

We have heard Jesus saying, “I am” over recent weeks, a claim to equality with God: “I am the gate”, or the Good Shepherd and, this week, “the way, the truth and the life.” In John chapter 14 Jesus is preparing his disciples for life when he has gone from them: in a sense Jesus is readying the church to be the physical presence of Jesus in the world, because Jesus will have Ascended. In this chapter Jesus gives up hinting that he is God and clearly tells his disciples, so that there can be no more confusion.

In last week’s reading Jesus describes himself as the gateway to the Father. Today, in verse 7, Jesus says knowing him is the same as knowing God the Father. “You do know him and have seen him”, says Jesus, making it clear that he and God the Father are one. Despite this directness, the disciples remain confused. Jesus has made such a bold and big claim. How would we react to a politician or a leader saying, “I am God”? I suspect, with disbelief? Philip says, show us! If you are the Father let’s see it! This may reflect a lack of faith and belief in the community that John is writing his gospel for, at some point between 70 – 120 A.D.? It sounds a bit like a challenge?

Jesus’ disciples know the Scriptures that tell about the great Prophets. In Matthew and Mark’s gospels Jesus is transfigured on the Holy Mountain and shines with the Glory of God. God the Father is heard saying, “This is my Son, listen to him.” Peter, James and John all witnessed this, although they didn’t seem to have really understood? They have seen Jesus walking with Moses and Elijah on the Mountain, but they still only seem to be able to think of Jesus like one of the Great Prophets? The Great Prophets performed miracles, so it seems as if the disciples can accept that Jesus can do this or “the works”, as he describes them. But, to divide the unity of God into Son and Father (and from verse 15, Spirit, as well) seems to be beyond their comprehension?

For the Jewish faith, God is One and indivisible. Maybe this is also a discussion in the early church, and so this part of John’s Gospel may speak into that debate? As time went on, debates became visible in letters written by church leaders like Origen (at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) about whether the Son was less than the Father? But they must have had their beginning much earlier? For the Greeks, who had many gods and goddesses, it might not cause such an issue? But, for Jews, it would have been blasphemous.

Jesus appeals for Philip, and perhaps others who cannot accept this new teaching, to at least believe that Jesus is close to God because of the miracles. He doesn’t want to lose core disciples because of unbelief, as his time left with them is very short. The disciples will have a vital role in spreading the Church, Christ’s physical and continuing Body on earth, after Jesus’ departure. Jesus says, “the one who believes in me will..... do greater works” than Jesus himself, because they will spread the knowledge of Jesus and his death and resurrection beyond Israel and into the rest of the world. Jesus promises to help his disciples in these works, if they pray in his name. Because he is one with the Father, he will aid them with the Power of God.

Once again, Jesus makes the claim that the disciples stand in the presence of God, in the body of Jesus. Earlier in the reading we hear doubt from Thomas, who asks how we could know how to get to God the Father, and then later from Philip. Are both having problems believing that Jesus is one with God? This strengthens the idea that the early church of John, perhaps, was also struggling to accept everything?

John chapter 14 is a well-known part of the Bible, not least from its use in funeral services. The talk of the many rooms in God's house is a reassurance of Christians having a permanent home in God's heart. Jesus is explaining how this comes about. Because he is one with God, if we believe in him, we are one with him: then we are also one with God too. Jesus assures us that our loved ones, who have passed before us, have a permanent dwelling place. It is somewhere where they are kept safe, within God, until the day when Jesus returns in power to raise the dead and fully brings in God's Kingdom.

At such a difficult time in our world today these words are important to assure us of God's continuing love, in Jesus. If we worship Jesus, we worship God the Father too, because they are one. Belief in Jesus means we are always part of him and so, always part of God the Father. It is a huge source of comfort that, whether we walk in the light of day or in the darkness of death, God is always near.