

"The House Guest Who Moves Us Out"

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Fifth in a series on John 14

John 14:21-26

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Jesus said, *"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."*

Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked, *"Lord, why are you about to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"*

Jesus answered, *"Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever doesn't love me doesn't keep my words. The word that you hear isn't mine. It is the word of the Father who sent me."*

"I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you."

Common English Bible

Poor guy. He gets to go through history as *Judas No-Not-That-Judas*. Judas, follower of Jesus . . . no, not *that* Judas. Judas, one of the twelve apostles . . . no, not *that* Judas. No, not that Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. The other Judas.

It seems it was a common name for boys. The original Judah had been one of the twelve sons of Jacob. It's a strong name. When you speak Greek, it's *Judas* . . . turned into a terrible name by *that* Judas.

Maybe we should call our guy *Good Judas*.¹ Or shorten it, like they did, *Jude*. Or give him a nickname, which they also did, *Taddai* or *Thaddeus*. That means "large heart."² *Heart-full-of-Love Judas*.

We see his heart when he questions Jesus.

¹ "Good Judas" is what Bruner calls him. Frederick Dale Bruner, [The Gospel of John, A Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 843.

² <https://biblehub.com/greek/2280.htm> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaddeus>

II

The Messiah has just promised that soon, he'll show himself to them again. They are about to face Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution, so that's good news! For them. But *Big-Hearted Judas* is filled with the expansiveness of God's love. He says, basically, "Wait a sec! Why just us? Why not reveal yourself to the whole world, Jesus?"

Sure, they're going to need to see Jesus, but won't everyone? What about the rest of God's People, Israel? What about the world? What about everyone and everything, everywhere? All creation is groaning and waiting, crying out for help. God the Creator, made the world. God the Lover, loves the world so much, that God gave Jesus.

But it's only this small huddle that sees him. And it's to just them that Jesus is promising more of himself.

They call this the "Scandal of Particularity." Amid the multitudes, God works with the few. Every family is messed up; God creates and calls one particular messed-up family — Abraham and Sarah's — to be a blessing for all! All the peoples of the world are stumbling in the dark; God chooses one particular people — Israel, the Jews — to shine God's light. All Israel falls into disobedience; God elects one from Israel to be faithful for all — Jesus the Messiah.

It's not democratic. It's not equal. It's this, not all that. It's these, not all them. It's one, not the rest. But what about the rest? We protest with the heart of *Heart-full-of-Love Judas*.

But . . . don't think our hearts are any bigger than God's? Not even close!

III

Honestly, it looks like Jesus sidesteps the question.

He keeps his focus on those who love him and are keeping his words, his commandments. What are these?

That same suppertime, he'd given two.³ First, let him wash your feet. In other words, let Jesus serve you. Let him make you clean. Allow his salvation gift — his life, death and resurrection — to wash over you. Let him love you. That's the first. The second, love each other. Jesus has also commanded us to love God with all that we are. Also, to

³ Bruner, 836.

love our neighbours as though they were us.⁴ And, love our enemies too.⁵

"When you love me," Jesus says, "you will keep my commandments."⁶ His commandments are love.

Does this start to answer *Heart-full-of-Love Judas'* question, his question about everyone else? Jesus' mission is all about love. Do you imagine they are left out?

IV

Jesus says more. These few love-commandment-keepers, Jesus loves them. God his Father loves them. He and his Father will come to them, and make the Divine home with them.

Did you catch that? God will make God's home with them, with us.

A few weeks ago, when we began looking at this conversation Jesus was having with Good Judas and the others, we heard Jesus say, "*In my Father's house are many places to live.*" In God's Kingdom, in God's Family, there is more than enough room, always.

Now, even more incredibly, Jesus promises that God will make God's own room, God's own dwelling place with us — in us individually and among us in our community together.

The Divine Presence, the Trinity, is coming to us. God makes God's home with us.⁷ God chooses to be at home within in the community of God's People.

⁴ For Jesus' "Great Commandment," which is two commandments intertwined, see Matthew 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:27.

⁵ Matthew 5:43-48.

⁶ He says this first in John 14:15, then repeats himself in verses 21, 23, and (negatively) in verse 24. I've rendered the Greek word *ean* as "when" (something that's going to happen) and not "if" (something that might happen). It seems to me that Jesus clearly assumes they will love him. Following Jesus' commands is an expression of our love for him; it is not a condition we must first fulfill to earn his love for us. See Bruner, 835.

⁷ Here we see the same Greek word as in 14:2, there translated as "room," "dwelling place," or, more archaically, "mansion." William Temple wrote, "This is a thought even more wonderful than the other [of the Father's house in 14:2-3]. That I should somewhere find a place, a little place, prepared for me in the Father's house is wonderful, but my memory of God's love makes it not incredible. But it would be incredible in any other connexion than that of this divine discourse, that the Father and the Son should come to lodge with me." Quoted in Bruner, 864.

V

Leslie Newbigin was British, but spent much of his life in India. Immersed within that lively, multi-religious place, he pondered that scandal of particularity. Why does God repeatedly choose to work with the few in the midst of the many. He wondered that same question that Heart-Full-of-Love Judas had: *Why just us? Why not reveal yourself to the whole world, Jesus?*

Newbigin then realized this. God insists on working through relationships. It makes sense. God is love, and love happens in relationships.

This is from Newbigin's very important book, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society.

There is, there can be, no private salvation, no salvation which does not involve us with one another. Therefore . . . God's saving revelation of himself does not come to us straight down from above — through the skylight, as we might say. In order to receive God's saving revelation we have to open the door to the neighbor, whom he sends as his appointed messenger. . . . There is no salvation except one in which we are saved together through the one whom God sends to be the bearer of his salvation.⁸

VI

God is the House Guest who moves into the Heart-Full-of-Love community that Jesus creates. God chooses to dwell in the midst of our life together. God moves in and stays. God is the House Guest who never goes away. God moves in and stays . . . to move us out.

That's the answer. God works with a few, not at the expense of the many, but for the sake of the many.

Jesus showed himself to those first Christians, so they could then go and share him with others. His love for the world — all the world, everyone in the world — would be revealed in relationship, their acts of love.

They did this. The Holy Spirit worked in them, always reminding them of everything to do with Jesus. It is only because of them that we know. Their experience of God's love, they passed on, then they passed on, then they passed on . . . all the way to us.

Now Jesus shows himself to us, so we can go and share him with others. His love for

⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 82f.

the world — all the world, everyone in the world — will be revealed in relationship, our acts of love. Our acts of love for God, for our neighbour, for our enemies, for each other.

“Why not reveal yourself to the whole world, Jesus?”

He is. Through us. Through you. Through me. Through our community together. The only scandal of particularity breaks out when his people fail to love.

Jesus' answer to Heart-full-of-love Judas' question is . . . us. His people. His community. His church. Is it a good answer?

Well, that's for you and me to decide . . . by what we do next.