Section II - The Children’s Questions, and the Farewell

John 13:36-38; 14:5-7,8-14,22-31

We now turn to the questions that four of the little ones asked their dying Parent.

The first one was asked by the disciple who, more than the others, was prone to speak his mind - Simon Peter. Jesus had intimated that He was going away. Now Peter had a question about it. He was disturbed by Jesus’ words. They seemed to hint at danger and clearly indicated separation. So he was tormented with uncertainty, terrified by the vague allusion to a hidden danger, and grieved at the thought of being separated from his beloved Master. He could not rest until he had penetrated the mystery. Therefore, when Jesus paused for a moment during His discourse, Peter abruptly asked, “Lord, where are You going?” (Jn. 13:36). He was thinking, “Where You go, I will go.” But he did not say it.

Jesus responded to this unexpressed thought. He did not say where He was going. The answer to that question was to be inferred from His reserved countenance and from the tone in which He spoke. He simply told Peter: “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later” (Jn. 13:36). With this answer, He demonstrated He had not forgotten that He was dealing with children. He does not expect heroic behavior from Peter and his fellow disciples as the crisis approaches. He does expect that they will ultimately play the hero. They will follow Him on the martyr’s path bearing the cross. Jesus had already given them the law of discipleship when He made the first announcement of His own death. But for now, He expects them to behave like little children, running away in terror when the moment of danger arrives.

These were Jesus’ thoughts about Peter. However, they were not the thoughts Peter had about himself. He did not think of himself as a child. He was all man. Vaguely comprehending what following his Master meant, he thought he was perfectly suited for the task now. He almost felt hurt by the low opinion of his courage. Therefore, he asked in a tone betraying his hurt: “Why can I not follow You right now?” Is it because there is danger, imprisonment, and death along the path? If that is all, it is not a good reason, because ‘I will lay down my life for You’” (vs. 37). Ah, that “why”; how like a child. That self-confidence! What an unfailing indication of spiritual weakness!
If Jesus’ answer to Peter’s first question was indirect and evasive, the one He gave to his second was too plain to be misunderstood. “Will you?” He said, using the disciple’s own words. “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times” (vs. 38). It would have been better for Peter if he had been content with the first reply! But not really - not better, only more pleasant for the moment. It was good for Peter to be told this bluntly what his Lord thought of him and to be shown, once for all, who he really was by Someone who did not make mistakes. It was just what was needed to lead Peter to an understanding of himself and to bring about a beneficial crisis in his spiritual history. On more than one occasion he had been dealt with for faults springing from his characteristic vices of being too pushy and too self-confident. But such specific correction had not produced any deep impressions, no decisive effect on his mind. He still did not know himself; he was still just as pushy, self-confident, and self-willed as ever. This was clear from the statement he just made. Therefore, there was an urgent need for him to be taught a lesson that he would never forget. It would be a word of correction that would be indelibly imprinted in the erring disciple’s memory. It would bear fruit throughout his whole life from that point on. Here it is, finally; it is a good time to do it. The Lord tells His brave disciple that he will be a coward. He tells His attached disciple, to whom separation from his Master seems more dreadful than death, that before too long, Peter will deny that he is connected in any way with Him whom he loves so fondly. He tells him all this at a time when the prophecy must be followed by its fulfillment almost as fast as a flash of lightning is followed by thunder. The prediction by Jesus is perfectly precise, and the denial of Peter exactly fulfills it. By themselves, both are remarkable. And since they come so close together, they will surely complement one another. It will be very strange if the two together do not, by the blessing of God and in answer to the Master’s intercessory prayer, make the fallen disciple into a much different man. The result will, without a doubt, prove the truth of another prophetic word reported by Luke that was spoken by the Lord to His disciple on the same occasion (Lk. 22:31). The chaff will be separated from the wheat in Peter’s character. He will undergo a great change of spirit. And, being converted from self-confidence and self-will to meekness and modesty, he will finally be prepared to strengthen others, to be a shepherd to the weak, and, if necessary, to bear his cross and follow his Master through death to glory.

