

## A Storytelling Commentary on John 14:1-14

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This discourse is part of Jesus' last conversation with his disciples and is part of the long discourse that is present in John 13 to 17 where Jesus talks with his disciples prior to his death the next day. This is a simple part of the speech. There is no major change in who is being addressed or on the topics that are being discussed. It is about the relationship between Jesus and his disciples and is addressed to us as the listeners. So in the telling of this story, you as the storyteller are Jesus addressing your audience as the disciples of Jesus. This is the first time in the entire Gospel of John in which there is an extended address by Jesus to his disciples and this is part of that address that begins in chapter 13 in the aftermath period and the end of his washing the disciples feet. This is about what it means to love Jesus and to be in an intimate relationship of trust, faith, and love. I would recommend that you read the article on the voice of Jesus and John as a framework for the development of Jesus' voice in your telling of this discourse.

This last speech is not intended to be told in an authoritative voice as a series of theological pronouncements. Jesus' voice here is the voice of one who is talking to his closest friends on the night before his death. He is sharing with them the things that they need to know. The basic dynamic of this speech is his communicating to his disciples how much he loves them.

The verbal threads in the story are easy to identify. At the beginning and the end "if you love me you will keep my commandments" and "those who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me." A second is "because it neither sees him nor knows him" and "in a little while the world will no longer see me" and then later "but you will see me" and fourth "on that day you will know that I am in my father and you and me and I and you." So these are the words of a teacher and friend speaking with the students with whom he has traveled for three years.

The dynamics of the story are the dynamics of love. "If you love me you will keep my commandments and I'll ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever." "Advocate" here is a translation of the Greek word *Paraclete* which means both an advocate and a counselor. It is one who is also named the Spirit of Truth and later this figure was called the Holy Spirit. So the *Paraclete* will be sent by Jesus as a source of teaching and consolation. So, Jesus will ask the Father to send the *Paraclete* to be a source of consolation and teaching in the aftermath of his death.

The major contrast in this discourse is between the world and those who are followers of Jesus. Jesus calls his followers out of the world and reveals himself to them but not to the world, an issue that is addressed in the next section. The world is then a place to which the disciples do not belong. They belong rather in the safe place that Jesus will create for them where he will come and be with them. A part of the promise is that he will not leave

them orphaned or alone without a leader and that is in part because he will send them the *Paraclete*. But it's also because he will come and take them to the place where he is. This is a promise that they will see Jesus again and that because he lives they will also live. This reference to "that day"(14.20) is probably a reference to the day of resurrection. That is, "on that day you will know that I am in my father and you in me and I in you" and that's the day in which they will see him again. Jesus' prophecy here is fulfilled in the stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances. The promise is that his resurrected life will be a vindication of his way and an indication of what is possible for them.

The primary commandment of Jesus is to love one another. This commandment is named a number of times in this last discourse. The statement "Those who will love me will keep my word" is related to the promise that the Father and the Son will come and make their home with the one who loves Jesus and keeps his word. Literally God will live with us in our homes. To keep Jesus' word is closely related to the commandment of the Shema, to love God with all your heart, all of your mind, and all of your strength. To love Jesus' words by keeping them in our hearts is a way of creating an intimate relationship between God, Jesus, and you.

Knowing and loving God's word and loving and knowing Jesus' words is a continuation of the primary motif and commandment of the love of God that is foundational to the entire tradition of Israel. Jesus names this as the great commandment. So the relationship of love is a relationship of keeping Jesus' commandments. Those who keep Jesus' commandments will be loved by God and by Jesus. And they are invited, indeed commanded, to love one another. So the central dynamic of this section of Jesus' last speech to his friends is naming the various dimensions of love and unity: the Father's love of Jesus, Jesus' love of the disciples, their love for one another and the extension of that love into the world.