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John 14:1-14

You are not abandoned

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. **2**In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3**And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4**You know the way to the place where I am going.” **5**Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" **6**Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7**If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." **8**Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." **9**Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10**Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11**Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. **12**I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. **14**You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

The devil decided to have a garage sale. He marked all his tools with their appropriate price: hatred, envy, lust, deceit, lying, and pride. Laid apart from all of these was a rather harmless looking but well-worn tool marked much higher than the rest. A buyer pointed to it and asked, “What is that tool?” The devil replied, “That is discouragement.” “Why is it priced so high?” the man asked. “Because it is more useful to me than the others. I can pry open a man’s heart with discouragement. Once inside, I can make him do whatever I choose. It’s badly worn because I use it on almost everyone. But few know that it belongs to me.”

Have you ever felt discouraged? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Of course you have. All people have experienced these feelings. It might be over financial problems that caused you to doubt God’s provision. It might be over a doctor’s report. It might be over the rejection from a spouse or a friend. It might even be over a sin that you continue to commit and wonder how God could still love you. Whatever the cause, you are left feeling discouraged and abandoned.

In our reading we find the disciples discouraged. The setting is the upper room. Jesus has washed his disciples’ feet. Jesus has shared the meal with them. Jesus has told them that he is going to the Father. Knowing that they would be separated from Jesus, Philip says, “Show us the father and that will be enough for us” (14:8). In other words, give us a picture of God to hold onto so that we will not be discouraged.

This request is reasonable. Alister McGrath shares a story about a picture his aunt held onto. He explains: An aunt of mine died some time ago, having lived to be eighty or so. She never married. During the course of clearing out her possessions, we came across a battered old photograph of a young man. My aunt had, it turned out, fallen hopelessly in love as a young girl. It had ended tragically as he died unexpectedly. She never loved anyone else and kept the photograph of the man she had loved for the remainder of her life. Why? Partly to remind herself that she had once been loved by someone. As she had grown old, she knew that she would have difficulty in believing that she really had meant something to someone, that someone had once cared for her and regarded her as his everything. It could all have seemed a dream, an illusion – except that the photograph said otherwise. It reminded her that it had not been invented; she loved someone once and was loved in return. The photograph was her sole link with a world in which she had been valued (Alister McGrath, *Doubt*).

Philip wanted a picture of the Father to hold onto in order to know he was valued. The problem is what picture of God should Jesus give? Does Jesus give his disciples a picture of God's power? He has already done that. Jesus turned water into wine. Jesus fed the five thousand. Jesus healed the sick. Jesus raised the dead. Surely those signs would be enough for the disciples. But they weren't.

Maybe Jesus should have God speak. Hasn't that already happened as well? God spoke at Jesus' baptism at the transfiguration and on the day of his triumphant entry as Jesus prayed for God to glorify his name. God replied, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). The disciples heard this. They heard the voice of God. Surely that would be enough. But it wasn't.

This is important because most of us want something to hold onto when we are losing control. God give us a sign. God speak to us. What would happen if God did? Would that be enough? And what happens if God did not always give a sign? Does sickness mean God hates us? Do financial problems mean God is mad at us? What about the opposite? Does health mean God loves us? Do financial successes mean God is happy with us? The truth is that God's will is hidden in these areas. God does this so that you will not go looking for Him in these areas. Instead, God wants us to look in the place where He has revealed Himself. Namely, in Jesus!

Jesus is the picture of God for you to hold onto when you are feeling abandoned. Verses 9 & 10: "Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?'" In other words, if you want to see the Father, look at me.

Did you know that? Did you know that to get a real picture of God you have to look no further than Jesus Christ? Jesus is God incarnate. "In the beginning was the word [Jesus] and the word was with God and the word was God" (John 1:1). The face of Christ is the face of God.

If you need more than a face, then listen to Jesus' words. "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (14:10-11). Not only is Jesus the face of God, Jesus is the voice of God. Every word from Jesus' lips is God's word. Every time Jesus forgives a sinner, it is God the Father forgiving them. Every time Jesus offers a promise, it is God the Father offering a promise.

Listen to some of the wonderful promises of God spoken by Jesus. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (3:16).

“Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:14). “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:39-40). “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (10:11). “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (11:25-26). Every word is God's promise to you. Hold on to them.

If you still need more of a picture, then look at the great things Christians have done. “**12**I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. **14**You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

How can we do greater things than Jesus? Tony Campollo asked this very question in a sermon he once preached. Compollo says:

When I was in Haiti, I checked on our missionary work there. We run 75 small schools back in the hills of Haiti. I came to the little Holiday Inn where I always stay and shower and clean up before I board the plane to go home. I left the taxi and was walking to the entrance of the Holiday Inn when I was intercepted by three girls. I call them girls because the oldest could not have been more than 15. And the one in the middle said, "Mister, for \$10 I'll do anything you want me to do. Do you know what I mean?"

I did know what she meant. I turned to the next one and I said, "What about you, could I have you for \$10?" She said yes. I asked the same of the third girl. I said, "I'm in room 210, you be up there in just 10 minutes. I rushed up to the room, called down to the concierge desk and I said I want every Walt Disney video that you've got in stock. I called down to the restaurant and said, do you still make banana splits in this town, because if you do I want banana splits with extra ice cream, extra everything. I want them delicious, I want them huge, I want *four* of them! The little girls came and the ice cream came and the videos came and we sat at the edge of the bed and we watched the videos and laughed until about one in the morning.

And as I saw those little girls stretched out asleep on the bed, I thought to myself, nothing's changed, nothing's changed. Tomorrow they will be back on the streets selling their little bodies. But the spirit spoke to me: "For one night, for one night you let them be little girls again."

Compollo goes on to write:

"I know what you're going to say: "You're not going to compare that with Jesus walking on water." No, I'm not, for very obvious reasons. If Jesus was to make a decision which is the greater work, walking on water or giving one night of childhood back to 3 little girls who had it robbed from them -- giving one night of joy to 3 little girls that armies had marched over -- which do you think Jesus would consider the greater work, walking on water or ministering to those 3 little girls.

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (14:12). If you doubt God, look at the work Christians are doing. You will get a clear picture of God.

And yet, this still might not be enough. You might still think you are abandoned. If you need another picture then remember Jesus said these words the night before his death. Jesus would die on the cross to reveal the love of God.

Reformation, do you feel abandoned and forsaken? Do you need a picture of God to hold onto? Jesus says, hold onto me. Hold onto my words. See the great things Christians have done in my name. Look at the cross. This is your picture. You are not alone. You are not abandoned or forsaken.

**In Jesus' Name,
Amen**