The Second Question
The second question came from Thomas, the melancholy disciple. He was slow to believe and was prone to have a negative perspective on things. The mind of this disciple fastened on the statement that Jesus made to conclude His second word of consolation: “You know the way where I am going” (Jn. 14:4). That statement seemed to Thomas to be not only untrue, but unreasonable. For he was totally unaware that he possessed the knowledge that the Speaker said he had. Furthermore, he did not see how it was possible for any of them to possess it. For, before now, Jesus had not distinctly told them where He was going. And not knowing that destination,
how could anyone know the road which led to it? Therefore, in a dry, matter-of-fact, almost cynical way, Thomas remarked: “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?” (Jn. 14:5).

This question was thoroughly characteristic for Thomas. We know him through John's portrait of him in his Gospel (Jn. 11:16; 20:24-29). Peter, the one who is extremely practical, asks Jesus where He is going and is determined, if possible, to follow Him. Thomas, however, does not think it is worth his time to make this kind of inquiry. Not that he is unconcerned about the matter. He would very much like to know where his Lord is going. If it were possible, he would be just as ready as Peter to keep Him company. Danger would not stop him. He had said once before, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Jn. 11:16). He could say the same thing honestly again. He may be pessimistic, but he is not selfish or cowardly. This situation is similar to an earlier one. Then, Jesus disregarded the warnings of the disciples and determined to go from Perea to Judea to visit the afflicted family of Bethany (Lazarus’ family). Thomas had the most negative perspective of the situation and believed that death was the certain fate awaiting them all. Like then, he resigns himself to a hopeless, despondent mood. The thought of the Master’s departure makes him so sad that he does not have the heart to ask the why questions or questions asking for directions. He doesn’t mind being ignorant on these matters. Doom is inevitable. “Where? Where? I don’t know. Who knows? The future is dark. The Father’s house you talked about - where in the universe can it be? Is there really such a place at all?”

Even the question asked by Thomas, “How do we know the way?” (Jn. 14:5) is not as much a question as it is an apology for not asking questions. It is not a demand for information. Rather, it is a gentle complaint against Jesus for expecting His disciples to be informed. It is not an expression of a desire for knowledge. It is an excuse for ignorance. At this moment, the melancholy disciple has no hope that he can know the ultimate destination or the way to it. Therefore, he is not curious; he is apathetic. He is far from seeking the light; he is in the mood to exaggerate the darkness. He is like Jonah who, in his angry mood, indulged in asking a lot of questions. In his sadness, Thomas delights in gloom. He does not eagerly wait for the dawn of day. Instead, he takes pleasure in the night. This matches his current frame of mind. Good people who have a melancholic temperament are, at best, like people walking in the midst of the solemn gloom of a forest. Sadness is the prevailing feeling in their souls. They are content to have occasional and partial glimpses of heaven, like peeps of the sky through the leafy roof of the forest. But Thomas is so burdened that he hardly cares even for a glimpse of the celestial world. He does not look up. He only walks through the dark forest at a slow pace with his eyes fixed on the ground.

The argumentative tendencies of this disciple appear in his words as well as in his proneness to despondency. Another person who was in a despairing mood may have said: “We do not know the ultimate destination nor the way there. We are totally in the dark as to where you are going
and as to the road by which you are going to get there.” But Thomas needs a reason. His mental habits lead him to represent one aspect of ignorance as if it necessarily follows another. He would think, “We do not know Your destination. Therefore, it is impossible to know the way.” This man is afflicted with the malady of thinking too much. He gives reasons for everything. Here he maintains the impossibility of having a certain kind of knowledge. At another crisis we will find him insisting on a believable demonstration that his Lord is, in fact, risen from the dead.

How does Jesus reply to the hopeless words of Thomas? Most compassionately and sympathetically. It is no different now from any other time. To the curious question that Peter asked, He gave an evasive answer. On the other hand, to the broken-hearted Thomas, He offers information that he had not asked about. And the information He gives is complete - almost redundant. The disciple had complained of ignorance about the ultimate destination and, especially, about the way to get there. It would have been a sufficient reply to have said, “The Father is the ultimate destination, and I am the way.” But the Master, out of the fullness of His heart, said more than this. He was firm and emphatic in His response. It was not only meant for Thomas but for the whole world: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (Jn. 14:6).

