

## Gospel of John - episode 28

### Chapter 14 part 2

Welcome to our reflection on chapter 14 of John's Gospel. At the very beginning of it we find that the disciples are troubled. Jesus wants to console them and to put them at ease. It really is no wonder that the disciples are troubled because they have just been told about Judas' betrayal, and about Jesus' departure, and they don't know where he's going. Hearing about Peter's denials was enough to distress any of them. So, they realise that they have been overtaken by events, and they're not sure if they are ready. When great events happen, we're never sure that we're ready no matter how much preparation has been done. So, Jesus wants to strengthen them; he wants to comfort them, and give them vision for going forward, because it's only vision that will enable them to persevere through the great trial that is coming upon them immediately. We need to remember that we are in the Cenacle.

Jesus is very anxious to make his disciples comfortable, but as soon as they go outside, they find enemies everywhere. Jesus' enemies are very active, preparing to torture and kill him; They are preparing a cross for him! So, when you put those two realities together, you see the sheer heroism of Jesus taking care that others are comfortable while he himself is going to be comfortless. Jesus takes care that they will be together and unified when he himself will be completely alone. What he asks them is to trust in God still. That means they have been trusting in God the Father. They've been trusting Him all their lives insofar as they were able. Jesus says, You must continue to trust in me. Now, that's no small demand to make when you consider what's going to happen. Everything that they believe about God, about the scriptures, and about the Messiah is going to be challenged. So, it is extremely important for them to trust Jesus - I'm emphasising this because of the great trials that are going to come upon the world very soon, for we will be in exactly the same position.

We must trust God beyond reason. Now, beyond reason means beyond our ability to understand, beyond our ability to work it out. We must let God be God, to do what God does. That's extremely important. We like to be in control. We like to work things out, and when it makes sense to us, we agree. Well, that won't help in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus in those days, or in the passion, death, and resurrection of the church that's coming in our day. We must let God be God, and trust God beyond reason. In other words, real faith, where we realise how small we are and how great He is, and how narrow our vision is, and how wide His vision is. He can see the whole of history. He can see the whole universe.

We can see very little. Therefore, if our faith in Him has trust beyond reason, it also has hope in Him, and hope anchors us in Him. This is what Jesus wants, because as soon as they leave the Cenacle and go into Gethsemane It's going to seem almost immediately as if God has abandoned them. It will look like Jesus is not the Saviour, as if he's not the Messiah, when they see him so easily arrested, crushed and killed - everything they've ever heard about him will be challenged. It's will seem as if all the prophecies of scripture are just nonsense.

So, if they're going to stay within what their own little minds can understand, they will lose the plot completely, and this happens when they all run away, but they will have enough teaching from the Final Discourse to help them recover. So, while Jesus goes physically into Death and Resurrection, morally and spiritually all his disciples, apart from Judas, go into a spiritual death and resurrection experience. They're all going to die, and the life that they have known up to this moment will stop. There will be a new normal. What they understood as normal before will cease to exist.

So, this is the time to trust Jesus as they trust in God. They must trust that Jesus knows what he's doing, and that will be very difficult when they see him surrendering in the Garden of Gethsemane. They're going to have to trust that the scriptures speak the truth. When eventually they go back to Isaiah 53, it will all be there. The Book of Wisdom, chapter 2 shows how the world deals with a holy man. The Book of Sirach, chapter 2 shows that the holy man will have trials and be tested, and hopefully fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of men. However, we're going to see Jesus surrender into the hands of men and into the hands of sinners, and that will challenge them terribly. So, trust is the issue going forward, not only for them, but for us at the end of this Era that we're living in also.

Jesus says, "there are many places, many rooms in my Father's House". The image John uses there is that of Solomon's massive dwelling place because he had 300 wives and 700 concubines. So, he had to have a village. There were many rooms for such a large family. One would hope that the text was exaggerating! So, we have the image of the Father's house able to house billions of children. He is saying, 'please don't think that you grasp everything that God does. You don't; or that you see everything that God does. You don't'. But there is a place for you in this massive mosaic of God's plan on the Earth; there is a place for you. You're an essential part of it. If you ever do a jigsaw puzzle and you're trying to recreate a beautiful picture, it's awful if there are one or two pieces missing. It just is not right. You can have a massive tapestry, but if there's a hole in it, it's awful. It destroys the whole thing. Your place in that tapestry, in that wonderful design is absolutely essential.

