Show Us: Let Love Be Visible

John 14:8–14 | Love One Another series

Some days I look at everything that needs fixing, and I feel very small.

There is suffering on the news that I cannot touch. There are people right here in our community who are sick, or lonely, or stretched thin by money, or caregiving, or grief. There are needs at the schools, in our families, at the end of our own street. And Monday morning, the laundry and the inbox are still waiting.

So a quiet question creeps in: What difference could I possibly make? I am one person. I have limited time, limited energy, limited resources. What is one phone call, one casserole, one visit, against all of that?

But underneath that question is something good. Most of us want to know that our lives matter. Not that our names will be remembered, just that because we were here, someone was helped. Something got better. Someone felt a little less alone.

That longing to see something real is very close to what Philip asks Jesus in John 14.

We live in a world full of claims. Companies tell us what they value. Organizations tell us what they stand for. Churches tell people what they believe.

And eventually, we all ask the same question: What does it produce?

Words alone have never been enough. Someone can say, “I care about you,” but sooner or later, care has to become something. Someone can say, “Family comes first,” but sooner or later, family has to show up on the calendar. And a church can say, “God loves you,” and a neighbor can fairly ask, “What does that love look like?”

If we are honest, we in the church have sometimes been better at announcing love than at showing it. That is not meant to shame us. It is an invitation. And it is exactly Philip’s question.

Jesus has been talking to his disciples during his Last Supper with them. Earlier in the evening, he knelt and washed their feet, and then he gave a new commandment: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another. People will know you are my followers by how you love one another.”

In John 14, he continues sharing his last words. He has been talking about going to God's house and preparing a place for his friends. Then Philip, one of his disciples, speaks up. I love Philip, because he says out loud what the rest of us are thinking: "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

In other words: Jesus, just show us God. Give us something we can see, and then we will get it.

That is deeply human. We want God to be unmistakable. Give me proof. Give me clarity. Give me something dramatic.

And Jesus' answer is surprising. He says, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

Hear the tenderness in that. Jesus is not scolding. Jesus is saying, Philip, what do you think you have been watching?

Jesus is not saying that God looks physically like a first-century carpenter. He is saying, "If you want to know what God is like, look at what you have seen in me." And what have they seen? They have watched Jesus welcome people others avoided. Feed hungry people. Touch people no one else would touch. Forgive. Heal. Listen. Restore dignity. And just one chapter earlier, last week's story, they watched him kneel on the floor with a towel.

Jesus does not simply tell us what God thinks. Jesus shows us what God's love looks like when it moves into the neighborhood.

This is at the heart of our United Methodist-Christian faith. Grace is not only something we agree with. Grace is God's love at work in us, and it changes how we live. Love of God becomes love of neighbor.

Then, in verse 12, Jesus turns the conversation toward us, and it gets startling. Those who trust him, he says, will do the works he has done, and even greater works than these.

That can sound intimidating. None of us is thinking, Wonderful, this week I will outdo Jesus. So let's be clear about what "greater" means. Jesus' earthly ministry took place in a small corner of the world over just a few years. But the love Jesus embodied did not stay there. One person became twelve. Twelve became a community. That community spread. And two thousand years later, wherever followers of Jesus feed, heal, welcome, teach, forgive, advocate, and accompany, the work goes on. Not because we replace Jesus, but because Christ works through ordinary people, empowered by the Spirit.

Jesus trusts ordinary people with extraordinary love.

And most of those “greater works” do not feel greater while we are doing them. They feel small. A casserole. A ride to chemotherapy. Tutoring a child. A conversation at a kitchen table. Help with paperwork. A bag of groceries. A check on the neighbor who lives alone. Patience with the coworker everybody else avoids. Sitting beside someone who is grieving when you have no words at all.

Each act seems small. But multiplied through thousands and millions of lives, love becomes visible all over the world.

Now I need to say something a little uncomfortable. Sometimes “I can’t fix everything” becomes a quiet excuse for doing nothing. The need is real. But the size of the need can become a hiding place, and Jesus does not let us stay there.

“I can’t solve hunger.” No. But you can feed somebody. “I can’t cure loneliness.” No. But you can call somebody. “I can’t repair everything that is broken in our community.” No. But you can make one corner of it better.

“I don’t have much to offer.” Maybe Jesus is not asking what you don’t have. Maybe the question is: What is already in your hands? Time. A car. A kitchen. A phone. A listening ear. An hour. A skill. A lawn mower. A word of encouragement. A connection that could help somebody.

So here is your practice for this week. Each morning, ask: **“What would love make visible here?”** At home. At work. At school. At the grocery store. In the neighborhood. At church. Then choose one two-minute good. Not ten things. One. Send the text. Make the introduction. Carry the bag. Thank the worker. Tell someone specifically what you appreciate about them.

And one more challenge: ask one person this week, “What would make your week a little easier?” Then listen. If it is appropriate and within your ability, do it. We do not assume what people need. We ask, and we honor their dignity.

If you want people to see love, give love something to do.

Imagine a church that is known not primarily by its building. Not by its programs. Not by what it opposes. But by what happens around it. People are fed. Children are encouraged. Those who grieve are accompanied. Older adults are remembered. Families under pressure receive help. Lonely people find company. And people who need dignity receive it.

What if people in Monroe did not first know us by the sign out front, but because someone from this church showed up when life got hard? Because somebody brought food. Somebody tutored a child. Somebody listened. Somebody offered a ride. Somebody remembered a name. Somebody made room.

And slowly, people began to say, “I don’t know everything those people believe. But when they show up, something gets better.”

Philip says, “Show us God.” Maybe part of Jesus’ answer today is: I intend to. Through you. Through me. Through us.

And here is the good news: we do not do this on our own strength. Jesus does not hand us a to-do list and wish us luck. Jesus gives us a table.

Today is World Communion Sunday. Right now, in every time zone, in languages we will never speak, Christians are gathering around bread and cup. Different songs, different customs, the same Christ. The love Jesus entrusted to ordinary people has multiplied across the whole world, and it is still being handed out one piece of bread at a time.

Philip says, “Show us God.” And again and again, Jesus answers with something people can experience. A touch. A meal. A towel. Bread. A cup. Jesus takes the love of God and puts it where human beings can receive it.

This table is not a reward for people who have it all figured out. It is grace, the grace that went looking for us before we knew to look for God, that forgives us, and that keeps on shaping us into people who love. And it is Christ’s table, not ours, so all who love Christ, who seek Christ, or who want to love Christ more, are welcome here. Whether you came in certain or doubting, strong or worn out, you are invited.

So this is not a sermon that ends with “try harder to be nice.” It ends with this: first receive, then go and give what you have received. Come to the table. Take in the love you did not manufacture and cannot earn. And then Christ will send you from this table to be a sign of that same grace in the world.

You do not have to fix the world this week. You do not have to do anything impressive. Just ask, What would love make visible here? And then give love something to do. And when someone wonders what God’s love looks like, perhaps, just for a moment, they will be able to see it.

Friends, the table is ready. Let us prepare our hearts.