

## **“Almost Enough”**

Psalm 121; John 14: 8-14 – Tesa Hauser  
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – March 5, 2023  
Second Sunday in Lent

*Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words that through the Incarnation, we may know that we are your beloved – good and enough. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

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My favorite stories within the Gospels are the ones where the humanity of the disciples comes out. They feel so relatable, and though Jesus sounds sassy in many of his responses, I believe that Jesus wants to make known to the disciples that their limitations won’t get in the way of what God is doing. We don’t know much about what the disciples thought about being called by Jesus, but I imagine the disciples probably felt an immense amount of pressure.

Many left professions to follow Jesus, and then they spend most of their time with him running away and trying to understand what he was teaching. The texts show the mysterious and confusing ways Jesus talks; there is a reason this idea of the Messianic secret is in the gospel of Mark. He tells them to keep his identity a secret. There are other times when Jesus explicitly tells the disciples, I am explaining this to you since you are my disciples; even though it was confusing to other people, they will hopefully get it one day.

As I mentioned, we don’t have enough commentary about when they were first called by Jesus. Did they struggle with imposter syndrome? Did they worry

they potentially didn't know the scriptures as well as they should? Did they feel like they were enough to be Jesus' disciples? We know more about their struggles in the book of Acts, but the gospels mostly give us glimpses of their glaring humanity and shortcomings. I skipped quite ahead with the passage in John on this second Sunday in Lent, but it helps us understand the incarnation, Jesus' ministry, and our role in all of it.

The previous verses in the passage of John that I read are Jesus' declaration that he is The Way, the Truth, and the Life and that no one goes to the Father except through him. Jesus wanted to provide clarity and comfort to the disciples before he was to depart. How does all of what Jesus has done, the person they have followed, now inform how they were to view God. As one commentary I read said, "how humanity's relationship to God and God's relationship to humanity had now been decisively altered...The incarnation...brings the tangible presence of God's love to the world." The incarnation has changed everything!

Jesus makes this huge declaration, and then Philip goes, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." And I understand! I understand why he would ask that question. I am thankful for the Philips of this world – they are the people in the classroom who ask the question the rest of us are afraid to ask! Again, you can imagine Jesus may have had some options as to how he wanted to respond. At this point, they had spent many years with Jesus and were still asking

these questions. Jesus may have sighed, closed his eyes, and rubbed his forehead, wondering how to respond to dear Philip's question. Maybe he responded quietly and slowly to have them intentionally lean in to hear what he had to say. Jesus could have grabbed Philip by the shoulders and shaken him while responding. Or wrapped his arm around him and began explaining the best he could to Philip and the disciples.

But what is underlying to Philip's question here? He feels he knows almost enough to go out and do what Jesus has asked. It is this beautiful acknowledgment and worry of Philip's human limitations. He's saying, "I do not feel enough to do what you have done Jesus, not without you here." Jesus then explains that everything he has done was God's work, not his own. Though you think you have almost enough, by believing, following, and knowing Jesus - you know God. You have everything you already need.

The word believe occurs three times in verses 10-11, "the repetition of this verb shifts the focus from Jesus's revelation of God to the disciple's acceptance of it," says one commentary I read. Then Jesus goes on to say something that should cause you to pause and wonder, John 14 verse 12, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father." God, through Jesus, is saying that our humanity is not a threat or not enough, but it is something God has

created, it is something God loves, and something that God can redeem. In believing in Jesus, we know that there is a need for redemption, for salvation, because we won't always get it right and will ask the same questions over and over again. There is this newness that God will bring, and has brought through Jesus, to show that brings all you are, even your humanity – God will use for good. In ways that you can't imagine, and they will be even greater than what Jesus did.

As one commentary I read notes, the work the disciples will do is not greater “because anything intrinsic to the disciples themselves, but because they belong to the new eschatological age ushered in Jesus' hour and as such, they continue the glorification of God through Jesus that was the purpose of Jesus' works.” Though the disciples feel almost enough, Jesus reminds them that they are enough, they have been called by God, and that is enough. Jesus' life, ministry, death, and ultimate resurrection is the ultimate example of God's all-sufficient grace. Through the incarnation, we are now enough.

Psalm 121 is a song of ascent, a psalm used during a processional or a journey. This psalm is believed originally to be a prayer or profession of a warrior and repurposed to be read as a pilgrimage psalm, typically a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I think of the Psalms and imagine it is a well-known one by Jesus. He traveled often and was, at times, running away from those who wanted to cause harm. So, I assume that this psalm hits close to home for him, as it is a deep

reminder that God will take care of God's children. We don't have to lean on our strength; when we don't feel enough. When we don't feel like we can keep going, God has said I have you. God has said I will be your protector and will take care of you, and there is nothing you need to do to receive this protection.

One commentary I read noted, "Psalm 121 affirms that the sovereign ruler of the cosmos has a personal concern for the lives of all God's people." So, I would say that forevermore is not limited to when it was first written, nor to the present moment. This declaration goes further back to when God finished with creation. Looking at creation, God says it is good. There are no prerequisites. There are no tests of endurance; there are no pop quizzes. God says this is so good.

I would argue that since our inception, God has made it known that we are enough; we are worth protecting, and we deserve love and grace - you, all of us. God has said, let it be known clearly, through my Son, through Jesus Christ. Let it be no question or concern further, but when there is doubt, the community will and should be there to remind you of these truths. That my friends is good news. Amen.