So, Jesus says, there is a place for you. I think we need to look at that. There is a place for you in all your uniqueness and in your specialness. There are many rooms, and he says, "I am going ahead to prepare a place for you". First of all, we should look back at the Exodus, because this Passover is Jesus' new Exodus, as I've already told you. Reading Deuteronomy chapter 1:33 will reveal what John has in his mind. This is what God the Father said, "The Lord went ahead of you on the journey, He went to find a camping place for you". Now, the translation says camping place, the original language says 'a dwelling place', (and that's what Jesus is saying, I'm going ahead to prepare a dwelling place for you). By night, He gave you guidance through the fire to light up your path, and during the day, He gave you a cloud to protect you along your way". So, in other words, the Lord actually prepared the way of the Exodus before them.

They couldn't have taken this journey without Him. They didn't know the way. Jesus is saying on a much higher plane, that he is going ahead to prepare the way back to the Father for humanity, because he has to reopen Paradise, and to prepare our place in heaven for us. We know from the letter to the Hebrews that one of the things he must do is to enter into the Holy of Holies in heaven taking his own precious



blood to offer on our behalf. So what Jesus is saying is that, yes, he will be absent in the flesh, but will be present in the spirit. John deals with this mystery of presence in absence. We often use that language for friends, even though you're far away, you're present because you're present in my heart. That's what Jesus is saying but on a much higher plane. He says that while he will be physically absent from them, he will be present in his church, in the community of the beloved disciples, and he will journey with them all the way throughout the whole night of history, but he won't Return until the journey is finished, just as he doesn't go back to the Father until his journey is finished. Cf Matthew 28:20.

The bride also has to journey until her journey is complete. The church will be a pilgrim through the wilderness of this world and through the night of history. However, the Lord will give her the light of the Holy Spirit to guide the way. The cloud represents the mystery of God's Presence that will be there all the time to protect her on this journey. Apart from that, our place in heaven is assured also. So, this is the eternal security of the believer. Our privilege is, that having a special relationship of intimacy with the Most Blessed Trinity, we allow God to reign on Earth in us, and through us, and allow Him to continue His merciful role of saving souls. But this time it's in us and through us because we are His tabernacles, and together we are His temple. So, it's in this journey in which Jesus appears to be absent while he is present we discover the real meaning of the name Emmanuel (God is with us).

John is not just thinking of the Exodus, he is also thinking of a Jewish marriage, and he wants to bring in the idea that the beloved disciples together to form the bride of Christ, the bride of the Lamb. So, using the imagery of a Jewish marriage at the time of Christ (I'm talking about biblical times), the bride and the groom took their marriage vows in public, but then separated for a year. The Bridegroom went away with the other men of the village to prepare a place, a home, for this new family to live. In the meantime, the bride went back to her parents to prepare the linens, the furniture and everything needed for the new dwelling. So, he was providing the home, and she was getting ready also. She was preparing so that when they came together to celebrate and consummate the marriage, both of them had worked hard. This is the image used here, that the Bridegroom is going away to prepare a place for his bride.

The Book of Revelation is also written by John. There he uses the image of the church as the bride of the Lamb. We don't have the marriage of the Lamb until chapter 19 of Revelation, but before that, from chapter 6, you have the purification of the Earth and the purification of the bride. When you come to chapter 19, you realise that "the bride has made herself ready". They are the exact words that John uses in Revelation 19. 'Made herself ready' means that she is wearing a dazzling white garment full of the deeds of the saints. In other words, during the whole purification process on the Earth, the bride was busily doing what the Lord asked her to taking care of the poor and the sick and the blind and the lame, and doing everything that was asked of her. She herself was being purified, and as soon as she was ready, the marriage would take place. The marriage image between the church and Christ is found in the Synoptic Gospels also. John brings it in here in chapter 14. The bride is told that she must go out into the world, and do something to make herself worthy to be the bride of this particular Bridegroom - who is the Lord.

