

Satisfied

John 14:8

“Lord”, Philip said, “show us the Father and we will be satisfied”.

Ahh, yes . . . we will be satisfied! When will we be satisfied? Are we ever satisfied? With our stuff . . . with life . . . with God?

If only God would reveal himself . . . in a way that would leave no doubt . . . if only we could see God . . . and then everything would make sense . . . everything would be alright . . . then, we would be satisfied!

If only God would reveal himself . . . especially when life is a struggle . . . when bad things keep happening . . . when we can't make sense of the world . . . if only he would use his power to stop the baddies . . . to prevent the suffering . . . just give some sign that he's still all powerful and in control . . . if he would only do that, maybe then our hearts would not be troubled.

I pondered that sort of thought just this week as I sat by a hospital bed and prayed with a bloke who'd just been given bad news. I felt so useless sitting there . . . unable to do anything to ease his pain . . . and even my prayer felt weak and pointless . . . couldn't this God I was praying to have prevented this situation in the first place? Where were you God? Why didn't you . . . why don't you . . . show yourself . . . maybe then we might make some sense of it all.

I can understand Philip's request: “Show us the Father”

But, of course, that's just what Jesus does for Philip . . . and has done for us! Just not in the way Philip was hoping! Jesus points to himself . . . “you want to see God . . . well, here he is . . . the Father and I are one . . . and no-one sees God . . . no one comes to the Father . . . except through me”. It can't be any plainer than that!

So, did that satisfy Philip? Were the other disciples satisfied? This man walking with them . . . eating with them . . . teaching them . . . he was God. Were they satisfied with that response? Well, for a while they sort of were . . . when things were going well . . . when the crowds were flocking around . . . when Jesus was healing and driving out demons and performing miracles . . . that was all right . . . but, not when he started talking about suffering . . . and dying . . . what was that all about? . . . that wasn't God-talk . . . and when it actually happened . . . well , then they voted with their feet . . . they deserted Jesus . . . they ran away . . . he had so much potential . . . they hoped he was the one . . . but, no . . . he couldn't have been! Not on the cross . . . not weak . . . humiliated . . . so ordinary . . . just another human being.

Isn't that the biggest stumbling block for so many people? Jesus doesn't match their perception of what God is like? A good man, maybe . . . a great teacher . . . a prophet . . . even a miracle worker . . . but, God? No . . . God is powerful . . . not weak! God can't suffer . . . God can't die! No . . . they want to see the real God!

And, perhaps we do too, sometimes? When times are tough . . . when we're struggling . . . when God seems so far away . . . and the waters of baptism seem too mundane for God to be present there . . . and, a bit of tasteless wafer and cheap wine seem laughably inadequate to reveal God to us . . . and the church service is dragging on . . . the Bible readings seem to make no sense and the sermon is putting you to sleep . . . is this really what God's about? So ordinary . . . so mundane . . . so human? Come on! Show us the Father!

But, if we're hoping for some other response than the one Jesus gives Philip, then we're going to be disappointed. For, in the end, that's all we've got . . . just Jesus. Jesus who says: "Believe in God . . . believe also in me". Believe . . . trust . . . trust in this man . . . that's all we've got . . . this man who was so weak . . . so helpless . . . so pathetic . . . this man who suffered and died . . . as a criminal . . . on a Roman cross. Trust in him! That's crazy stuff, surely! Delusional! And, yes, it would be pitiful if it weren't for one thing . . . one thing makes our trust secure . . . one thing makes all the difference . . .

. . . we live after Easter! We live as people who have shouted: "He is risen!" This Jesus who suffered and died was raised to life . . . to eternal life . . . everything he said would happen is true . . . he has shown the way . . . he is the truth . . . he gives us the life . . . we can trust him!

What a difference Easter makes . . . what a difference the resurrection makes! Those same disciples who denied, betrayed and abandoned Jesus were now the ones who would show others who God really is . . . they would show them the way . . . speak to them the truth and give them the life only Jesus can give . . . God's life . . . they would continue the work of Jesus himself . . . bringing people to faith . . . and they would do it in the way Jesus told them to do it . . . in some pretty ordinary, mundane ways . . . through the proclamation of the Gospel . . . in ordinary, down to earth language . . . through the waters of baptism . . . through the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper . . . and through the gathering of the faithful . . . it is here that God is revealed because it is here Jesus reveals who God really is: a God who speaks to our hearts . . . a God who loves all people dearly . . . a God who was willing to be weak and helpless and humiliated . . . for our sake. That's who our Father is.

That's the God we are called to show people in our community. Through us . . . pretty ordinary people . . . Jesus brings people to faith . . . through us, Jesus comforts and reassures people . . . through us, Jesus shows his love.

It may not look like much at times . . . we may feel ineffective and ill-equipped, but we have Jesus' promise . . . we will do his work.

I only thought about it later, but when I sat and prayed with that bloke this week and I felt totally inadequate to deal with the situation and my prayer felt empty, it wasn't that God wasn't there . . . he was . . . he was there because I was there . . . there in Jesus' name . . . I didn't have any grand words of wisdom . . . I didn't have a solution that would fix everything . . . all I had was Jesus . . . God with us . . . and that's what I was doing . . . just being there.

Just Jesus . . . that's all any of us has . . . and that is enough.

Yes, that is enough.

Amen.

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