When we compare this momentous declaration with the preceding word of consolation, we observe a change in the way He presented the truth. The Father Himself takes the place of the Father’s house with its many mansions. This is the ultimate destination. And Jesus is more than the guide who will one day lead His children to the common home. He Himself becomes the way. The kind Master alters His language in order to graciously accommodate the childish capacities of the disciples. According to the Apostle Paul, Christians see the heavenly and the eternal, but it is only a poor reflection (I Cor. 13:12). But the disciples, during this crisis in their history, were not even able to do this much. Jesus had held up before their eyes the brightly polished mirror of a beautiful story about a house with many mansions, and they had not seen anything there. They saw no image, only an opaque surface. The future remained dark and hidden as before. What, then, was to be done? Just what Jesus did. People had to be substituted for places. Disciples who are weak in their faith must be addressed in this way: “Can you not comprehend where I am going? Then think to whom I am going. If you do not know anything about the place called heaven, at least know that you have a Father there. And as for the way to heaven, let that be Me. If you know Me, you do not need any additional knowledge. If you believe in Me, you can look forward to the future - even to death itself - without fear or concern.”

As we look more closely at the response Jesus gave to Thomas, we do not find it easy to know just how precisely it should be explained. The very fullness of this saying perplexes us. Though it is dark, it gives off an excess of light. Interpreters differ as to how the Way, the Truth, and the Life
are to be distinguished, and how they are related to each other. One person offers this interpretation: “I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of the ladder which leads to heaven.” Another interpretation: “I am the example, the teacher, the giver of eternal life.” A third person subordinates the last two attributes to the first and reads: “I am the true way of life.” Each view is true in itself. But one hesitates to accept any of them as exhausting the meaning of the Savior’s words.

Whatever is the preferable method for interpreting these words of our Lord, at least two things are clear. Jesus presents Himself here as all that anyone needs for eternal salvation and as the only Savior. He is the way, truth, life - everything. And He alone can bring people to the Father. In essence, He says this to all people: “What is it you want? Is it light? I am the light of the world, the revealer of the Father. I came for this purpose, that I might declare Him. Or, is it reconciliation you want? By the very death I am about to endure, I am the Reconciler. My very purpose in dying is to bring you, who are far off, near to God, who is a forgiving, gracious Father. Or, is it life - spiritual, never-ending life - that you seek? Believe in Me, and you will never die. Or, though you die, I will raise you again to enter into an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that will not fade away. It is eternal in the heavens (see I Peter 1:4). Let everyone who seeks these things look to Me. Look to Me for light. Do not look to rabbis or philosophers - not even to nature and providence. They may reveal God, but they do so dimly. The light of creation is only the starlight of theology. The light of providence is only its moonlight. But I am the sunlight. My Father’s Name is written in hieroglyphics in the works of creation. In providence and history, it is written in plain letters. But they are so far apart that it takes a lot of study to put them together in order that the divine Name may be spelled out. In Me the divine Name is written so that whoever is running the race may read it. (“The Word was made flesh, that Thy wisdom, by which Thou createdst all things, might provide milk for our infancy” [Augustine, Confessions, 7:18]). Look to Me also for reconciliation - not to legal sacrifices. That way of approaching God is outdated now. I am the new, the living, the eternal way into the holy of holies, through which everyone may draw near to the divine presence with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Finally, look to Me for eternal blessedness. I am the One who, having died, will rise again and live forevermore, and will hold in My hands the keys of Hades and of death. I will open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.”

In Christ is the fullness of grace and truth. This doctrine is very comforting to those who know Him. But what about those who do not know Him? What about those who only possess an implicit, unconscious knowledge which hardly merits the word knowledge? Does the statement we have been considering exclude these from the possibility of salvation? It does not. It declares that no man comes to the Father but by Christ, but it does not say how much knowledge is required for salvation. It is possible that some may be saved by Christ, and for His sake, who know very little about Him, indeed. We may infer this when we look at the disciples themselves. What did they know about the way of salvation at this time? Jesus addresses them as people who are
still ignorant about Him. He says: “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (Jn. 14:7). Nevertheless, He does not hesitate to speak to them as people who would be with Him in the Father's house. And what will we say about Job, and the Syro-Phoenician woman, and the Ethiopian eunuch, and Cornelius; and we may add, like Calvin, the Syrian courtier, Naaman. We cannot say more than the great theologian of Geneva has said himself about such cases. He writes: “I confess that in a certain respect their faith was implicit, not only as to the person of Christ, but as to His virtue and grace, and the office assigned Him by the Father. Meanwhile it is certain that they were imbued with principles which gave some taste of Christ, however slight” (Institutes, 3.2.32). It is doubtful that even this much can be said about Naaman. However, Calvin, without evidence, and simply to face the exigencies of a theory, argues that it would have been too absurd for Elisha to have been silent on the most important subject while speaking about more unimportant matters. Or, if we grant to Naaman the slight taste mentioned, shouldn’t we also grant it to Socrates and Plato and others on the principle that all true knowledge of God, no matter who possesses it and no matter how it is obtained, whether it be the sunlight, moonlight, or starlight, is virtually a Christian? Justin Martyr and Zwingli thought this way. In other words, is Christ, who is the only light, the light of every person who has any light in him?