This means that all of the disciples together constitute the bride of Christ. They are all, as a group, invited to have an intimate relationship with the Lord, because the church is at its most powerful when all of us are living a spiritual life in communion with God. Then Jesus says, "I shall Return and take you with me" (14:3). But Jesus is not going to Return! That Return is the Parousia. He won't Return until the bride's journey is over, and she has completed her mission. Now, he will come back in Resurrection appearances for his special witnesses, but the Return means the Parousia. The writings of Paul, John and Peter show that they were very conscious of the Return of the Lord. Here are a few references: 1 John 2:28: "live in Christ. That means live your union, live your intimacy with the Lord in Christ. Live in Christ then, my children, so that when he appears (that means when he Returns in Glory) we may have full confidence and not turn away in shame". So, you can see that the writers of the New Testament are conscious of the fact that the bride has a task to do. She has a journey to take. She must accomplish it, and then the Lord will Return. When he Returns, it is Judgement Day: Yom Yahweh. "I will take you with me" Cf 1Thessalonians 4:16-17. In 1 Corinthians 4:5, Paul tells the Corinthians who are sparring with each other, "leave that until the Lord comes". They are very conscious of the coming of the Lord.

Up to now, the only Apostles that were mentioned at the last supper were Peter, John and Judas. Now we get two more: Thomas and Philip. Thomas said to the Lord in 14:5, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how could we possibly know the way?" That is a response to what Jesus said in verse 4, "You know the way to the place that I am going". What Jesus said was, 'I have told you the whole mystery of salvation'. I've told you everything you need to know in order to return to the Father in heaven. But what Thomas is saying is, 'I think you're going on a physical journey'. He was, but he was going on a VIP spiritual which was the real one. Thomas, like Peter, is down at the level of below. He is thinking on the wrong level. What will happen in the Passion and Death of Jesus will transform these men forever. They will never, ever think this way again. They will think on the level of above, where they can see things from God's point of view. Cf Isaiah 55: 8-9. So, he said, "how could we possibly know the way?"

Jesus immediately raises him up to the level of above, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life". Now, this is a major revelation given just to the faithful Eleven. 'I am', of course, is **THE GREAT I AM. THE GREAT I AM IS THE WAY: THE GREAT I AM IS THE TRUTH: THE GREAT I AM IS THE LIFE.** God is everything. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is absolutely everything. If there is a way, He is the way. If there is truth, He is the truth. If there is life, He is the life. He is the origin of all life. We need to look at this statement Jesus has made, and to look at it in detail. So, initially let's just say that Jesus is saying, 'I am the way to the Father. I'm going back to the Father, and I'm the way to the Father. He's already told us in chapter 10, that 'You have to come through me'. I'm the gate into the sheepfold. I am the truth. In other words, the Word of God, what God wants to communicate to the human race, **Is Me.** Jesus is the Word, and I am the life. God said, **I AM.** In other words, God is being, and it's only possible for anyone else to have being because of Him. In our next session, I will speak in greater detail about what Jesus was saying when he said, 'I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life'. Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.

## **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our reflection on the second half of John's Gospel. I want to pick up where I left off in our last session at John 14:4, where Jesus said, "You know the way to the place where I am going, and Thomas said, Lord, we don't know where you're going. So how can we know the way? Jesus said, I am the way. I am the truth, and I am the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father, and from this moment, you know him, and you have seen him". Now, I want to take the first part of that because Jesus creates a problem in the second part, which we will have to deal with. What does Jesus mean by saying, "I am the way". I have already indicated to you that John has the Exodus in the background when he is writing the Gospel, and not only in the gospel, but also in his other writings the Exodus is the foundation document that is fulfilled in the Mission of Jesus.

In the Exodus, the Father made a way for his chosen people through the Red Sea. He literally opened the sea for them to make a way through. Then he made a way for them through the wilderness for 40 years until they eventually found the Promised Land, which, of course, symbolises heaven. The journey through the wilderness symbolises the mission of the beloved disciples and the Church through the Night of History. What Jesus says is that he is now opening a way for us to go back to the Father through his Passion and Resurrection. This is described in the letter to the Hebrews chapter 10:19-20. 25. I'm going to let you do that reading yourself; the author speaks about Jesus opening the way, entering the sanctuary in heaven, bringing his own precious blood, offering it to the Father so that the door is left open for us to follow. We will discover that when he emerges from Death in the Resurrection, that leaves the door open, yet most don't realise the significance of the open tomb of Jesus.

In other words, he has left access to the Father for us. This is an extraordinary privilege for each one of us.

