### “Show Us the Father” Steve Finlan for The First Church, May 7, 2023

**1 Peter 2:2–9**

2Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— 3if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and 5like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” 7To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner”, 8and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

**John 14:8–11**

8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” 9Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.”

We’ve been reading several passages from First Peter over the last few weeks. Most of them talk about Christ. This one emphasizes the image of believers as living stones, able to come together to be a “spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5). He also uses the image of the stone that the builders rejected, becoming the cornerstone of a new building. Christ becomes the cornerstone of a new structure, the family of God. But the idea of a “royal priesthood, a holy nation” (2:9) goes back to Exodus, where God tells Moses to tell the Israelites that “you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6). It is a profound wish for the people of God to be an exceptional community in which every individual plays a priestly or prophetic role, so to speak. It goes beyond the usual hope for obedience, and explores the hope that even rank and file believers may be spiritual leaders. That’s what’s meant by “priest.” It is a hope for special spiritual qualities to be common among the believing community. It is an anti-hierarchical vision, to some degree. Each individual believer can be an efficient testifier to what God has done to lift one “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Each person is, metaphorically speaking, a priest, that is, a religious leader. The priesthood of all believers is an essential Protestant principle. In other words, every believer is capable of interpreting the Bible.

Well, the twelve apostles were religious leaders, too, but they weren’t always brilliant. Philip’s question, “Show us the father” (John 14:8), is really quite ignorant. Jesus rebukes Philip, saying, in effect, “don’t you know that he who has seen me has seen the Father (14:9), that my whole life is a revelation of the Father’s nature? The Father is in me, and the things I say come from the Father’s nature. My whole mission in life is to reveal the Father to humanity.” Apparently Philip did *not* know that; it had to be explained to him. The ongoing revelation of the Father continues after Jesus’ ascension, because the Father sends another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth.

The Father is in the Son, and the Father and the Son are in the Spirit. We feel community with God and Jesus, while we are charged up with the Spirit’s inspiration. Jesus wanted the apostles to understand his spiritual unity with the Father, and we see it spelled out in the long speeches in the Gospel of John. We see it in his prayer for unity in John 17, where he prays that his followers may be one as he and the Father are one (17:11), and that his followers should be “in” Jesus and God, just as Jesus and the Father are “in” each other (17:21).

In the preceding chapter of John he had explained that “when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth,” and “he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (16:13, 15). He also explains that there is a circuit of truth and love from Father to Son that is meant to include the believers; he says “for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (16:27). So Father, Son, and Spirit have a circuit of truth and love, and believers are included in the circuit.

To combine the points made in these two readings, I’ll say that Jesus is, so to speak, the chief priest of the nation of priests that is the community of those who actively seek to do God’s will. He is also the chief cornerstone on which the lively stones of the believer community are built. He is the source and the center of the community of love and repair. The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us. We have no excuse for disunity or hostility toward others who seek to follow Jesus. We should be working to empower each other and help others move forward. We have been loved, now let us love. “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt 10:8 NKJV).

How do we love like Jesus loved? We pray for others, we give of ourselves to them, we serve them, we refrain from judging them, we use our power to benefit others (taken from <https://www.ourgodiswithus.com/8-practical-ways-to-love-like-jesus/>). Some of our attempts to love may fail; they may be clumsy or clueless; we may be reaching out to someone who doesn’t want to be reached; or our ego might get in the way. It doesn’t matter. We can pray for help and keep trying.

Persistence counts. Madeleine L’Engle had to submit her book *A Wrinkle in Time* to 26 publishers before it was finally accepted. L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was rejected so many times, that Baum kept a journal of his rejections called *A Record of Failure*. (https://www.ka-writing.com/ten-famous-books-rejected-publishers/)

We are to keep the love circulating. The love comes from God, through Jesus, into us, and through us to our neighbors. And you can trust that it completes the circuit and returns to God. We are part of a great recycling project. Keep that love recycling. And don’t doubt that you have indeed learned about the Father when you have learned about the Son.