This principle, while it has its truth, can very easily be perverted into an argument against a supernatural revelation. Therefore, in its very first chapter, Of the Holy Scripture, the Westminster Confession broadly asserts that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary for salvation. While strongly maintaining this truth, however, we must be careful not to be drawn into speaking negatively about what can be learned from God from those lower sources. While we walk in the sunlight, we must not despise the dimmer luminaries of the night. We must not forget their existence like we do the moon and the stars in the daytime. By doing this we would be virtually disparaging the Scriptures themselves. For much of what is in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, is a record of what inspired people had learned from observing God's works in creation and of His ways in providence. Everyone cannot see as much there as they saw. On the contrary, revelation was needed, not only to make known the truths that went beyond the teachings of natural religion but even to direct people's dim eyes to truths which, though visible in nature, were, in fact, for the most part not seen. Using the clear language of Calvin, the Bible is a pair of glasses through which our weak eyes see the glory of God in the world (The Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.6.1). Yet what is seen through the glasses with weak eyes is, in many passages, just what might be seen by strong eyes without their aid - nothing being placed there which is not visible in the creation (Institutes, 1.10.2).

These observations may help us to have hope for those whose opportunities for knowing Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life” are small. However, they do not justify those who are
content with a minimum amount of knowledge when they have an abundant capacity for knowing Christ. There is more hope for the unreached peoples than for these people. No true Christian can belong to their group. A genuine disciple may not know much to begin with (this was the case with the Apostles). But he will not be satisfied to be in the dark. He will desire to be enlightened with the knowledge of Christ and will pray, “Lord, show us the Father (Jn. 14:8).”

**Philip’s Request**

This was the prayer of Philip, the **third** disciple who took part in the dialogue at the dinner-table. Philip’s request, like Thomas’ question, was a virtual denial of a statement previously made by Jesus. Jesus had said to Thomas: “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (Jn. 14:7a). Then He added: “From now on you know Him, and have seen Him” (vs. 7b). Philip felt he was unable to agree with this last statement. “Seen the Father! I wish this were so! Nothing would gratify us more. ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us’” (vs. 8).

In and of itself, Philip’s prayer was very devout and worthy of praise. There can be no higher aspiration than seeking to know God the Father. There is no better indicator of a spiritual mind than to think of such knowledge as the **summum bonum** (the highest good). And there is no better indication that one has ultimately arrived at the goal than the frankness which honestly confesses he doesn’t know the answer. In these respects, the feelings expressed by Philip would have pleased his Master. In other respects, however, they were not as satisfactory. The wise inquirer evidently had a very crude notion about what seeing the Father was all about. He dreamed it was possible to see the Father just like he saw Jesus - with his physical eyes. And it seems he wanted to do this. Suppose that had been his desire. Then his thinking is foolish: “...and that will be enough for us.” What good would it do anyone to simply see the Father with one’s eyes? That same thought painfully demonstrated how little the disciples had gained from all their past conversations with Jesus. They had been with Him for years, yet they had not found rest and satisfaction in Him. They still craved something beyond Him. Without knowing it, they had been getting what they craved from Him all along.

Such ignorance and lack of spiritual capacity so late in their training was very disappointing. And Jesus was disappointed. But with His characteristic patience, He was not irritated. He was not offended with Philip’s stupidity or with his contradiction of His statement (Jesus would rather be contradicted than have His disciples pretend to know when they didn’t). Rather, He aimed at enlightening the little ones to some degree so they could know the Father. To accomplish this purpose, He gave great prominence to the truth that knowing the Father and the Son was the same thing. He that has seen the Son has seen the Father. So He could implant this great principle in the minds of His men in a better way, He spoke in the strongest possible terms. He treated their ignorance of the Father as if they were virtually ignorant of Himself. He asked, “Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?” Then He continued to
reason with him. To be ignorant of the Father was to be so ignorant of Himself that, in essence, it would be a denial of His divinity. He asked again, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? (vs. 10a). Then Jesus followed up the question with a reference to those things which proved His identity that He was asserting - His words and His works (Jn. 14:10-11). But He did not stop here. He went on to use even more convincing proofs for His identity with the Father. They would come through the wonderful works which would later be done by the Apostles themselves in His Name and through powers He gave them in answer to their prayers (vs. 12-14).

