

I am in the Father and the Father is in me

John 14:1-14

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

Today’s reading was the first part of Jesus’ farewell speech. The Disciples must have been startled by the news that Jesus would soon depart from them. So, Jesus tried to calm them down and had a Q&A session. During their conversation, Philip asked Jesus something remarkable, something that we all want. He said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Facing anxiety and fear about the uncertain future, he asked for a powerful religious experience of God that could cast out all fear and doubt from his heart. Have you ever asked God a similar thing to what Philip asked? Actually, I have.

I shared my calling statement with you when I was first appointed to our church. Do you remember it? If not, good, as I am going to repeat it during this sermon. Long story short, I was not a good pastor because I began my ministry without a strong sense of calling from God. I did it just to complete a process. You can guess how it went. The church to which I was appointed, had no church members, so I preached to empty pews every week for 6 months and I soon reached my limit. I asked myself, “Am I crazy? What am I doing here?” It was impossible for me to do ministry until I found assurance of my calling. I told my parents, “I will do a 40 day fast if I have to, to find the assurance of my calling to ministry. Maybe in my hunger, I may have a vision or hear God’s voice. I don’t care what it is, but without a strong and tangible experience of God’s calling, I cannot continue my ministry.” Like Philip, I wanted an undeniable and powerful experience of God to overcome my doubts and anxiety.

I don’t think that I am the only one who has sought a powerful spiritual experience of God. When a situation seems unfavorable for us, we seek assurance or tangible evidence for our faith, something like the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, miraculous healing, speaking in tongues, or seeing visions. We look for something special, something we can hold onto to cast out our doubts and fear!

Know Thyself

Philip wanted something extra ordinary, a special spiritual experience of God so that he could be satisfied. Replying to Philip’s request, Jesus made a surprising statement. Jesus said, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” What a bold claim it is! This bible verse has occupied my mind throughout the whole week for several reasons.

First, I was intrigued by Jesus’ bold claim that came from his deep understanding of his identity as God’s beloved. Jesus fully knew himself, so he was not afraid to say “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

There is an existence that is the most difficult to know because it is so close to us. Do you know what it is? It is ourselves! Although we think we know ourselves well, in reality, we often don’t. When I was in graduate school in Korea, I studied the Enneagram at a pastoral counseling center. The Enneagram is a framework for understanding people. It broadly categorizes people’s personalities into nine types and explains how their personalities can change depending on the situation. The Enneagram describes a personality as a “habitual, unconscious pattern of responding to external stimuli.” We often say that people don’t really change. Do you know why people don’t change? According to the wisdom of the Enneagram, people don’t change because

they don't realize what happens within them, so they just follow their unconscious habitual pattern of responding to external stimuli. The Enneagram helps people recognize the changes happening within them so that they can make different choices. The Enneagram is a way to understand ourselves, but there are many other ways to see ourselves.

The question, "Who am I?" is a significant religious question for us. So who are you, really? When asked this question, what is your answer? My immediate response would be, "I am Yohan, an Asbury pastor, Juhee's husband, a son, a sibling, maybe Joy's father (not biological father of course) but his father, a friend, having a sense of humor, I am not perfect but good enough... and so forth. But none of these fully capture who I am really. Knowing who we are is not easy. I will ask "who are you?" ten times and you answer who you are in a word or sentence.

Who are you? (x 10) How was that? Some of you may find it difficult to answer this question five times. Knowing who we are really is not easy but it is also central to our Christian faith. A famous religious reformer, John Calvin contends, "one could not truly know God without knowing oneself and that one couldn't truly know oneself without knowing God." The more we understand ourselves, the more we can be free from prejudices, desires and expectations of others. So, I want you to keep thinking of this question, "who am I?" at home and do this practice. Sit in a quiet place and relax. Breathe your question in. Ask, "who am I?" Your mind will rush into some obvious answers. As answers emerge, set them aside and return to the question. "Who am I?" Patiently and firmly engage with this question and your mind will turn to more immediate experience and feeling. Keep direct yourselves toward immediate experiences that emerge at that moment. While you do this practice, also remember God, our Creator. In his struggle with this question, "who am I?," Bonhoeffer wrote, "Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!" God knows you, who you truly are and helps us to know who we are in God.

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father

Jesus knew himself fully and lived out his identity as God's beloved son. So he boldly claimed that "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Remember that Jesus never claim that he is the Father. Jesus knew that he was in the Father and the Father was in him. His life, teaching and action fully reflected God. He was not ashamed, saying "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus was like a window through which we can see the presence of God.

In chapter 15, Jesus explained this relationship with his disciples by using the parable of the vine. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing... If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (5-7)

We are in Christ and his word abides in us. It means that we are the window through which people can see the presence of Christ. Let me ask you a question. If someone asked you to show them Christ, how would you answer? Would you dare to say, "whoever has seen me has seen Christ?" or would you say, "go to see the pastor. Pastor Go may show you how to meet Christ?" I hope that we can shamelessly say "see Christ in me!" I may be an idealist but I believe what the church needs today are Christians who can boldly claim "whoever has seen me has seen the Christ!" This may sound like blasphemy, but I hope that more people can do this and people can really see the presence of Christ in us.

I know you are humble people so may think how would I dare say "whoever has seen me has seen Christ." Or maybe it is impossible for us to make this claim because... we are not perfect. We are imperfect human beings. How can we really become like Christ? But Jesus

promised, “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (12-13)

We may think that we will never be enough to say, “whoever has seen me has seen Christ.” We may not trust in ourselves but our Lord Jesus Christ trusts in us. Without faith in the possibility, no one would ever try to change themselves to imitate Christ! But our Christ says, “you will do greater works than I do if you believe in me.” Let Christ in us continue to remold us in his image and show the presence of Christ in us through our words and actions. Amen.