Jesus can do this because he is the temple, the altar, the sacrifice and the priest; he's absolutely everything. not only that, but in chapter 10:9-10, Jesus told us that he was the Good Shepherd, that he was the gate, so he can open the gate and let us in and out. In Isaiah chapter 35, there is a wonderful preparation for the Gospel. There we read that God would provide a new sacred way that only the redeemed could travel on, and that they would find their way all the way back to God. So, Jesus is the way. He prepares the way ahead of us. He is the shepherd. He takes care of us on the journey, and he is the gate. Everything is through him, with him, and in him as the Church proclaims in the Eucharist.

He is not only the way; he is also the truth. The word 'truth' means reality as it really is. God is truth. God is reality. Only somebody in contact with God, in deep communion with God, can reveal that reality to others. Now, the unbelieving world is not interested in truth. It prefers its own deceptions, and so it opposes the truth. **Jesus, is the Great I AM**, which he revealed in the first part of the gospel. He is the one who reveals the reality about the Creator and the created. He is the one who reveals the reality about the need for redemption, and he is the one who reveals that there is a journey for us to take all the way back to the Father. He has provided all the knowledge we need in his teaching in the Gospels.



You will find in the Exodus that the people were aware that while they had had been brought physically through the desert to the Promised Land, that there was a spiritual journey that had to take place also, so, you find dotted all over the Old Testament, requests for the Lord to show them the way. For example: 1): Wisdom 5:6, “Clearly, Lord, we have strayed from your way”. So, they realised the way wasn’t just physical, it was a spiritual journey that they had to take. 2): The Psalms are full of the request that I’m going to read from Psalm 27:11. “Lord, teach us your ways”. 3): Psalm 30:5. “Lord, every word that you’ve given to us is true. 4): You could spend a lot of time on Psalm 119 which says,” Lord, your word is truth, and by studying your word, by meditating on your word, we can find your ways. Lord, teach us your ways, show us your paths, which are shown in the word of God. So, the way of life that Jesus is teaching his beloved disciples is the way of truth, and the way to the fullness of truth. ‘I am the truth’. They already have all this knowledge. Then finally, Jesus said, “I am the life” because God is life. God is being. When God was asked by Moses who he was, he said, **I AM**. He didn’t have to say anything else. It is because **He Is** that we have life. **BECAUSE HE IS**, I can have being. Jesus is the revealer of the truth and the life of God. In John 6:63, Jesus said, “the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life”. They belong to this dimension where God operates, the level of above. They are spiritual, and they are life-giving. Jesus says, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life”. They communicate divine life to us. In John 5:24, Jesus said, “whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me - that is, believes in God, the Father - the Father of Jesus – “has (at this moment) eternal life”. Now, eternal life means that you have a quality of life that death cannot take from you. Death is simply the separation of the body from the soul. It is the soul which has this eternal life and it will continue forever in this wonderful God-given life.

Also, the prologue of John, chapter 1:4 says, “in him was life, and that life was the light of men”. Jesus is the source of life, so, when he says, “I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life” he is telling all his beloved disciples that he is the very embodiment of truth and the source of eternal life for everyone, whether they believe in him or not. Unfortunately, the ones who refuse to believe won’t enter into this. This authentic way of life leads to the fullness of truth and the fullness of life eternally, is something the world doesn’t want to know about. Why? Because it includes the mystery of suffering and death, or what we nowadays call the mystery of the cross. First of all, we have to have the death of the egocentric self if love is to be born in us. Second, we have to be open to the idea of laying down our lives in martyrdom, in witness to the truth, and in witness to the love of God, as Jesus did.

Sometimes it means to lay down your life in martyrdom just for who you are, as Jesus laid down his life for who he was. He was the Son of God, and we’re the sons of God in him and through him. Then in 14:7, Jesus said, “if you have really known me up to this point, you will have known the Father also”. Why? Because in John 10:30 Jesus said, “the Father and I are one”. Jesus is speaking to his Apostles, his chosen ones at the Last Supper, before his Passion. You can see that they have not grasped the mystery. It makes more sense that they would struggle than that we can be struggling with this reality having been Christians for many years. Jesus said, “from this moment you have seen him, and you have known him”. Now, they are looking at Jesus while he says “from this moment, you have seen the Father, because the Father and I are one”. The Apostles won’t realise that until Jesus is raised up on the cross first, and then

raised up in glory. They will then understand what they don't grasp now, which is that **God himself was truly with them**, and they will marvel at God's humility and their own blindness.