The first question Jesus asked Philip (“Don’t you know Me?”) was more than a logical strategy to make ignorant disciples reflect on the contents of the knowledge they already possessed. It hinted at a real fact. The disciples had not really seen Jesus yet, even though they had been with Him for so long. They knew Him, and they did not know Him. They did not know that they knew, nor what they knew. They were like children who recite a catechism without understanding what it means, or who possess a treasure without being able to estimate its value. They were like men looking at an object through a telescope without adjusting the focus, or like an uneducated person who gazes up at the sky on a winter night, sees the stars which compose a constellation (such as the Bear or Orion), yet does not recognize the constellation. The disciples were familiar with the words, parables, discourses, etc. that were spoken by their Master and accompanied with His miraculous works. But they only knew these things as isolated events. The separate rays of light flowing from the fountain of divine wisdom, power, and love in Jesus had never been gathered into one focus so they could form a clear image of the One who came in the flesh to reveal the invisible God. They had seen many stars shine in the spiritual heavens while they were in Christ’s company. But the stars had not yet become a constellation to them. They did not have a clear, full, consistent, spiritual conception of the mind, heart, and character of the man Christ Jesus, in whom all the fullness of deity dwelt (Col. 1:19). They would not understand these concepts until the Spirit of Truth, the promised Comforter, came. The very thing He would do for them was to show them Christ. He would not just help them remember the details of His life. He would show them the one mind and spirit which dwelt in the midst of the details, as the soul dwells in the body and makes them an organic whole. Once they understood the big picture, it would help them recall all the isolated events which, at this time, were lying dormant in their consciousness. When the Apostles finally understood, they would truly know Christ - the same Christ whom they had known before - yet different, a new Christ, because He was a Christ they comprehended. They would see Him with the eye of the spirit just like the former Christ had been seen with the eye of the flesh. And when they had seen Christ in this way, they would sense that they had also seen the Father. Knowing Christ would satisfy them, because in Him they would see with unveiled face the glory of the Lord (see II Cor. 3:18).
The disciples were offered a vision of God being a future good that they would obtain after the Comforter had been sent. This satisfied their souls. It could not have been Jesus’ intention to assure the disciples that they possessed it already. Still less did He force it on them by using reason. When He said, “From now on you know Him, and have seen Him” (Jn. 14:7b), He evidently meant: “Now you know how to see Him. You do it by reflecting on your relationship with Me.” And the only reason for the statements made to Philip concerning the close relationship between the Father and the Son, evidently, was to impress upon the disciples the great truth that the solution to all religious difficulties and the fulfillment of all longings was to be found in knowing Christ. Jesus was saying, “Know Me, trust Me, pray to Me, and all will be well with you. Your mind will be filled with light and your heart will be at rest. You will have everything you want. Your joy will be full.”

This is a very important lesson, but it is one that everyone is slow to learn, like Philip and the other disciples. How few see in Him the true and perfect Revealer of God, even those who confess Christ’s divinity! To many, Jesus is one Being and God is another, and quite a different Being. They hold to this view while honestly acknowledging that Jesus is divine. This great truth lies in the mind like a dormant seed buried deep in the soil. We can say about this truth what has been said about the doctrine of the soul’s immortality: “One may believe it for twenty years, and only in the twenty-first, in some great moment, discover with astonishment the rich contents of this belief, the warmth of this naphtha [a combustible liquid] spring” (Jean Paul Richter). People get impressions of God from one place and impressions of Christ from another. Then the two sets of impressions lie side by side in the mind. They are incompatible, yet both have room to co-exist. Therefore, when a Christian begins to consistently carry out the principle that to know Jesus (who is God) is to know God, he is probably going to experience a painful conflict between a new and an old class of ideas about the Divine Being. Two Gods - a Christianized God and a sort of pagan divinity - struggle for the place of sovereignty. And finally, when the conflict ends, when the God whom Jesus revealed is enthroned in the mind and the heart, the dawn of a new spiritual life has arrived.

