

John 14:7–14

Introduction

Here in John’s Gospel we’re in the midst of what is often called Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse.” As much as I don’t prefer that title, it does remind us of the context. John says in the first verse of chapter thirteen:

- John 13:1 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would **depart** out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Jesus says in verse 33:

- John 13:33 — “Little children, I am with you **a little while longer**. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘**Where I am going, you cannot come.**’”

It’s important for us to remember that *all* of Jesus’ words in these chapters (14-17) are spoken in the light of His soon departure. But “farewell” has a meaning and a flavor that I think can also be inappropriate. “Farewell” could just be a synonym for “good-bye,” but this isn’t just a long, drawn-out “goodbye.” “Farewell” could also be used to express good wishes at a parting (“fare you well”). But Jesus isn’t expressing “good wishes.” The emphasis here isn’t on “goodbye” or “farewell,” but rather on Jesus’ promise of their coming *reunion* and also of His spiritual and powerful *presence* with His disciples until that reunion (cf. Mat. 28:18-20). Can you see the important difference in this perspective? The departure and “going away” of Jesus is actually the key to both of these things – to both the coming *reunion* and to His spiritual and powerful *presence* with *all* of His disciples until that reunion. So we read in verses 2-4 of chapter 14:

- John 14:2-4 — “I go to prepare a *place* for you. *If I go* and prepare a *place* for you, *I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*. And you know the way where I am going... I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Jesus goes not only to prepare a *place* for us (our future reunion), but also to be the *way* for us to come where He is (His presence with us now). If He *is* the *way* for us to come where He is—if He *is* the *way* for us to come *to the Father*—then He must in some way be really and truly with us even today. So Jesus continues, now, in verse seven:

I. John 14:7 (LSB; NIV; NRSV; HCSB; NET; NA27) — “If you have come to know Me, you will know My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

The ESV and the NASB adopt a different Greek reading which assumes that the disciples did *not*, in fact, know Jesus: “If you *had* [really] known Me, you *would have* known My Father also.” But I think this reading is almost impossible (for the following, see Michaels).

What did Jesus say to the Pharisees?—“You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also... I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” (Jn. 8:19). Are the disciples no better off than the Pharisees? What did Jesus say in chapter ten?—“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me” (10:14; cf. 13:1). What did Jesus just say to His disciples?—“You know the way where I am going... I am the way....” (14:4, 6). And now Jesus says here: “If you have come to know Me [perfect completed action], you will know My Father also [future]...” There can be no doubt about the fact that the disciples *will* know the Father; therefore, there can be no doubt about the fact that the disciples have *already* come to know Jesus. Jesus isn’t casting doubt on whether the disciples know Him or not. But then why does He say “if”—“*If* you have come to know Me...”?

The point of the “if” isn’t to cast doubt but to invite the disciples into a fuller understanding of what their knowledge of Jesus really means – and what it *will* one day mean. They’ve already come to “know” Jesus because they’re “His own”—because they’re His sheep who know His voice (cf. 10:4) and who have followed Him. But they haven’t yet fully grasped what this knowledge of Jesus means, in part because so far they’ve only known Jesus “according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). Because of the date on the calendar they couldn’t possibly know Him in any other way. In other words, the point isn’t a “carnal,” fleshly knowledge of Jesus, but their knowledge of Jesus only in the context of His fleshly weakness (in “the days of His flesh”; Heb. 5:7). This helps us understand Jesus’ words when He appeared to Mary after His resurrection:

- John 20:17 — Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”

Mary was still thinking of Jesus “according to the flesh” and so she clung to Him with the kind of clinging that was obviously not willing that He should ever leave her again. But Jesus gently tells Mary that she must come to know *Him*—who is the *same* Jesus that she’s always known—now in the light of the power of His resurrection – now as the one who is ascending to the Father to be glorified in Him. It’s in this light that we can understand what Jesus says here to the disciples: “If you have come to know Me [and you have “according to the flesh”—in the context of my fleshly weakness], you will know [future] My Father also, from now on you know Him...”

What does Jesus mean by “from *now* on”? “Now” doesn’t refer to that specific day; instead, it’s a redemptive-historical “now” – it refers to that redemptive-historical event of the crucifixion/resurrection/ascension that was even then, in a sense, already underway. Remember what Jesus said in chapter 13 after Judas had gone out to betray Him:

- John 13:31 — “*Now* is the Son of Man *glorified*.”

“If you have come to know Me [and you have come to know Me “according to the flesh”—in the context of My fleshly weakness], you *will* know [future] My Father also, *from now on* you know Him...” In other words, that great redemptive reality that has always belonged to the future (“you *will* know My Father also”) is now already in the process of being realized (“*from now on* you know Him [present]”). The disciples know Jesus already because they’re “His own” who

know His voice (cf. 10:4) and who have followed Him; but when Jesus is raised from the dead in *power* (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phil. 3:10) and when He has ascended to the Father in *glory* (1 Tim. 3:16), then the meaning of their knowledge of Jesus will be fully unveiled because then they will know Him no longer “according to the flesh.” “From now on you know Him, and have seen Him” – because from now on you will see Me glorified in Him, and Him glorified in Me (Jn. 13:31-32).

