

May 15

Closing out on John 14:1-14, looking at verses 7-14: Jesus says, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father". The verb here, seen, is the word one would use to say, "I saw Joe Blow and Sally Sue". It is also the word that will be used to express the disciples' encounter with the Risen Lord. They say, "We have seen the Lord". Nor is it some special word John uses in his gospel. You find it all over the place. So, as we say, See means see.

Okay, I respond. What do I see? What is my reaction to what I have seen in Jesus? Here are some of my reactions to this declaration, depending on the day, even the time of day.

True confession time. The following list is only partial

- 1). Don't know what I'm looking at
- 2) Love what I'm looking at
- 3). Don't like what I'm looking at
- 4). Reject what I'm looking at
- 5) Accept what I'm looking at
- 6) Ignore what I'm looking at
- 7) Fear what I'm looking at
- 8). Imitate what I'm looking at
- 9) Share what I'm looking at
- 10) Celebrate what I'm looking at
- 11) Oppose what I'm looking at
- 12) Defend what I'm looking at
- 13) Curious about what I'm looking at
- 14) Confused by what I'm looking at
- 15) Agnostic toward what I'm looking at
- 16) Hopeful about what I'm looking at

- 17) Doubtful about what I'm looking at
- 18) Angry about what I'm looking at
- 19) Disappointed about what I'm looking at
- 20) Loyal to what I'm looking at
- 21) Feel unworthy before what I'm looking at
- 22) Feel intimidated by what I'm looking at
- 23) Feel weary from living with what I think I'm supposed to do because of what I'm looking at
- 24) I think what I'm looking at is naive
- 25) Whatever I think or feel, I trust what I'm looking at
- 26) I obey what I'm looking at
- 27) I am surprised by what I'm looking at
- 28) I am happy to be aware of what I'm looking at
- 29) I am bemused by what I'm looking at
- 30) I am grateful for what I am looking at
- 31) I am awed by what I'm looking at
- 32) I am frustrated by what I'm looking at
- 33) I am disgusted by what I am looking at
- 34) I think what I am looking at is irrelevant
- 35) I think what I'm looking at is ridiculous
- 36) What I am looking at encourages me to open myself to the world
- 37) What I am looking at helps me accept myself
- 38) What I am looking at helps me be compassionate

39) What I am looking at helps me be less judgmental and decisive (not full bore or black and white all the time)

40) What I'm looking at helps me accept the variety of human nature and our choices

41) What I'm looking at helps me accept the ambiguity in life—not all choices are clear cut or have equal weight

42) What I am looking at helps me face the uncertainty of life—the future is unknown

43) What I am looking at persuades me that we all do better when we all do better

I can go on, but I suspect that the variety of my responses captures at least several of yours. I hope it is not shocking to you that there is such a wide range in my responses. Nowhere does it say that being Christian makes life easier or us less complex people. Neither are clergy immune to the variety of emotions, foibles, quirks, preferences, tastes, dispositions everyone else has.

My point in laying all this out is to open a pathway into this familiar declaration from Jesus. In me, Philip, you have seen the Father. If you accept that, carry it onward. Through me the Father has seen you and encountered the human experience of being a human being (I know this sounds strange, but I mean moving from the outside looking in to being inside looking out).

Where we can go with this is toward hearing Jesus trying to help the disciples put the pieces together that he knows they can assemble, rather than simply issuing a rebuke. More of a 'You can do it' and less of 'Try again, dumbell'. Now I confess that I have a personal stake in this viewpoint, as I grew up a stutterer who learned reading skills slowly, and was unaware of poor eyesight and hearing problems (now long-since corrected/provided for).

Now the great declaration: you will do greater things than you have seen me do because you shall have the Holy Spirit with you. Think about what Jesus might mean about this upcoming reality. The work of God on earth is being given into our hands, heads, and hearts along with the Holy Spirit. I want to suggest that the more we hear the words of Jesus to Philip as simply an exasperated rebuke, the harder it is for us to accept what Jesus says is going to possible for us when the Spirit comes.