A key idea about God, as He is revealed by Jesus Christ, is expressed by the name Father. According to the teaching of our Lord and Savior, God is not truly known until He is thought of, and heartily believed in, as a Father. Any God who is not regarded as a Father cannot satisfy the human heart. So His own way of speaking about God was in total agreement with this teaching. He did not speak to people about the Deity or the Almighty. These titles which philosophers are so fond of applying to the Divine Being - the Infinite, the Absolute, etc. - never crossed His lips. He never spoke any words that suggested the idea of a gloomy, arbitrary tyrant before whom the guilty conscience of superstitious paganism cowers. He always spoke in His sermons, parables, model prayer [The Lord’s Prayer], and private conversations of a Father. Expressions such as “the Father,” “My Father,” and “your Father,” were constantly on His tongue. All He taught about God harmonized perfectly with the feelings these expressions were intended to bring out.
With all Jesus’ efforts and all the beauty of His words about the Being whom no man has seen, it seems that many have not grasped what it means to worship the Father. Because of ignorance or preference, people still extensively worship God under other names and categories. Some think the name Father is too domestic and prefer a name that expresses more distance and ceremonialism. The Deity or the Almighty satisfies them. Philosophers do not like the name Father because it makes the personality of God too prominent. They prefer to think of the one who is Uncreated as an Infinite, Eternal Abstraction. They want Him to be an object of speculation rather than of faith and love. Legal-minded professors of religion are afraid of the word Father. They are not sure they have a right to use it. They think it is safer to speak about God in general terms which take nothing for granted, such as the Judge, the Taskmaster, or the Lawgiver. Those who are worldly, educated, and religious agree with them by not using the Name into which they have been baptized (Father). However, their motives for doing so differ. Only a small minority worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Those who read the gospel superficially may love the idea that the name Father, which was applied to God by Jesus, is simply or mainly a sentimental poetic expression. For them, the loss of this name would not be regrettable. But there could be no greater mistake. The name that came from Christ’s lips always represents a definite thought and teaches a great truth. When He uses the term to express the relationship between the Invisible One and Himself, He gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the Divine Being. He is telling us that God is not an abstract Being. Followers of Plato and Arius thought of Him in this way. Yet, He is not the Absolute, incapable of relationships. He is not a passionless Being, without feelings. Rather, He is one who eternally loves, and is loved. In His infinite nature, the family feelings find room for ceaseless interaction - One in three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons in one divine substance. Then, again, when He calls God Father (when He is addressing mankind in general, as He does over and over again), He proclaims to people who are sunk in ignorance and sin this blessed truth: “God, My Father, is your Father also. He has a paternal feeling toward you even though you are so spiritually blinded that He might not know you. You might be so degenerate that He might be ashamed to own you. And I, His Son, have come - your Elder Brother - to bring you back to your Father’s house. You are not worthy to be called His sons, because you have stopped bearing His image, and you have not obeyed Him nor reverenced Him. Nevertheless, He is willing to be a Father to you and receive you graciously in His arms. Believe this and become sons of God in your heart and behavior. Then you will enjoy the full, the spiritual, and eternal benefit of God’s paternal love.” When He finally calls God, Father, with special reference to His own disciples, He assures them that they are the objects of God’s constant, tender, and effective care. All of His power, wisdom, and love are engaged for their protection, preservation, guidance, and final eternal salvation. Their Father in heaven will see to it that they lack nothing good and will make all things minister to their interests. In the end, He will give them their inheritance in the everlasting kingdom. Fear not, is His comforting message to His little chosen flock, “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
The Fourth and Final Question

We now come to the fourth and final question asked by the children. It came from Judas, not Iscariot (he is occupied with something else). He is the other disciple who has that name and is also called Thaddaeus.

In His third word of consolation, Jesus had spoken about a reappearance (after His departure) that would be especially and exclusively to His own. He had said, “The world will see Me no more, but you will see Me.” That is, they will see after a little while. Now two questions might naturally be asked about this exclusive manifestation. First, how was it possible? And second, what was the reason for it? How could Jesus make Himself visible to His disciples and yet remain invisible to everyone else? And granting the possibility, why not show Himself to the world at large? It is not easy to decide which of these two difficulties Judas had in mind. The question could be interpreted either way. When translated literally, essentially it says this: “Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us and not to the world?” The disciple might have intended to ask, like Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” Or, he might have thought about asking: “We have been hoping for the coming of Your kingdom in power and glory, visible to the eyes of all people. What has led You to change Your plans?”

