Text: John 14:1-14

**Introduction**

What is our fundamental desire?

I’m not foolish enough to say I’ve got the answer. I’m not even sure that there is one fundamental desire. But let’s play along with the question for a bit. What is our first or prime desire?

I think some would answer to be loved and maybe even to love in return.

Others might answer to know and be known.

Still others would say both of those things are hopelessly advanced desires. The base desire is security: food, shelter, rest.

And then Darwin would simply say sex. That life would go on, even if mine does not.

There might be other answers. Including those that would simply say stop asking stupid questions.

What is the sound of one hand clapping? The zen master realizes there is no spoon. The smart aleck goes (claps one hand). Both are ways to grapple with such questions.

**Text**

Reading the gospel of John to me sometimes feels like wrestling with such questions. And the early centuries of the church loved to do such things. I think that the people who produced the creeds would answer something like Philip in our text today: “Lord, show us the Father.” They wanted to know and be known. They wanted to know God and believed that such a thing was possible. We, or at least our dominant culture, is at the other end of such things. It is not atheist. It is not the zen master who would say that the entire world is an illusion pulled over our eyes. We aren’t serious enough for that. Oh, Hollywood likes playing with such things, but if they don’t come with great action sequences we don’t really care. Eventually the Matrix resolves into John Wick. Drop the philosophy and just keep living and enjoy the ride. We are much more like the kid clapping one hand.

But when we insist on being agnostic, or putting such questions out of our minds, I think there is a nagging anxiety that is created. When we deny – the fancy world is teleology – the direction of all things, all kinds of things break. The first to go is probably hope. The agnostic can still talk about hope, but its more like a ghost of the real thing. An emotional memory, a sentimental desire. If we are no longer directed somewhere, and hope is a ghost, most of us lose meaning. Oh, some of us want to think that we are Nietzschean supermen and create our own meaning. Or maybe we are complete gnostics and think that if we cast our desires out into the universe it will send them back to us with complete fulfillment. The much more common course is to intuit the danger in the loss of hope and meaning and invest our hearts and lives in acquiring things. We can get through most of life with a strong denial and a desire for a big enough house.

It is to that stew of desires, anxieties and troubles that Jesus has at first as very simple pronouncement.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God – Believe in the Father; believe also in me.”

I said that I’m not foolish enough to say I’ve got the answer, but I do think the scriptures tell us some answers. And I think one of those answers is the as the singer Marcus Mumford summarized, “you were born to meet your maker.” Or as the apostle Paul puts it, “to know even as you are known.” But the problem is that in our sinful condition we see through a glass darkly. In our sinful condition the idea of meeting our maker fills us not with love or joy, but shame and dread.

And so even though such a meeting is what we were created for, to live in communion with God. We come up with all kinds of copes to avoid it. But none of those copes really address the anxiety.

**Christology**

It is only the words of Jesus – the true man and true God – that addresses them. “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe.”

Why should these words help us in our situation? I think Jesus, with the help of a couple of disciples here, runs down a list of reasons.

But the very first reason is the means of knowing. When we talk about knowing and being known that anxiety is that we are so limited. The second that you even say the word God, if we are honest, that is beyond knowing. The Trinity that we confess is unknowable, at least in its essence. Especially to sinful beings. We look through a glass darkly. We can’t know. There is a day we shall know more completely. But today, this is the day of grace, and the grace of God comes by faith. God does not demand knowledge, but asks us to believe.

Believe what?

The simple answer is that He has provided. “In my Father’s house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” We are used in a world groaning because of sin in dealing with scarcity. Those who would answer the fundamental desire with base security are not completely wrong. Jesus’ call is to lift our eyes from such temporal anxieties and that we might believe the eternal reality. God is not a god of scarcity, but one of abundance. This is one of those places the old King James translators understood their own language. In my father’s house are many mansions. Like the tardis, it’s bigger on the inside. Mansions fit inside the house. And one of them is yours. Christ, the carpenter’s son, has gone to prepare it. He has gone, and right the only way you can help, the means of building that mansion, is faith.

But how are we to believe? Or in what? How do we know that our faith is leading us to the right place?

Thomas helps us by throwing out his anxiety. “But Lord, we don’t know the way.” You are going to leave us and we have no idea where to go or how to get there. And Jesus makes it simple. “I am the way, the truth and the life.” If you believe in Jesus, you believe in the Father. The love and life and teaching of Jesus is all that we need. The love that gave himself for us on the cross. The way. The teaching that he has given to us that we might believe enough to know, and know enough to believe. The truth. The life that he now lives for us beating death and pleading for our forgiveness. Preparing for us a mansion.

But what are such things based on? What is the core reason these things should ease our troubled hearts. Jesus has already broached it, “If you had known mem you would have know my Father.” But that just kinda flew by. Philip pushes him on it. “Show is the Father.” It’s something of a dare. Ok, Jesus the door, open for us. Show us the one we really want to know. The one you have told us to believe. And Jesus answer is the Father’s plan for us to know the unknowable. “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” Look at the works. The incarnation, the miracles, the cross, the resurrection. This is the work of the Father. And the Father is in the Son. In Jesus we see and have seen the Father. Jesus we can know and be known. In Jesus we have the love of God and learn to love.

Christ is the image of the Father. Everything the Father desires for us has been granted in through Christ. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in the Father, believe also in me.

**Moral**

But why faith? What does such believe lead to? “Truly, Truly, I say to you, whoever believe in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the father.”

Of course if we define works as the miracles, or the teaching, we quickly run into a problem with this. Because as much as I wish I could even heal the sniffles, let alone raise the dead, it is just not there. I’m not denying that such a gift might be out there, but it isn’t here. So what works does Jesus mean?

And I think what he means revolves around the life of faith. We are to pick up our cross and follow him. Now I might be pushing this next bit too far, but forgive me. Jesus had faith in his Father, that the cross would not be it. But Jesus also knew the Father. Because he has gone to the Father and sent the Spirit to dwell in us. Not seeing or not knowing like Christ, we never-the-less believe. That saving faith is created out of stone hearts that knew nothing of God. And it is the works of faith, the fruits of the Spirit, that bring praise and glory to the Father. Those fruits are our own praise. And they are what the world sees and marvels at. Because it is only by them that they hear the proclamation. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Let me tell you about Jesus and his Father.

**Eschatological**

There is one last thing in our text. “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

Like the truly, truly statement on works, this is a bit difficult, because I’m sure we have all had the experience of asking for a Mercedes Benz and not getting it. God, all my friends drive Porches, don’t you know what this looks like. It would certainly glorify you if I had one of the new Mercedes, right?

 Ok, I’ll leave Janis Joplin behind. Christ came to save sinners. He came to prepare us for that mansion. He didn’t come for our best life now defined as the world defines it – all the things we use to soothes those opening anxieties. He came that we might know the Father and believe. Everything in the life of Christ is pointed toward that end. He is the way, the truth and the life of sinners that we might come to the Father. So, to ask things in His name is to ask things that are part of that mission.

Maybe a Mercedes-Benz or winning the lottery is part of that cure, but probably not. Asking those questions is usually an admission of wavering faith. My heart is troubled give me a pacifier.

But if we are asking for that which turns hard hearts to hearts of flesh. If we are asking for the peace that calms troubled hearts. This we will get. That is why he came and why he has gone to the Father.

He came to turn our hearts to eternal things. And it is only in those things eternal that those hearts find rest.