

## 5.1.2022 St. Phillip and St. James (John 14:1-14)

When I read the Gospel for the Feast of St. Phillip and St. James, I was reminded of a story about the famous newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, a man who was known to have a great desire for artistic treasures. The story goes like this: One day Mr. Hearst saw a picture of a beautiful painting. It was an incredible image that touched the depths of his heart. He was so moved by this painting that he was determined to have it as his own, and directed one of his employees to find this remarkable treasure and purchase it, no matter the cost. After months of searching, the employee sent a message to Mr. Hearst telling him the painting had been found. In fact, it was in a crate in one of his own warehouses. This magnificent treasure, which he had to have at any cost, was already his.

In the Gospel passage we read today, St. Phillip makes a similar mistake. Consider these words that our Lord spoke to His disciples, and to Phillip, on the evening of Holy Thursday just hours before His betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. On that evening, after boldly declaring *“I am the way, the truth, and the life...”* (John 14:6), Jesus said, *“If you had known Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us. Jesus replied, Philip, I have been with you all this time, and still you do not know Me? Anyone who 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 I say to you, I do not speak on My own. Instead, it is the Father dwelling in Me... Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me...”* (John 14:7-11 BSB).

In Phillip’s request, *“Lord, show us the Father,”* we see that he is searching, not for a painting that touches the depths of his heart, but for an infinitely magnificent treasure, a vision of Almighty God as our Father. Notice, Phillip’s request is not: Lord, show us the Creator of the world and everything in it, or Lord, show us the Sustainer of all things visible and invisible. Yes, *“The heavens declare the glory of God”* (Psalm 19:1), but Phillip’s desire in this difficult hour is not to see God in the beauty of creation, but instead in the way Jesus had been revealing Him in His ministry, in the same way He revealed God to His disciples when He taught them to

pray, “*Our Father who art in heaven*” (Luke 11:2). Phillip’s desire is the desire of every human heart, for no vision of God brings more comfort, reassurance, and peace than the vision which reveals that we are the beloved children of God, and He is our perfect Father in Heaven.

Phillip’s words, “*Lord, show us the Father,*” have been expressed in different ways, in all parts of the world, throughout human history. Yet on that Holy Thursday, the desire of these men to see God our Father must have been especially intense, for they’d heard so much about Him from Jesus. They had seen the way our Lord, the Son of God, would often withdraw from groups of people, and the demands of daily life, to spend time alone with the Father in prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). The disciples knew that our Lord’s intimate relationship with His Father was the source of His compassion, wisdom, power, and joy. Jesus had set the example, and now His Apostles desired such intimacy with God, especially at this time, because on this night our Lord told them He was leaving, He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:3).

When Phillip made the request, “*Lord, show us the Father,*” he spoke not only for himself, but for the men gathered with him on that Holy Thursday, for us, and for every disciple of our Lord. We all desire a vision of Almighty God that leads us to know Him as our Father, and what we learn from St. Phillip’s conversation with our Lord is the truth that what we desire to see, we have already seen in our Savior Christ. In Christ, both the nature of God, who He is, and our relationship to Him are manifested. In Christ, we recognize not only God’s glory, majesty, dominion, and power in creation, but His sacrificial love, mercy, kindness, and friendship in a Person. In Christ, we see the clearest manifestation that God has made of Himself on this earth, and so, to all who say, *show us the Father*, we must say, if you want to see God the Father, then look no further than God the Son.

Holy Scripture describes our Lord as “*the image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1:15), “*the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person...*” (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus said, “*Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father... I am in the Father and the Father is in Me*” (John 14:9,11). In saying this, our Lord is communicating the truth that in Him, in His humble life and sacrificial death, in His glorious resurrection and ascension, *the invisible God*, the One who transcends the created order is made known in

the most personal way. In our Savior Christ, God is a Person, and in becoming man, God has revealed His heart to us and His love for us, in a tangible, intimate, and sacrificial way we can all truly understand.

The lesson we learn from St. Phillip this morning is that Jesus, God made man, is the perfect, the complete, the ultimate expression of the Father. Therefore, if your desire, like Phillip's, is to see the Father, then behold His Son, and behold Him now. Phillip said, "*Lord, show us the Father,*" obviously expecting a future revelation of God, but Phillip is, in that moment, looking at the very God he asks to see. He just doesn't realize it, and I can't help but wonder how often we act just like him.

Too often we have a tendency to look forward, with great anticipation, to some day in the future when the weight of this world will be lifted from us and we will be overwhelmed by a miraculous revelation of God our Father. We look forward to that day never realizing the infinitely magnificent treasure we seek is ours now. In the Gospel, Jesus gently corrected Phillip for such a mistake, and I can hear Him speak to us in the same way, saying, "*I have been with you all this time, and still you do not know Me? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.*"

The words of our Lord declare the truth that those who have eyes to see our Savior, have seen the Father. We see the Father only in and through His Son. As St. John tells us, "*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only, who is Himself God and is at the Father's side, has made Him known*" (John 1:18). Jesus has made God known, and He has made Him known to us as our Father who hears our prayer, who guides our path, who smiles at His children. God our Father who gave His Son to the end that we may commune with Him here in His house, now in this earthly life, and evermore in the world to come.