

Easter 5 Year A John Ch: 14 v1-14 and Acts Ch:7 v 55- 60

How well do we know Jesus? How well did the disciples know Jesus?

In the gospel reading, John portrays the disciples as a bit slow on the uptake.

Thomas asks a practical question. "We don't know where you're going so how can we know the way?" Perhaps he imagined Jesus was talking about a physical house with many rooms in some other part of the country. Philip seems to have completely missed the point! He asks "Lord, show us the father and we will be satisfied."

I can hear the exasperation in Jesus' voice. "Have you been with me all this time and **still** don't know who I am? How can you say 'Show us the father?' honestly Philip you **really** don't get it all do you?"

To be fair, it's a lot to take in. Let's think about what has just happened.

Jesus has predicted that Judas would betray him. He told Peter, his right hand man, that he will deny him 3 x. And now he is talking about leaving them. I imagine they were feeling pretty anxious. Realising that things were going to change, but not sure how or why.

We know all too well at the moment how unsettling that is.

They'd been with him since the beginning .Yet none of them understood. I wonder if **we** ever feel like that?

Of course we have the benefit of hindsight. We know about the crucifixion and the resurrection. The disciples didn't. Not yet.

In our Acts reading we heard about Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Now Stephen **really did** get it. He acted like Jesus in every way. There are quite a lot of similarities between Jesus and Stephen. Stephen was young, like Jesus. Full of the Holy Spirit, like Jesus. Performed signs and miracles, like Jesus. Had a very short ministry, like Jesus. Was abused by a mob and killed before witnesses, like Jesus. And died praying for forgiveness for his executioners, like Jesus. Stephen put his money where his mouth was. And who was watching approvingly from the sidelines? Saul, later known as Paul. And we know what happened to him!

I find it incredibly encouraging that God chose to use the fallible, confused disciples and Paul, persecutor of Christians, in his mission to change the world. Jesus entrusted this mission to his disciples and to each new generation ever since. Including us.

Jesus explains that if we know him, we know God. God the father is present in Jesus already. Jesus is one with the father. We begin to glimpse the community that is God. The perfect relationship that is the Trinity. Relationship is crucial.

Jesus clarifies what is to come. He knows his disciples are anxious. He speaks of preparing a place for them in his father's house. There is plenty of room for everyone. Everyone.

Then he makes one of his famous "I AM" statements. "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me." What does he mean?

Jesus is the way, the route to God as father. We can't come to God as father except through Jesus. It's about relationship again. Those who believe in him have been adopted into his family. We are children of our heavenly father, brothers and sisters of Christ. Many will come to God as judge, but his **children** will come to him as their heavenly father.

Jesus embodies all truth. He tells Philip " Even if you don't believe what I say, believe me because of what you have seen. "The disciples witnessed many miracles and were yet to experience the miracle of the resurrection. Blessed are those who have **not** seen, and yet have believed."

The way, the truth, what about the life? "I have come to give you life in all its fullness." It's what our diocesan LIFE vision is all about. Again, relationship. When we know Jesus we are caught up in the relationship of the Trinity, father, son and spirit.

In next week's gospel reading we learn about the promise of the Holy Spirit, the 3rd person of the Trinity. Jesus says it is necessary for him to leave so that the Holy Spirit can come. He promises not just eternal life when we die, but a transformed quality of life **now**. To gain access to that that life **now**, we **do** have to choose to enter into a relationship with Jesus.

Relationships are built on trust. Trust is built on relationship and experience. Knowing what is going to happen, helps a lot. Not knowing requires a great deal of trust. We trust people who keep their promises. Jesus **always** keeps his promises.

We are living in uncertain and unsettling times. We don't know what next week will look like, let alone six months time. It's natural to feel anxious. Jesus wants us to be at peace about today **and** tomorrow. When we share our life with him we can **know** that peace. But trust is built on relationship. The more experience we have of trusting Jesus, and knowing his presence for ourselves, The more we will be prepared when times are difficult.

He wants to spend time with us. Like with any other relationship it involves us speaking **and** listening. We call it prayer. When you know someone well you can be comfortable just being silently in each other's presence. We don't always need to talk. It is the same with prayer.

The way we build relationships is to spend time with each other. At the moment this might only be by phone, Skype or Zoom But it's important to keep in contact. To share what we've been doing and how we feel. Jesus longs to spend time with us. And **his** invitation is already sitting in our inbox waiting for our attention. All we need to do is join the call.