Most of the time they looked at Jesus as someone who is merely human. If you think the Apostles were blind, try us! We have Jesus actually present in the most Holy Eucharist. Look at the way we behave! We certainly don't behave as if **God** is with us. Our blindness is unbelievable. Jesus had said to them earlier in John 8:24, "if you do not believe who I am, you will die in your sins. If you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins". In other words, if you don't realise that God is actually present to you and offering you eternal life, then you will stay under the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world. This time, Philip says - and it sounds wonderful - "Lord, "let us see the Father, and we will be satisfied". Jesus said, "But to have seen me is to have seen the Father!" The enormity of this revelation must have shocked Philip because he became silent. Whether he was able to take it or not, we don't know.

John doesn't explain that, but what Philip does is he expresses the need of every believer - and that is to see God. That is the deep ache inside of our being, that we need to see God, we need to see our Creator. We came from Him; we are spirits inhabiting bodies, and we need to go back and see the Father. It's an absolute necessity. There is this ache that all people have in the depths of their being. 'I want something and I don't know what I want'. That ache is the need to see God, and it will never be satisfied with anything less than God. St Augustine discovered this, "our hearts are restless until they rest in you". So, Philip expresses that on his own behalf, and on behalf of humanity, because the ultimate in religion is to see God. This was the request that Moses made to God on the mountain in Exodus 33:18. "Lord, show me your face", but at that stage, when the people were not redeemed, they were under the wrath of God, so God said, "No, I'll only show you my back. You can't see my face". To see the face of God is the Beatific Vision.

What John wants us to see here is that Philip has walked with God for three and a half years! He should have discerned the Presence of God in the Person of Jesus before now. He should have discerned the Presence of God in the teaching of Jesus, and in the miracles of Jesus. He shouldn't need a new spiritual experience to prove that to him. He has already had enough evidence. Jesus answers him, this is 14:8- "Philip said, Lord, let us see the Father, and then we shall be satisfied. Have I been with you all this time, Philip, said Jesus to him, and you still don't know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father. So how can you say, let us see the Father? Do you not believe? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" Here we have a revision lesson from the first half of the Gospel. "The words that I say to you, I don't speak of myself" (John 12:49). Where was Philip? Jesus said, "it's the Father living in me that's doing this work (John 14:10). You must believe when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe it on the evidence of the work, if for no reason" (John 10:38).

My reaction to that is, poor Jesus! Philip reminds me of a child the night before an exam; the teacher is trying to do last minute revision with them. The child asks a question that makes the teacher realise they haven't understood anything because if they ask that question, the rest of the material is lost. The teacher says, 'where have I been with this kid? They've learned nothing!' So here Jesus is saying to Philip what he has already said to the Scribes and Pharisees; what he has already said to the people - to everybody!

If you're not able to discern me, surely to goodness, you would know in the works that I have done that the Father is working in me. Jesus is saying 'if you see a work, a wonderful building for example, you admire the architect, and you say that the one who designed the building was a genius. When you see a famous painting in a museum, you look in amazement that anyone could paint such a picture. We put the painters on pedestals because their incredible work. Jesus says, 'look at the work I have done, Philip. At least believe that'. That's why my reaction is, poor Jesus, because he realises that they haven't grasped anything. 'Believe it on the evidence of the work'. He should have recognised the Presence of God in Jesus and he didn't. He should have recognised it in Jesus' teaching, and he didn't. And now Jesus said, 'at least the miracles, at least believe that they came from God'. You shouldn't need any further experience. What he wants us to realise is that as one who has been sent by God the Father speaks the Father's words. Now, this is the whole of the first half of the gospel. Jesus acts exactly as the Father has told him. He should have recognised him.

See Deuteronomy 18:18 where the Father said, "I will send you a prophet like Moses, and you must listen to him". Also, Deuteronomy 34:10-12, and you'll begin to realise something of the frustration of Jesus. This has all been prepared in the scriptures. Why don't they get it? It's really sad.

I'll leave it there for today,

Thank you for joining us, and we'll pick it up from here the next day.