



St Marylebone
Parish Church

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia!

St John's Gospel, like the proverbial football match, is a game of two halves.

Up until Chapter 12, Jesus engages in a very public ministry, openly teaching and preaching throughout Galilee and Judaea and his divine nature is revealed through a series of 'signs' or miracles.

No-one who has eyes to see or ears to hear can be left in any doubt that Jesus is 'the Light' the One long-promised who has now, in God's time, come; that Jesus is Life with a capital 'L': water is made wine, thousands are fed from nothing more than a very modest picnic, the sick are healed and even the dead are raised to life.

For those, who do have eyes to see and ears to hear, the long-promised Kingdom is, at last, glimpsed in and through the builder-carpenter from Nazareth.

But from Chapter 13 on, the second of the two halves, John portrays Jesus withdrawing from the crowds, and what he says he says now only for the benefit of those who have come to accept him as God's Messiah - his disciples and those who will come to believe through their testimony in the future.

We move, if you like, from the 'public gospel' to the 'private gospel', from public proclamation to intimate, domestic, instruction.

Jesus teaching moves from the here and now of 1st century Palestine to what will come after the final and greatest of all the 'signs' that reveal who Jesus is, the Crucifixion at Calvary.

It is from this 'private teaching' that our gospel reading this morning comes: Jesus telling his disciples - and us, as those who come to believe through their testimony, - about the things that are to come.

What he has spoken in parables, he now tells them plainly.

Whilst he was with his disciples, there was no need for Jesus to speak to them about such things – about times of persecution and trouble; about inevitable rejection and betrayal; about what Dietrich Bonhoeffer was to call the 'cost of discipleship'.

Whilst he was with them, Jesus did not need to tell the disciples about the promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would supply all their needs.

So, as he began the process of taking his leave of his disciples, Jesus make a promise to them that they will not be alone; that they have nothing to fear; that he who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, will not leave his disciples comfortless; that he will not abandon them to their inevitable fate – even if they will, at the end, abandon him.

As he prepares to return to the Father, Jesus promises that he will always be with his disciples - *and* that he will be with those who will come after them and who will join them in following him in the Way of the cross; indeed, that he will be with them as the very breath of their very being.

Jesus promises Thomas and Philip and James - and he promises us - that a life lived in the power of the Comforter-Spirit will be a life which gives glory to God, no matter what challenges it faces.

As Jesus prepares to return to his Father, he promises those who live in

him, and through him and by him, everything they need to go on living lives – and indeed, dying deaths - which will glorify the Father and give life to the world, just as his life and death glorify the Father and give life to the world.

As we move through the days of Easter in the Lord's Resurrection and begin to look forward to Ascension Day, and to Pentecost which lies beyond, may the promised Comforter-Spirit dwell in us and with us, emboldening us, as the Spirit strengthened and protected and led Thomas and Philip and James, as we explore ever more deeply what it means to live the Resurrection and to follow in the Way of him who is Truth and Life. Alleluia!