philip's request Philip says Jesus if you're going and you want us to manage without you give us a vision of God show us the

Father and Jesus says that what he's giving us completely surpasses what Philip is asking him for if we'll keep listening to Jesus words we'll go on seeing Jesus and as we see him we see God if we keep believing in Jesus we can see God at work through us doing even greater things than they'd seen Jesus do as he gives eternal life to everyone who turns to him and by his spirit Jesus draws closer to his disciples than ever before that he's living in us manifesting himself as present with everyone who loves him what might it look like to be a person who sees God like this I think you'd have some marks of it in your life one would be a deeper prayer life a prayer life that is more central to your activity and who you are and what you do that when you when you pray you're not just trying to get things from God shooting up arrow prayers requests you pray because you enjoy talking to God being with God and if you find yourself too busy ever to pray like that in your normal week then you're not taking up what Jesus is freely giving us the chance to know God and experience his presence with you for some of us it might be that you do that with worship music singing with the help of worship songs it might be that you set aside time in a disciplined way to pray but looking to experience God in prayer another mark of someone who knows God like this would be that you see that the Bible is more than just a human book that you have this sense that these are the living

words of Jesus being spoken afresh to you today you've had an experience in your life of the Bible being sweeter than honey more precious than gold it might not be every day it might not be every week that you have that lived experience but I see people having that experience when I have conversations with people in our church that there are people who will share that they've had that kind of experience in their lives of the scriptures it's not just words about God these are the living words of the living God to you and to me words through which we see Jesus and we find that he's the bread of life do you have that concern to find a day by day connection with God through his word because of what

Jesus says here another mark of these people would be people who know God would be that there has been genuine change in your life because Jesus says whoever has my command and obeys them he is the one who loves me so the person who really knows God I take it will be able to say looking at their life I'm sad that I'm not the person that I should be and I know I'm not the person I will be but I can see that I'm not the person I was that there has been progress in my Christian life because my desires have changed there are areas of my life I can point to where pleasing Jesus matters more to me than pleasing myself these are some of the marks of truly knowing God in the way Jesus promises we can here but how can he promise this how is any of this possible well just look up at what prompted Philip to say show us the father in verse 8 in verse 7

[30 : 24] Jesus said if you really know me you will know my father as well from now on you do know him and have seen him he says from now on when he says from now on he's speaking about something imminent and he's not speaking about something that's just changed in the room he's speaking about what's about to happen to make all of this possible the next day at Calvary what if the reason we can't see God is because he is a holy God what if the issue that stops us seeing him isn't physical distance but rather that he is a God who is so holy he can't be in the presence of sin and we carry sin with us and then picture Jesus on the cross the next day saying my God my God why have you forsaken me what's he saying he's saying I can't see you Jesus who's always seen God who is in the father and the father in him is experiencing a darkness so deep on the cross he can't see God anymore he's blinded by the spiritual darkness of our sin and he endures that darkness so that we can see the light of the presence of God so when we see

God in Jesus what does he reveal to us well what did it cost your God to love you it cost him a darkness so thick he couldn't see so that he could bear your sin and send his spirit and by his spirit he could make his home in you do you really know God that's what Jesus is asking us let's pray together Lord Jesus we marvel at your grace to us your kindness in these words heavenly father help us to know you and Jesus Christ whom you sent make us a people who know you we pray and who know that whatever else we may have our only boast worth counting is that we know you the living

God we thank you that Jesus has made that way possible and we praise you in his name amen visitor please don't feel under any obligation to give and please do think about these serving sheets before you leave today there's a box at the front and the back and pens to fill them in let me close our formal time together with a prayer father we want to know you and so we thank you that you have made the way known in Christ we see you in your words and we grow an understanding of you as we hear you speak we pray that that would lead us to joyful obedience and a deepening life of prayer and worship as we respond to what we have received in Christ thank you for paying the cost of your son that we may know you and for sending the spirit that we may be with you forever and so may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore amen have a lovely Sunday