II. John 14:8 — Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

What is the ultimate blessedness of man? Isn’t it to see God?—Not in the sense of seeing a physical shape or form (God is spirit; Jn. 4:24) and not in the sense of seeing His essence or His being (in this sense He is invisible; 1 Tim. 1:17), but rather in the sense of seeing the full manifestation of His glory – of His goodness; of all His infinite perfections. This is what has often been called the “beatific vision” – the vision of infinite blessedness that results in infinite blessedness.

➤ Exodus 33:18–20 — Moses said [to the Lord], “I pray You, show me Your **glory!**” And He said, “I Myself will make all My **goodness** pass before you, and will proclaim the **name** of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

This was a *temporary* vision of God’s glory given *only to Moses* and necessarily “*limited*” so that Moses would not die. But Moses’ request represents the great need that we all have, and God’s gracious answer to Moses was a promise that one day *all* God’s people would be allowed to see God’s glory – and not just a passing vision of His glory, but rather the *permanent* blessedness of *always* seeing God and even of seeing Him *fully*.

Philip hears Jesus say, “*from now on* you know Him, *and have seen Him*” and he responds: If it’s really “from now on” then show us the Father *now* and this will be enough for us – this will be all that we could ever ask for; this will be all that we could ever need. Philip is still thinking of the Father as somehow fundamentally distinct and separate from Jesus. The drift of his question (even if he doesn’t realize it) implies that if Jesus would only show them the Father then they would no longer have any need for Jesus. If Jesus would only show them the Father, then *that* would be *enough* for them.

III. John 14:9a — Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you all, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip?”

In verse seven Jesus “assumed” that His disciples had, indeed, come to know Him. So Jesus isn’t expressing surprise, here, that Philip does *not* know Him. He’s challenging Philip to see what knowing Jesus really means and in seeing what knowing Jesus really means to know Him all the more truly. Jesus goes on to say:

IV. John 14:9b — “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

This is the mystery and the wonder and the very heart and soul of Christianity!—That *we* have been given the beatific vision – the vision of the *glory* of God in all His goodness and all His infinite perfections; and that this is not just a passing vision but the permanent blessedness of always seeing God and of always seeing Him fully revealed. So the Apostle Paul can say in 2 Corinthians:

- 2 Corinthians 4:6 — God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the *face* of Christ.

Jesus isn’t saying that everyone who saw Him pass by on the road had just had a passing glimpse of the Father. This “seeing” is the seeing of believing and trusting; it’s the seeing that shows itself in following and obeying. So when Jesus says to Philip, “How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” He assumes that Philip *does* know Him and that Philip *has* seen Him, and therefore that Philip *has* known and seen the Father. But if this is really true, how can Philip be so unaware? How can Philip see the Father and not know that He’s seeing the Father? Here again is the mystery and the wonder of Christianity!—That the Father was manifested to us, *for a time*, in the weakness of mortal flesh.

So now we might ask: How can Jesus rebuke Philip—even as gently as He does—for asking that He show him the Father? Isn’t it only when Jesus is raised from the dead in *power* and when He has ascended to the Father in *glory* that the *meaning* of their knowledge of Jesus will be fully unveiled because only then will they know Him no longer “according to the flesh”? Jesus goes on to say in verses 10-11:

V. John 14:10–11 — “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you all I do not speak from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”

Jesus is pointing the disciples back to all the things they’ve already heard Him speak and to all the things they’ve already seen Him do. Hasn’t He already *said* that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (Jn. 10:37-38)? Hasn’t He already *said* that He speaks not from Himself, but only as the Father has taught Him (Jn. 8:28; 12:49)? Hasn’t He already *said* that He does nothing from Himself, unless it’s something He sees the Father doing (Jn. 5:19)? Hasn’t Jesus already said, “He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me” (Jn. 12:45)? If the disciples can’t yet understand fully what these things mean, shouldn’t they still be able to confess these things by faith?

But if the *words* of Jesus are not enough, then Jesus exhorts His disciples to *believe* “because of the *works* themselves.” As one commentator says: “*Thoughtful meditation* on... the turning of the water into wine, the multiplication of the loaves or on the raising of Lazarus will disclose

what these miracles *signify*: ... that the saving kingdom of God is at work in the ministry of Jesus, and this in ways tied to his very person [to who Jesus is]" (emphasis mine; Carson).