In both cases, Judas’ question was based on a misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus’ promised manifestation. He imagined that He was to reappear bodily after His departure to the Father. He thought He would be visible to the physical eye, but not just to one person here and another one there. He would appear to everyone, unless He made the effort to hide Himself from some while revealing Himself to others. Neither Judas nor any of his brothers were yet capable of thinking about a spiritual manifestation. And they certainly did not expect to receive a full compensation for the loss of His bodily presence. If they had grasped the thought of a spiritual presence, they would have had no difficulty in reconciling Jesus’ making Himself visible to one while remaining invisible to another. For they would have understood that the vision could be enjoyed only by those who could see with spiritual eyes.

This was a question that was asked by someone who did not have the capacity to understand the subject about which he was asking. How was such a question to be answered? Just like you would explain to a child how a telegraph works. If your child asked you, “Father, how can you send a message by telegraph to my uncle or aunt in America which is so far away?” You would not think of trying to explain to him the mysteries of electricity. You would take him to a telegraph office and tell him to look at the man who is actually sending a message. You would tell him that as the man moved the handle, a needle in America pointed at letters of the alphabet. When the letters are put together, they made up words which said just what you wanted to say.
This is the way Jesus answered Judas’ question. He did not attempt to explain the difference between a spiritual and a bodily manifestation. In essence, He said: “You do so and so, and what I have promised will come true.” “If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). These words just repeat what He had already said, but they are slightly altered and are more pointed. Nothing new is said, because nothing new can be said intelligibly. The old promise is stated in such a way that, if the condition is met, the fulfillment will occur. “If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My children, pay attention to that, and the rest will follow. The divine Trinity - Father, Son, and Spirit - will truly dwell with the faithful disciple who is very concerned about making every effort to observe My commandments. For those who do not love Me, do not keep My sayings, and do not believe in Me, it is simply impossible for them to enjoy such majestic company. Only the pure in heart will see God.”

**Jesus’ Farewell**

Jesus had now spoken all He meant to say to His disciples as a dying Parent addressing His grieving children. All that was left was for Him to wind up the discourse and tell the little ones “goodbye.”

As Jesus brings His words to a close, He does not believe that He has removed all difficulties and erased all gloom from the disciples’ minds. On the contrary, He is conscious of the fact that everything He has said has made only a slight impression. Nevertheless, He will not say anything else to bring them comfort. In the first place, there is no time left. Judas and his band of men are under the influence of the prince of this world, and they are serving him. They can be expected at any moment, and He must be ready to go and meet the enemy (Jn. 14:30-31). Secondly, it would be useless to add anything further. It is impossible to use any amount of words to make things any clearer to the disciples in their present condition. Therefore, He does not attempt to do so. Instead, He refers them to the promised Comforter for all other explanations (Jn. 14:25-26). Then He proceeds to offer His farewell: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you” (vs. 27). These words always move people deeply. It is hard to put into words how they affected both the Speaker and His hearers at that time. We don’t know if perhaps they did more to comfort the dejected little ones than all that had been said before. There is a pathos and music in the very sound of them, apart from their meaning, which are wonderfully soothing. Truly, we can imagine that as they were spoken, the poor disciples were overcome with deep feelings and burst into tears. That, however, would be good for them. Sorrow is healed by weeping. The feelings which melt the heart, at the same time, comfort it.

This touching, sympathetic farewell is more than a good wish. It is a promise - a promise made by One who knows that the blessing that is promised is within reach. It is like the cheerful words David spoke to brothers in affliction: “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for
The Dying Parent And The Little Ones

The peace He offers His disciples is His own peace - *My peace*. It is not a peace that He has to get somewhere; it is a peace He has experienced. He has had peace in the world in spite of sorrow and temptation. He has had perfect peace by faith. Therefore, He can assure them that this kind of peace is possible. They, also, can have peace of mind and heart in the midst of difficult trials. The world does not understand this kind of peace, and neither can they impart it. The only peace it knows is that which is connected to prosperity. But trouble can destroy it as easily as the wind agitates the calm surface of the sea. But there is a peace which is independent of outward circumstances. Its sovereign virtue and blessed function is to keep the heart when fears and worries come. Jesus had enjoyed this kind of peace. Now He helps His disciples understand that through faith and singleness of mind they may enjoy it also.

