

Dear Friends,

JOHN 14: 1-14

The people of Israel expected God to come to the world to set things right. They remembered how God had set them free from slavery and had brought them through the sea and the wilderness. They were confident that God would act again by sending a chosen one through whom their oppressors would be overthrown and God's just and peaceful rule would be established. Meanwhile their suffering continued. A succession of powerful nations dominated them while they could only dream of freedom.

Then came Jesus. Some became convinced that he was God's chosen one. Through him, especially through his healing, they experienced God's blessing. Surely this was the coming of God's kingdom. They hoped that this kingdom would now fully show itself in the defeat of the Roman's who ruled over them and the setting up of God's rule. The crucifixion of Jesus seemed to destroy all of their hopes. But the conviction soon took hold that Jesus would return to complete his work of rescuing humankind. The first Christians believed that it would not be long before his second coming. The earliest gospels paint dramatic pictures of what that coming would be like. It would rattle the whole creation. The sun would be darkened, the moon would give no light, the stars would fall from heaven. Then in great power and glory, which every eye would see, Jesus would come and bring in a new heaven and a new earth where evil would finally be overcome and the will of God would be done.

Alongside this hope of Jesus coming again to rescue the world grew up another hope. This other hope was more personal. It was the hope that Jesus would come to the individual, that there would be a relationship of communion between each person and God. This week I am going to share some thoughts about John 14: 1-14, it was one of the passages given to us for last Sunday. Within it, Jesus talks about the personal side of the Christian life. I do not however want to let go of the other side, the hope that God will act on the bigger stage in overcoming evil and establishing justice and peace. Jesus comes both to the world and to the individual.

There are moments in the Bible which show how comfortable God is moving between the very personal and the mind blowingly cosmic. My favourite example is Psalm 147 where we see the attention and care that God gives to the individual who is suffering put immediately alongside God's awareness of each star in the vast universe. It says, "The Lord ... heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars. He calls to them all by their names".

This week I will focus on your relationship with God. God comes to you. But God also comes to bring healing and flourishing to the suffering world, to bring the whole creation to life in all its fullness.

God bless you,  
Tony