So what does Jesus expect His disciples to believe? Notice that here He doesn't say, "Believe in Me" (see v. 12). He says, "Believe *Me that* I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." It's completely vain and futile to believe *in* Jesus without believing something *about* Jesus. Furthermore, it's completely vain and futile to believe in Jesus without believing the *right things* about Jesus. Christianity isn't just a "relationship," it's also a body of doctrines; and the doctrines are just as essential as the relationship. To the extent that we get the doctrines *wrong*, then our "relationship" will be with a Jesus who is a figment of our own imagining – a Jesus who isn't real. To the extent that we *neglect* the doctrines, then our "relationship" can't possibly consist in that true discipleship to which we've been called. As another commentator says: "Faith *that* there is a mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is part of the faith whereby one *commits* oneself to Christ. If there is no such indwelling [and if there is not the heart-belief in this mutual indwelling] there can scarcely be full commitment" (emphasis mine; Morris). In other words, sound doctrine is essential to a genuine relationship between us as disciples and Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

And so on the basis of the *word* of Jesus and on the basis of the *works* that He did even in "the days of His flesh" *what* do we believe? *What* do we confess? We believe and we confess that Jesus is in the Father and that the Father is in Jesus. And so we believe in confessing this mystery that in coming to see the Son we see the Father. It's *in this believing* that we're *given* the full blessedness of the beatific vision – of *seeing* the Father in all His goodness and infinite perfections. It's *in this believing* that we have that *permanent* blessedness of *always* seeing the Father and of *always* seeing Him *fully*. And so it's also *in this believing* that we *commit* ourselves fully to Jesus as the one in whom we see the Father.

But even in the midst of Jesus' gentle rebuke, He still isn't saying that the disciples should have been able to know Him and see Him already as they're about to know Him and see Him. He's still not saying that the disciples should have been able to see the Father already as they're about to see the Father. What did Jesus say? "If you have come to know Me, you *will* know My Father also; *from now on* you know Him, and have seen Him." And so Jesus begins to unpack this future "knowing" and "seeing" that was about to begin even then in that great redemptive-historical "now." And Jesus does this in the most astonishing way imaginable. Remember what Jesus just said: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the *works* themselves." And then Jesus says:

VI. John 14:12-14 — "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

It's because the disciples couldn't yet comprehend these realities that Jesus prefaces His words with "truly, truly." What He says may seem incomprehensible and unbelievable and yet it's wonderfully true nonetheless and of the utmost importance.

How can the disciples do “greater works” than Jesus did? Jesus answers: “Because *I* go to the Father.” When the disciples *see* Jesus by faith in His resurrection power and glory, then they will understand what it means that Jesus is in the Father and that the Father is in Jesus. Then they will understand that in seeing Jesus they are seeing the Father and that they’re seeing Him then as they could never have seen Him before. And so as a direct result of this unprecedented “seeing” of the Father, Jesus’ disciples will *ask* Him for things that they could never have dreamed of asking Him before – or even of asking God. Jesus says, “*Whatever* you ask in My name, that will *I* do... If you ask Me *anything* in My name, *I* will do it.” The point is not that we will do greater works than Jesus did independently of Him. The point is: Now that Jesus has ascended to the Father in resurrection power and glory *He* will do these “greater works” that we ask Him for *in and through us*.

And what are these “greater works” that He will do in and through us? They must be the works that are only possible *because* Jesus has ascended in power and glory to the Father. They must be the works that are only possible because of that great redemptive-historical “now” in which we are living when Jesus has already died and been raised and ascended to the right hand of the Father. And so they’re the works that the “miracles”—or the works—of Jesus during the days of His flesh were always pointing us *to*. Jesus said in John chapter five:

- John 5:20–21 — “The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.”

Today, Jesus is raising those who are spiritually dead to spiritual life in and through us as we faithfully and earnestly *ask* Him to be doing this work. Today, Jesus is forgiving sins through our preaching of the Gospel as we faithfully and earnestly *ask* Him to be doing this work (cf. Jn. 20:22-23). Today, Jesus is sanctifying and fitting people for heaven through the gift of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven as we faithfully and earnestly *ask* Him to be doing this work. And today, because of Jesus’ exalted station in heaven, He’s doing all these “greater works” not just for the Jews in Judea but for Jews and Gentiles from all the nations of the earth (“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself”; Jn. 12:32). One commentator says: “The works that Jesus has done on earth are merely the beginnings and signs of the all-encompassing power and glory with which he as the heavenly Lord will be clothed and in the exercise of which [his] disciples will be involved in this [climactic] dispensation of redemptive history” (Ridderbos).

And so now we can already see the answer to this question: *Why* does Jesus promise to give us whatever we ask Him for in His name? Because in giving us these “greater things” that we ask for, the Father will continue to be glorified in Him – the glory of the Father will continue to be revealed in Him so that more and more people will come to *see*—in a way that was never possible before—*the Father*. Isn’t this simply the work and the goal of evangelism and of discipleship and of all of life? Isn’t this to be the goal of all our earnest and faithful prayers? Why does Jesus promise to give us whatever we ask Him for in His name? Because it’s His will that all those whom the Father has given Him should be given the beatific vision – because it’s His will that in *seeing* Him they should *see* the Father. And so already we begin to understand that though Jesus has physically gone away, He is still spiritually and powerfully *present* with us

– hearing our prayers and even calling us up to share with Him in those “greater works” by which the Father is still, even today, being glorified in Him.

Conclusion

What are the things that we ask for? What are the things that we ask for *together*? What is the goal of all our asking? Have we comprehended the “greater things” that He has promised to do through us when we ask in His name? Do we know the blessedness of always seeing in Jesus the Father and of always seeing Him fully?