These final words are not only a promise made by One who knows what He is talking about. It is a promise from One who can give the blessing that is promised. Jesus does not simply say: “Be happy. You can have peace in spite of trials, just like I have had.” But He says specifically, “The peace I have had I give to you as a dying legacy. I bestow it on you as a parting gift.” The inheritance of peace is granted to the little ones by a last will and testament. But since they are minors, they do not actually receive it now. When they come of age, they will inherit the promise and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Later on, the disciples’ experiences proved that their Lord’s promise had not been false and empty. The Apostles, as Jesus foretold, found much tribulation in the world. But in the midst of it all, they enjoyed perfect peace. They trusted in the Lord and did good, and they lived without fear and worry. In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they made their requests known unto God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, truly guarded their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

Jesus had not yet said His last word to the little ones. He saw grief on their faces and, in spite of everything He had spoken to comfort them, He abruptly threw out an additional remark. This gave the whole subject of His departure a new twist. All through His farewell address, He had been telling them that though He was going away, He would come again to them, either personally or by a representative. He would one day come in the body but, in the meantime, He would come in the Spirit. Now He told them that apart from His return, His departure itself should be an occasion for joy rather than of sorrow because of what it signified for Him. “You have heard how I said to you, I go away and come again to you.” By all means, receive comfort from that promise. But “if you loved Me (as you should), you would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father (Jn. 14:28). You would forget about yourselves and think what a happy change it would be for Me.” Then He added, “For My Father is greater than I.” The connection between this clause and the first part of the sentence is somewhat obscure. This is true also of its theological import. Our understanding is that when Jesus spoke these words, He was thinking about His death and
was answering an objection that arose at the thought of their rejoicing in His departure. “You are going to the Father,” one of them may have said - “yes, but what a way to go!” Jesus replies, “The way is rough, and flesh and blood abhor it. But it is the way My Father has appointed, and that is enough for Me. For My Father is greater than I.” When we interpret the words in this way, we only make Jesus hint at a thought which we find Him clearly expressing immediately after His concluding sentence. There, He makes it plain that His voluntary endurance of death is a manifestation to the world of His love for His Father and as an act of obedience to His commandment.

And now, finally, by word and deed, Jesus tries to impress on His little children the solemn reality of their situation. First, He tells them to note what He has told them about His departure, so that when the separation takes place, they may not be taken by surprise. “I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe” (vs. 29). Then He helps them understand that the time for His departure is near. After this point, He will not talk much with them. There will not be an opportunity to do so. For the prince of the world has come. Then He adds words to this effect: “Let him come. I am ready for him. He has no part with Me. He has no claim upon Me. He has no power over Me. He cannot charge Me with any fault. Nevertheless, I yield Myself into his hands so that all people may see that I love the Father and am loyal to His will. They will see that I am ready to die for truth, for righteousness, for the unrighteous” (Jn. 14:30-31). Then, lastly, with a firm, resolute voice, He commands everyone to rise from the couches on which they had been reclining, “Come now; let us leave” (vs. 31).

We can surmise that the men did not leave the supper chamber at this point. First, John records a continuation of the discourse. And secondly, we know this is the case because of the statement he makes at the beginning of the 18th chapter of his Gospel (“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron” (vs. 1). They simply got into a new frame of mind and stood up as if they were getting ready to leave. In this situation, their movement was natural. It aptly expressed the frame of mind Jesus was in and corresponded to the changed tone in which He continued to address His disciples. In fact, their getting up from their reclining position became the transition between the first part of His discourse to the second. This action did what words could not have done. It changed their moods and prepared them for listening to language that was not soft, tender, and familiar. Now His words were stern, dignified, and impassioned. It struck the keynote - the basic thought in His discourse - by which Jesus passed from the lyric to the heroic style. In effect, He said: “Let us do away with the nursery talk. If this kind of talk continued, it would only weaken you. Let Me briefly speak to you now as men who must play an important part in the world. Stand up! Shake off your lethargy and listen while I speak words that are intended to fire you with enthusiasm, to inspire you with courage, and to impress you with a sense of the responsibilities and honors connected with your future position.”
When we understand their rising from the table in this way, we will be prepared to listen, along with the disciples, and begin the study of the remaining portion of Christ’s farewell discourse. And we will not feel there is a sudden transition between the first part of the discourse and the second.